

Housing First Programs in Alberta and the Right to Housing

by

Sophie Laura Stadler

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Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
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Abstract

This thesis examined the extent to which Housing First (HF) programs in Alberta realize the right to adequate housing. HF provides chronically homeless people with access to permanent housing and separate support services. In Alberta, HF has been central to provincial and municipal responses to homelessness since 2008. The rise of HF within public policy appears to be consistent with the principle that *everyone* has a right to housing, and that the state has a corresponding duty to make housing accessible and affordable to all. Conversely, chronic homelessness is a severe breach of the right to housing, associated with stigmatization, loss of dignity, and threats to health and survival. However, almost no research has directly examined if and how HF programs are rights-oriented, even though the right to housing has been identified as an important premise of the model.

This research considered whether HF in Alberta is practiced in a way that is consistent with international human rights principles. To do so, it adapted Fukuda-Parr's (2006) framework for measuring the realization of human rights through four key principles: non-discrimination, participation, adequate progress and remedy. The specific objectives of this research were: (1) To investigate the degree of *non-discrimination* in HF programs' practices and processes, including in criteria for assessing client eligibility and priority; (2) To assess the level of client *participation* within HF programs' processes and procedures; (3) To consider whether and how HF programs ensure *adequate progress* towards the goal of ending homelessness, for example through benchmarking and intermediate targets, in light of contextual challenges; (4) To examine HF programs' accountability and effectiveness in providing *remedy* to clients whose right to housing is being violated, whether by internal or external factors. The extent to which these principles were fulfilled served as an indicator of

whether HF programs respect, protect, and fulfill the right to housing – duties which are imposed by human rights law through international treaties.

Data were collected through qualitative interviews with 25 key informants working in the HF sector in Edmonton, Calgary and Fort McMurray. Relevant data were then assigned deductively into Fukuda-Parr's categories, before inductive thematic analysis was conducted *within* each category. Key findings were as follows. First, due to discriminatory and non-participatory processes, not all HF clients have their right to housing equally respected. Despite the commendable efforts of staff and their inherent respect for clients' dignity, Indigenous clients, clients with very high or low acuity, and violent clients experience exclusion and delays in their housing process. Second, the duty to protect the right to housing effectively is partly adhered to. HF programs' processes and staff were able to prevent forced evictions and provide legal remedy in case of forced evictions. However, graduation requirements within programs were recognized as severely counterproductive; when graduation occurs prematurely, it increases the risk of eviction, rather than protecting the realization of the right for clients in the long-term. Third, HF programs' duty to fulfill the right to adequate housing in a timely, effective and non-discriminatory manner was not fulfilled. This was due to a combination of internal and external factors, including discriminatory processes, insufficient training for staff, premature graduation expectations, and insufficient financial supports from government.

These findings should inform new (or reformed) versions of HF practice that are rights-affirming and put pressure on provincial and federal governments to support HF programs to the best of their ability. This is important and timely because the National Housing Strategy, which aims to halve homelessness in 10 years, commits Canada to progressively

implementing the right to housing, and articulates that “every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable home” (Government of Canada, 2017, p4).

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Sophie Laura Stadler. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Housing First and the Right to Housing”, Pro00066434, July 27, 2016.

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List of Abbreviations

Assertive Community Treatment = ACT
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped = AISH
At Home/Chez Soi = AH/CS
Calgary Homeless Foundation = CHF
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation = CMHC
Canadian Observatory on Homelessness = COH
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness = CAEH
Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights = CESCR
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights = CESCR
Civil and Political Rights = CPR
Economic, Social and Cultural rights = ESC rights
Employment and Social Development Canada = ESDC
Homelessness Partnering Strategy = HPS
Housing First = HF
Intensive Case Management = ICM
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights = ICCPR
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights = ICESCR
Linear Residential Treatment = LRT
National Homelessness Initiative = NHI
National Housing Strategy = NHS
Non-Governmental Organization = NGO
Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights = OHCHR
Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer = OPBO
Pathways Housing First = PHF
Permanent Supported Housing = PSH
Point-in-Time count = PIT count
State of Homelessness in Canada = SOHC
Supplemental Security Income = SSI
Treatment First = TF
United Nations = UN
United Nations General Assembly = UNGA
United Nations Special Rapporteur = UNSR
World Health Organization = WHO

1. Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Homelessness in Canada

A homelessness crisis has unfolded in Canada since the mid-1990s, creating “a human rights calamity” (Young, 2015, p47). At least 235,000 Canadians now experience homelessness each year (Gaetz, DeJ, Richter, & Redman, 2016). The following chapter presents an overview of the Canadian definition of homelessness and the definition of Indigenous Homelessness, recent numbers of persons experiencing homelessness, and the historical development and responses to the current crisis.

1.1.1. Canadian Definition of Homelessness

The Canadian Observatory of Homelessness (COH) published an official Canadian definition of Homelessness in 2012, presenting a standard within which homelessness can be interpreted and translated consistently into numbers. It includes a general description of the “situation” of being homeless, as well as its causes, involuntary character and negative impacts:

“Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.” (Gaetz, Barr, Friesen, Harris, Hill, et al., 2012, p1)

It is important to stress that homeless persons seldom chose to be homeless, and that it is not simply, or primarily, a consequence of individual mistakes. The Canadian Definition of Homelessness states clearly: “homelessness and housing exclusion is the outcome of our broken social contract; the failure of society to ensure that adequate systems, funding and supports are in place so that all people, even in crisis situations, have access to housing and the supports they need” (Gaetz et al., 2012, p1). Homelessness in Canada can be understood as the result of the intersection of multiple factors: *structural factors* like discrimination, the

lack of affordable housing, economic crisis and therefore lack of income; *systemic failures* to care for vulnerable populations sufficiently, meaning these persons' homelessness could have been prevented by public services; and *individual and relational factors* like mental health of the individual or their family member(s), addictions, disability, trauma, or personal crisis like domestic violence (Gaetz et al., 2012; Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013).

In the *State of Homelessness in Canada 2013* (SOHC), Gaetz et al. emphasize that homelessness is rarely caused by a single factor but is more often a result of "an intricate interplay between structural factors, systems failures and individual circumstances" (p13). However, a lack of affordable housing seems to be the single most important contributing factor. They also clarify that people in homelessness do not have distinct characteristics or share a common background; rather, pathways into homelessness are diverse and the line between having a home and being homelessness "is quite liquid" (Gaetz et al., 2013, p13). This said, some populations - like women, youth, refugees, veterans and Indigenous peoples – are vulnerable to homelessness due to certain systemic processes, circumstances and discrimination.

According to the official Canadian definition, the term "homelessness" describes a person's form of habitation. It encompasses being *unsheltered*, being in an *emergency shelter*, being *provisionally accommodated*, and lastly, being housed but *at risk of homelessness* (Gaetz et al., 2012). *Unsheltered* is defined as "living in public or private spaces without consent or contract" or "living in places not intended for permanent human habitation" (Gaetz et al., 2012, p2). *Emergency sheltered* people sleep in short-term overnight emergency shelters for the homeless, in high security environment shelters for victims of domestic violence, or in emergency shelters after fleeing from a natural disaster. *Provisionally accommodated* persons have access to short-term temporary accommodation, which takes diverse forms: transitional housing (provided through a government or non-profit organization), "couch-surfing" at friends' or family's places often without paying rent (also called the "hidden homeless" population); occupation of motels or hostels; provisional accommodation in institutional care facilities; or occupation of reception centers for recently arrived immigrants and refugees. Lastly, persons *at risk of homelessness* live in housing conditions that are insecure, inadequate or precarious. Insecure conditions mean that a person's

housing situation could potentially be permanent, but due to precarious employment, discontinued financial support, discrimination, or disability etc., they are at risk of losing their housing. Precarious and inadequate housing can relate to economic hardship (e.g. rent is paid at the expense of other needs, including their household's health and well-being), culturally inadequate housing, living with pests or a lack of hygienic sanitation, or a lack of access to necessary services and infrastructure like health centres or schools (Gaetz et al., 2012).

All these forms of habitation are part of being homeless or being at risk of homelessness. Individuals affected by the latter can be defined as being in core housing need if they live in accommodations that do not meet standards of adequacy, if they have to pay more than 30% of the total before-tax household income for rent, or if they live in non-suitable units that do not offer enough bedrooms for the number of inhabitants (Gaetz et al. 2012, p5).

Homelessness can also be categorized according to the length of time someone experiences homelessness and the number of homeless episodes in their lives. The SOHC 2013 takes its definition of the three types of homelessness on Kuhn's and Culhane's differentiation from the 1990s (Gaetz et al., 2013, p28). The first and most common type is *Transitional Homelessness*, which encompasses all persons who experience short-term homelessness, often less than a month, and mostly only once. They usually do not have complex health issues or addictions and are mostly younger. The second type is *Episodic Homelessness*, often experienced by younger people with more complex health issues, and "includes individuals who move into and out of homelessness several times over a three year period (and some of the moves may be into corrections or hospital)" (Gaetz et al., 2013, p28). The third type is *Chronic Homelessness*, which includes long-term shelter users and persons living on the streets. A person counts as chronically homeless if they "are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e., have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation)" (Government of Canada, 2016).

People experiencing chronic homelessness often have severe mental health issues and struggle with addictions and/or physical disability. They present the smallest group, but

because of their high needs and long shelter-stays they use homeless services the most (Gaetz et al., 2013, p28). Chronically homeless persons' situation is often a harmful spiral, where their constant state of homelessness worsens mental and physical health conditions, and leaves them vulnerable to criminalization, sexual exploitation and further trauma (Gaetz et al., 2013, p28). Of all the types of homelessness, this is the most challenging and life threatening (Gaetz et al., 2013).

1.1.2. Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada

The Canadian Definition of Homelessness is based on western understandings of home and does not reflect the experiences of Indigenous homelessness. It is thus incomplete, especially as Indigenous people experience homelessness in Canadian cities at a disproportionate rate due to historical trauma, oppression, discrimination and racism associated with colonization (COH, 2019a). Anderson and Collins (2014) identified causes of urban Indigenous homelessness in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, based on a review of 35 studies. They found that the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in urban homelessness is mostly caused by the negative effects of colonization, which produced "disempowerment, cultural erosion, social deprivation, loss of social and psychological well-being, and diminished political power and collective rights" (Anderson & Collins, 2014, p970).

1.1.2.1. The Difference in Cultural Understandings of Home and Housing

In an insightful document, published by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Jesse Thistle defines Indigenous Homelessness in Canada (2017). To understand what homelessness means for any population, culture or community, it is crucial to understand what their concept of home looks like. Thistle differentiates the Indigenous understanding from the western concept. The latter views "home" as a physical built place where the concept of binary gender roles was created and reproduced through the division of labour (Thistle, 2017). In contrast, "(t)he holistic Indigenous concept of home is understood as circles of interconnectedness that together form the heart of healthy Indigenous social and spiritual emplacement"(Thistle, 2017, p14 -15). Thistle refers here to Julie Christensen's (2013) word "rootedness":

“...meaning that an Indigenous person, community and Nation feel at home when they have a reciprocal responsibility and stable relationship with such things as place, geography, animals, community, sense of belonging, identity, family, ancestors, stories and independence (Christensen, 2013). Without these connections, Indigenous Peoples feel ‘rootless,’ unanchored or ‘homeless’ (Christensen, 2013, p. 809).” (Thistle, 2017, p15)

This interconnectedness is described among various Indigenous groups like the Cree or Métis as *miyo wahkohtowin* or *niw_hk_m_kanak*, by the Sioux as *mitakuye oyasin*, by the Inuk as *mitakuye oyasin*, or by the Ojibwe as *nindinawemaaganidok*, meaning “All My Relations” (Thistle, 2017, p15). It is the basis of the Indigenous concept of home and crucial to the social and spiritual well-being and health of Indigenous people.

Thistle further elaborates that Indigenous homelessness includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who lack “stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing” (2017, p6), similar to the Canadian Definition of Homelessness. But he explains that Indigenous homelessness means that people “cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships” (Thistle, 2017, p6) and are homeless through the loss of All My Relations. He clarifies that the lack of a physical habitation is only a symptom but not the cause of Indigenous homelessness, which is ground in “*being without healthy social, cultural, spiritual, emotional and physical relationships (Christensen, 2013).*” (Thistle, 2017, p16).

Prior to the European settlement of Canada, the Indigenous understanding of “home” might have included a structure of habitation, but it was not crucial for having a home, and a person sleeping under the night sky was not necessarily classified homeless, as they would be in settler understandings (Thistle, 2017, p16). Through colonization, Indigenous views were oppressed and the western understanding of a home in the sense of a physical structure rather than the connection to All My Relations was imposed: “hundreds of years of colonialism have eroded, undermined and supplanted Indigenous cultural practices and their inclusive concept of home, replacing these with the Western ideals of patriarchy and a personally owned independent home” (Thistle, 2017, p16). At the same time, Indigenous

peoples were physically dispossessed and displaced from their lands, severely uprooting them from All My Relations (Thistle, 2017).

These differences in understandings are today another cause of Indigenous homelessness as Anderson & Collins (2014) illustrate. Differences in understandings of what secure housing means heavily influence the housing stability of Indigenous tenants. For example, in Indigenous understandings, sharing a home with many people or “cycling between the homes of relatives”, “is a cultural norm, and not considered a state of insecure housing” (Anderson & Collins, 2014, p967). But today’s Canadian housing market and tenancy rules do not recognize that “extended family structures are central to Indigenous cultures” and that cohabitation of many relatives is a valid cultural norm (Anderson & Collins, 2014, p967). Consequently, many Indigenous households are penalized with evictions for violating the tenancy agreement by having too many “guests” staying with them, which speaks to a “‘mismatch’ between urban housing and the cultural needs of Indigenous families” (Anderson & Collins, 2014, p987).

1.1.2.2. Colonialism and Indigenous Homelessness

The severe historical oppression and injustice against Indigenous peoples is reflected in the intergenerational trauma passed along generations of Indigenous people until the present (Thistle, 2017, p7). It often manifests itself in addiction, alcoholism and poverty, symptoms, which “are incorrectly assumed to be causes of homelessness in popular and worldwide blame-the-victim discourses” (Thistle, 2017, p7) instead of being recognized as the results of centuries of abuse. Today’s Indigenous population still suffers from the forced assimilation practices of residential schooling and the forced removal of Indigenous children into settler foster homes, as well as from an ongoing neglect of Indigenous cultural understandings of home, resulting in struggles to sustain or access housing (Anderson & Collins, 2014). The trauma of being uprooted from their own family and culture, of experiencing sexual abuse and violence, and of having a child forcibly taken away by the government, had a severe negative effect on the affected persons, often leading towards use of drugs or alcohol as coping mechanisms (Anderson & Collins, 2014). All these factors – trauma, poor mental health, addiction – are proven to increase the risk of homelessness, which reveals the direct connection between colonial practices and the prevalence of Indigenous homelessness (Anderson & Collins, 2014). Further, these cruelties did not only affect the generations who

experienced them directly, but also the following generations through drug use and violence within the family, especially against women and children, also making them more likely to become homeless (Anderson & Collins, 2014).

It is important to reflect on the history of colonization in Canada to truly understand the meaning of and the reasons for the disproportionate numbers of Indigenous people in homelessness in Canada (Thistle, 2017). Indigenous homelessness is often falsely associated with racist and discriminatory “myths about flawed Indigenous individuals” (Thistle, 2017, p7). Admitting that settler colonialism, which has benefitted European settlers and their descendants greatly, causes the ongoing structural crisis of chronic Indigenous homelessness seems to be unappealing for many. As Thistle states, “it is easier to blame the oppressed than it is to rationally evaluate the problem or to admit complicity—unwitting or not—in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples” (2017, p18). This situation is exacerbated by discrimination, which presents other barriers to Indigenous persons and families finding affordable homes and accessing the services they need (Anderson & Collins, 2014).

1.1.2.3. Thistle’s 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness

Through consultations over 1.5 years, Thistle identified dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness as articulated by Indigenous peoples across Canada (Table 1). They “underscore the loss of relationships endured by Indigenous Peoples through the processes of Canadian colonization and the disconnection from the Indigenous understanding of home as All My Relations” (Thistle, 2017, p39).

1. Historic Displacement Homelessness	<i>Indigenous communities and Nations made historically homeless after being displaced from pre-colonial Indigenous lands.</i>
2. Contemporary Geographic Separation Homelessness	<i>An Indigenous individual’s or community’s separation from Indigenous lands, after colonial control.</i>
3. Spiritual Disconnection Homelessness	<i>An Indigenous individual’s or community’s separation from Indigenous worldviews or connection to the Creator or equivalent deity.</i>
4. Mental Disruption and Imbalance Homelessness	<i>Mental homelessness, described as an imbalance of mental faculties, experienced by Indigenous individuals and communities caused by colonization’s entrenched social and economic marginalization of Indigenous Peoples</i>

5. Cultural Disintegration and Loss Homelessness	<i>Homelessness that totally dislocates or alienates Indigenous individuals and communities from their culture and from the relationship web of Indigenous society known as “All My Relations.”</i>
6. Overcrowding Homelessness	<i>The number of people per dwelling in urban and rural Indigenous households that exceeds the national Canadian household average, thus contributing to and creating unsafe, unhealthy and overcrowded living spaces, in turn causing homelessness.</i>
7. Relocation and Mobility Homelessness	<i>Mobile Indigenous homeless people travelling over geographic distances between urban and rural spaces for access to work, health, education, recreation, legal and childcare services, to attend spiritual events and ceremonies, have access to affordable housing, and to see family, friends and community members.</i>
8. Going Home Homelessness	<i>An Indigenous individual or family who has grown up or lived outside their home community for a period of time, and on returning “home,” are often seen as outsiders, making them unable to secure a physical structure in which to live, due to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal bureaucratic barriers, uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation.</i>
9. Nowhere to Go Homelessness	<i>A complete lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, shelter services or relationships; literally having nowhere to go.</i>
10. Escaping or Evading Harm Homelessness	<i>Indigenous persons fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes to obtain a measure of safety or to survive. Young people, women, and LGBTQ2S people are particularly vulnerable.</i>
11. Emergency Crisis Homelessness	<i>Natural disasters, large-scale environmental manipulation and acts of human mischief and destruction, along with bureaucratic red tape, combining to cause Indigenous people to lose their homes because the system is not ready or willing to cope with an immediate demand for housing</i>
12. Climatic Refugee Homelessness	<i>Indigenous peoples whose lifestyle, subsistence patterns and food sources, relationship to animals, and connection to land and water have been greatly altered by drastic and cumulative weather shifts due to climate change. These shifts have made individuals and entire Indigenous communities homeless.</i>

Table 1: The 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness, content by Thistle, 2017, p10-12

These dimensions are often layered in a person's experience, meaning that a person faces more than one layer of homelessness and even up to all 12 at once or over a lifetime (Thistle, 2017). Thistle provides the example of a residential school survivor...

- whose family could have been displaced historically leading to the loss of “traditional knowledge associated with their land” (Dimension 1),
- whose time in residential school led to the loss of “their connection to kin, language and Indigenous spirituality” (Dimension 3),
- whose trauma of these losses “could also have created an unbalanced or unhealthy mental state in that person as they grew up in a loveless environment” (Dimension 4),
- who is upon return to the home community “seen as an outsider who has little in common with their kin or community” and thus “pushed out and left with nowhere to live in the home community” (Dimensions 8 & 9),
- who then decides “to move to the city to establish themselves and put it all behind them” (Dimension 7),
- where “they face an impenetrable wall of racism and general lack of knowledge of how to access urban employment and housing services”, falling into chronic homelessness in the sense established by the Canadian definition of homelessness (Thistle, 2014, p29).

This example illustrates how Indigenous homelessness often reaches much deeper and is much more complex than conveyed in the Canadian Definition of Homelessness. It also shows how the power of colonization, discrimination, forced cultural assimilation, dispossession and displacement, and differences between Indigenous and settler cultural understandings, lead to Indigenous homelessness and suffering. It underlines that blaming the victims of these atrocities for the outcome (homelessness) is (conscious or unconscious) scapegoating and just adds another layer of injustice and discrimination.

1.1.3. The Canadian Homelessness Crisis in Numbers

To provide a better understanding of the scope of homelessness, it is helpful to look at the size of homeless populations in Canada. The following numbers stem from the two latest official reports on homelessness in Canada, published in 2013 and 2016. According to the most recent count, 35,000 Canadians are homeless on a given night and at least 235,000

Canadians experience homelessness in a year (Gaetz et al., 2016). Of these persons, 27.3% are women and 18.7% are youth.

The COH remarks that the nightly count only includes people sleeping in Emergency Shelters (approx. 14,400 in 2009) or in Women Shelters (approx. 7,350 in 2010), persons sleeping unsheltered, or persons in temporary institutional accommodation (approx. 4,464 in 2009)¹ (COH, 2019b). The actual number of homeless people, including provisionally accommodated persons (i.e. hidden homeless), is suggested to be much higher. Based on a count by Ipsos Reid in March 2013, the COH estimates that 1.3 million Canadians experienced some form of homelessness or extremely insecure housing conditions within the past five years.

The vast majority of homeless Canadians (88-94%) experience Transitional Homelessness (Aubry et al., 2013 in Gaetz et al., 2013). They have an average shelter stay of 50 days, but most transitional homeless people are homeless for less than a month and often need little to no support to find their way out of homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013, p28). Episodic Homelessness applies to 3-11% of the Canadian homeless population (Aubry et al., 2013 in Gaetz et al., 2013). Finally, even though their numbers are increasing, Chronic Homelessness represents the smallest subset of the homeless population, accounting for 2-4% of Canadian homeless people. However, these 2-4% are in the highest need. Indeed, together with the episodic homeless people they present “less than 15% of the homeless population, but consume more than half the resources in the homelessness system, including emergency shelter beds and day programs” (Gaetz et al., 2013, p29). In total, estimates are that “health, social and judicial services” for homeless people cost the Canadian economy \$7 billion a year (Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), 2018a, p4).

Another relevant number is the number of Indigenous persons in shelters. While Indigenous persons account for 4.3% of the entire Canadian population, they make up 28-34% of the shelter population (Gaetz et al., 2016, p5). Most of the Indigenous population lives in urban centres, where they often experience barriers to accessing housing and are in

¹ The numbers of people sleeping unsheltered or in temporary institutional accommodation are estimates according to the number of emergency shelter users. The COH (b) explains that for every 100 emergency shelter occupants, there are 20 people sleeping unsheltered and 31 persons sleep in temporary institutional accommodation.

disproportionate housing need (Thistle, 2017, p20). Belanger, Awosoga & Head (2013) cite numbers from a 2006 census from selected Canadian cities, which show the differences but also commonalities between Canadian cities. In Yellowknife, for example, Indigenous people make up 11% of the total population, but 95% of the homeless population. Indeed, over a fifth (21.7%) of *all* Indigenous people in Yellowknife are homeless (Belanger et al., 2013, p13). Here, homelessness seems to be connected to barriers that specifically affect Indigenous people, rendering them severely vulnerable to fall into homelessness, while Non-Indigenous homelessness is nearly completely prevented. Meanwhile, in Montréal “only” 20% of the homeless population is Indigenous and “only” 3.8% of the Indigenous population is homeless (Belanger et al., 2013, p13). Thus, Indigenous people in Montréal do not seem to experience the same extreme vulnerability. Nevertheless, in all cities considered, the share of Indigenous peoples in the homeless population is disproportionately higher than the share of Indigenous peoples in the city’s population (Belanger et al., 2013). These numbers convey the effect of colonization, discrimination, and trauma on Indigenous persons wellbeing compared to Non-Indigenous persons Canada wide.

1.1.3.1. Alberta’s Homelessness in Numbers

As my research took place in Alberta, it is important to provide some background about homelessness in this province. Alberta has an organization called 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness, comprised “of the lead organizations responsible for the implementation of local Plans to End Homelessness” (7 cities, 2019a) in Calgary, Grand Prairie, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The 7 cities work together to end homelessness in Alberta, to improve and support policy solutions and service provision, and to organize homeless counts to track their progress. In their official homelessness count from 2016 they stated a 31% decrease in homelessness since 2008 and a 19.2% decrease since 2014. In total they counted 5373 people in Alberta experiencing homelessness with the majority of 3222 living in Calgary and 1636 living in Edmonton (7 Cities, 2017). Of these 5373 people, 2537 people are emergency sheltered, 241 sleep unsheltered, 650 are incarcerated, and 1945 are in interim or other housing (7 Cities, 2017). Of the total, 28% are Indigenous, while only 6.8% of the whole Albertan population is Indigenous, showing once more the overrepresentation of Indigenous persons in homelessness (7 cities, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2019).

To be defined as chronically homeless in Alberta a person's current episode of homelessness has to be at least one year or more, and/or had to be homeless four or more times in the last three years (7 cities, 2017, p29). The 2016 count also provides the shares of chronic homelessness of the homeless population per city. Edmonton has the highest proportion with 59% of the homeless population experiencing chronic homelessness, followed by Lethbridge with 58% and Calgary with 51%. Grande Prairie has a 49% proportion, Wood Buffalo 48%, Red Deer 45%, and lastly Medicine Hat a 31% proportion of chronic homelessness within the homeless population (7 cities, 2017, p29). These numbers are very high compared to the 2-4% share of chronic homeless people within the homeless population Canada wide, taken from the report on the State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. It is not clear if or how these differences can be reconciled.

1.1.4. Homelessness and Housing Policy in Canada

At first sight it is astounding that a wealthy country like Canada with a focus on social services and good health care provision faces a severe homelessness crisis (Gaetz, 2010). The history of this crisis is closely connected to federal decision-making in policy and funding. It is a rather recent turn of events starting in the 1980s and 90s that impoverished households, and families and individuals with diverse backgrounds lost their housing (Gaetz, 2010). Before this, only a small number of single males tended to experience homelessness (Gaetz, 2010, p21).

After the Second World War up until the 1980s Canadian decision-makers had a favourable focus on building adequate housing and providing social support for those in need. "Canadian urban planners, public health officials, social workers and related professionals had been focused on rehousing people into better housing and neighbourhoods" (Hulchanski, Campsie, Chau, Hwang, Paradis, 2009, p3). With the help of a newly introduced "mortgage system with government mortgage insurance", by putting efforts into building social housing, and by subsidizing private-sector rental housing, the housing market grew stronger (Hulchanski et al., 2009, p3). It allowed people rehouse out of the run-down housing left from the war and the Great Depression into better quality, more adequate housing. At the same time, people living in a precarious situation during economically hard times, persons with health issues, and the older population received the support they needed through the introduction of social services including "Universal health insurance,

Unemployment Insurance, Old Age Pensions, and the Canada Assistance Plan” (Hulchanski et al., 2009, p3). Furthermore, in 1973 housing legislation was implemented with the premise “that our society has an obligation to see that all people are adequately housed” and resulted in 20,000 social housing units being created a year until the 1980s (Hulchanski et al. 2009, p3). Affordable, adequate housing and social supports kept homelessness low. But with the 1980s came a neglect of housing need by the federal government, starting a nationwide affordable housing crisis. Cutbacks in social housing and other social services in 1984 started large processes of “*dehousing*” instead of the former “*rehousing*” (Hulchanski et al., 2009, p3; Hulchanski, 2009, p1).

At the 1987 Canadian Conference of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) an “Agenda for Action on Housing and Homelessness through the Year 2000” was drafted, which described the Canadian government’s failures (Hulchanski et al., 2009, p4). It contrasted the underfunding of affordable, adequate housing with the need in the Canadian population and the will of local organizations to build effective social housing programs (Canadian Association of Housing and Renewal Officials, 1988, p122 in Hulchanski et al., 2009). The federal government however chose to continue with their cuts to the point that “In 1993 all federal spending on the construction of new social housing was terminated” (Hulchanski et al., 2009, p5). In 1996 the federal government went even further and “removed itself from low-income housing supply by transferring responsibility for most existing federal social housing to the provinces” (Hulchanski et al., 2009, p5), casting off all responsibility. With little new social housing stock being built, low income households became increasingly vulnerable to homelessness, something that was exacerbated by other cuts in social spending, and by the rise of part-time and precarious work (Gaetz et al., 2016, p13).

1.2. Response to Homelessness in Canada

The homelessness crisis has not been ignored. However, many responses have been mainly based on the provision of emergency services, preventing meaningful progress (Gaetz et al., 2016, p4). This changed with a new phase of “federal interest and investments in housing and homelessness” with a focus on Housing First and ending homelessness in Canada (Gaetz

et al., 2016, p4). Most recently (November 2017 onwards), the objective of ending homelessness has fallen under the National Housing Strategy.

1.2.1. Policy Response

The first phase response was initiated between 1980s until the 2000s while the current homelessness crisis was rising. It encompassed the formation of a large and expensive infrastructure of emergency services “including shelters, day programs, and drop ins” (Gaetz et al., 2016, p13). The critique of this phase is twofold. First, the extensive infrastructure was accompanied by law enforcement efforts that criminalize homelessness by penalizing actions necessary for their survival (see Box 1) (Gaetz et al., 2016; Amster, 2008). Second, the crisis was managed but not tackled. Emergency responses are crucial once someone is homeless, but they do not contribute to preventing homelessness in the first place or help persons to transition out of it quickly (Gaetz et al., 2016).

Box 1: Criminalization of Homelessness

A discriminatory but common way of policy to keep homeless people away from public space, where they are often unwanted by the housed public, is criminalizing their behaviour: “If you want to eliminate a particular social class or subculture or deviant group, locate some behaviour that is largely unique to that group and make it illegal ...With the homeless, it is only too apparent: panhandling, sleeping in public, sidewalk sitting, etc.” (Amster, 2008, pp. 88, 89). Making a group-specific behaviour illegal – criminalizing it - reframes an innocent group as criminals (Amster, 2008, p. 87). Even worse, the resulting arrests further undermine the ability of homeless individuals to survive, contributing to their alienation and devastating hopelessness.

The Safe Streets Acts in Ontario (1999) and British Columbia (2004) are examples of this form of policy-making. These Acts “forbid aggressive solicitation as well as the solicitation of a captive audience” (Chesnay, Bellot & Sylvestre, 2013, p. 165; Safe Streets Act Ontario, 1999, Safe Street Act BC, 2004) to reduce panhandling and squeegeeing, activities undertaken mostly by homeless persons in order to survive. Chesnay et al. (2013) explain that in both cases the Acts were formulated vaguely providing a wide range of options for interpretation and discrimination against homeless people on the part of law enforcement, effectively penalizing their presence and visibility in public space (p. 167). Penalization is a softer form of criminalization, where punishment rather consists of tickets and fines than arrests. But also penalization hampers homeless people’s attempts to making it out of homelessness and of re-entering the housed community. Any unpaid fines are legal debts, which are linked to the individual, affecting their credit rating. Thus, these fines impair their ability to gain heat and water at new housing, or their ability to even gain a health card or driver’s license (Chesnay et al. 2013).

The second response phase, from 2008 until today, learned from these mistakes. It aims to prevent people from falling into homelessness and to provide services to help people experiencing homelessness to exit it as quickly as possible (Gaetz et al., 2016). These efforts have inspired plans to end homelessness across Canada. The plans' focus is "often [to] prioritize system integration, setting measurable targets towards reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness, and the adoption of Housing First as a critical intervention" (Gaetz et al., 2016, p13).

Housing First as response to and immediate way out of chronic homelessness has been a federal priority since the 2013 five-year renewal of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) (Gaetz et al., 2016, p13). The HPS was first launched in 2007 as successor to the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) established in 1999 (ESDC, 2018a). It provided direct funding to 61 designated communities (urban centres) to develop their own projects to address local needs, and a separate funding stream to address "Indigenous and rural and remote homelessness" (ESDC, 2018a, p7). It also sought to promote "leadership by bringing together governments, the not-for-profit and private sectors and people who have experienced homelessness", and to "[support] the collection of data and research to develop evidence-based policies and deliver programs" (ESDC, 2018a, p7).

In 2014, the HPS was renewed and received funding of nearly \$600 million over a five year period until 2019. Additionally, the 2016 Budget distributed a further \$111.8 million funding over two years until 2018 to the HPS for the communities and their programs for people experiencing homelessness. The 2017 Budget continued the additional funding for 2018/19 (ESDC, 2018a). Since the 2014 renewal, Housing First policy was prioritized and supported and is now nationwide at the forefront of the response to chronic and episodic homelessness (ESDC, 2018a).

1.2.2. Housing Rights in Canada

Rights are a powerful – and international – vocabulary for making 'private' suffering visible (Young, 2015). There are few if any other discourses available to marginalized people to articulate publicly their needs and citizenship. The *Tanudjaja v Attorney General of Canada* case, which started in 2010 and ended 2014, was a discourse that tried to make the private suffering of homelessness visible. A "group of individuals with lived experience in

homelessness, academics, and lawyers in Ontario” came together to make the Canadian Government accountable for the homelessness crisis it created (Heffernan, Faraday, & Rosenthal, 2015, p11). They claimed that through its active policy and decision making that led to cuts in affordable, adequate and social housing and services, the Government actively neglected this vulnerable population and violated their right to housing – a right which flowed from positive obligations under sections 7 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Heffernan et al., 2015). The Government of Canada’s response was that the claim “was not justiciable because it raised “political” rather than legal concerns and that the remedies sought (which included declarations of rights violations, injunctive relief and supervisory orders) were beyond the institutional competence of the court” (Heffernan et al., 2015, p12). In 2014 the Ontario Court of Appeal agreed that courts could neither define nor enforce the concept (*Tanudjaja v. Canada (AG)*, 2014 ONCA 852).

As recently as 2016, in their 6th periodic report on Canada, the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) still expressed their concern for the ongoing housing crisis - including the absence of any national housing strategy, a lack of funding for housing projects, insufficient housing subsidies within social assistance, a lack of social housing, increased evictions in the rental market, inadequate housing conditions for Indigenous households, and the placement of persons with mental disabilities in care institutions or even imprisonment “due to lack of adequate housing” (CESCR, 2016, para 39, 43, & 45). This led the Committee to urge Canada “to develop and effectively implement a human-rights based national strategy on housing” (CESCR, 2016, para 40). It gave recommendations, referring back to General Comments 4 and 7 on the right to adequate housing and on evictions: increasing funding for housing and reinforce housing subsidies within social assistance; substantially increasing stocks of social and affordable housing; introducing regulations for rentals to protect tenants’ right to affordable, adequate housing and protecting them from forced evictions and homelessness” (CESCR, 2016, para 40 (d); CESCR, 2016, para 40 (a)-(d)). It further urged the Canadian Government “to intensify its efforts to address Indigenous peoples’ housing crisis, in consultation with Indigenous governments and organizations” (CESCR, 2016, para 44) and recommended “that a disability perspective is integrated in all housing plans and policies at all levels” (CESCR, 2016, para 46).

The Committee also voiced their concern for the growing homelessness crisis and the lack of measures taken to prevent, remedy, and end homelessness. It therefore recommended that in addition to a National *Housing* Strategy, Canada should adopt a National *Homelessness* Strategy, in order to understand causes of homelessness through data collection, provide sufficient and adequate shelter, and end the criminalization of activities of homeless persons necessary for their survival (CESCR, 2016, para 42).

1.2.3. The National Housing Strategy

Launched on November 22, 2017, the National Housing Strategy (NHS) adopts a “human rights-based approach to housing” (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 2) and signals the federal government’s return to housing leadership (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), 2017). This leadership entails a \$40-billion plan to realize the right to adequate housing over time (i.e. progressively). The National Housing Strategy also intends to invest further \$2.2 billion of its \$40 billion budget over ten years solely on the fight against homelessness (ESDC, 2018a, p9). It comes with a new Homelessness Strategy called “Reaching Home” which replaced the HPS in April 2019 (ESDC, 2018b). “Reaching Home” is based on consultations of the Federal Government “with stakeholders, provinces, territories, Indigenous partners, and people with lived experience of homelessness on how to modernize programming to better prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada” (ESDC, 2018c, para 2)

With the \$40-billion plan the federal government aims to realize the right to adequate housing progressively. It seeks to reduce chronic homelessness by half in ten years, to prevent forced evictions and discrimination and to provide affordable, safe, and adequate housing for all Canadians. It also promotes socially-inclusive housing to reduce the “stigmatization and discrimination of low-income households” (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 8). These goals are informed by the “core principles of inclusion, accountability, participation and non-discrimination” (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 2). After consulting with Canadians, including homeless people and Indigenous leaders, they formulated an outline for their efforts, which entails the following: new legislation to ensure future attainment of the strategy and accountability through regular reports to parliament; a new federal housing advocate who focuses on the systemic issues and barriers to housing of Canadians in greatest need; a new national housing council consisting of Canadians with

different backgrounds to ensure participation and inclusion; a community-based tenant initiative that provides funding to local organizations that help people in housing need, and informs and consults tenants; and a public engagement campaign that informs “about the different types and tenures of affordable housing” and promotes socially-inclusive housing to fight “stigmatization and discrimination of low-income households” (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 8).

1.2.3.1. Discussion

The new National Housing Strategy has been long awaited and fuels hope that significant change will follow its introduction. Its focus on the right to housing is promising. A rights-based approach is valuable because it can transform housing from a private need into a public entitlement demanding a collective response (Young, 2015). As Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing emphasizes, it demands a shift in the perception of housing from a commodity and financial instrument to an unconditional human right (see also Florida & Schneider, 2018). This approach also frames the issue of homelessness in terms of a denial of rights. Homeless people have to be acknowledged and respected as rights-holders (Farha, 2018a). If housing becomes an enforceable right, the voices of the marginalized would no longer be undermined as in *Tanudjaja v Canada (AG)*, and actual social change can follow.

For Leilani Farha, the principles that the NHS is built on – combined with a focus on helping the people in greatest need, legal recognition and a commitment to developing a separate Indigenous housing strategy in the future – make the strategy “solid[ly] rights-based” (Tasker, 2017). The CAEH states that the strategy presents “a very solid foundation to build on” (2017). However, both also criticize the aim to reduce chronic homelessness by half in ten years as too modest. Chronically homeless individuals are the most in need but also only present 2-4% of the homeless population. The CAEH calls for the government to fulfill its international human rights obligations and end *all* homelessness in 10 years (Shapcott, 2018).

This point aside, it is clear that HF, a policy already well-developed in Canada, will be central to achieving the reductions in homelessness mandated by the NHS. Indeed, the new federal homelessness strategy (*Reaching Home*), which is situated under the NHS, embraces the HF

approach, and the delivery of HF services by municipalities and communities, while also allowing them to develop other local practices and innovative solutions in an outcomes-based approach (ESDC, 2018b).

1.2.3.2. Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy

In a news release from June 11, 2018, ESDC announced “bold changes to the federal strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness” (2018b, para 3). In addition to HF being reaffirmed as core policy, *Reaching Home* has a strong focus on real-time person specific data and evidence-based practice. It plans collaboration between the governments and “communities to develop and deliver data-driven system plans with clear outcomes” to tackle homelessness (ESDC, 2018b, paragraph 4). It makes communities accountable to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% (Richter, 2018) and to do so it provides them with “greater flexibility to identify, test, and apply innovative solutions and evidence-based practices that achieve results for vulnerable Canadians” (ESDC, 2018b, paragraph 4).

A By-Name List and Coordinated Access System are the essential components of this new strategy. The By-Name list contains real-time data of all homeless people in a community and can therefore give information on how many people experience homelessness, who needs to be prioritized in service provision, and how flows in and out of homelessness work (Richter, 2018). It can coordinate referral processes and help with evaluating programs: “This real-time actionable data supports triage to services and system performance evaluation” (Richter, 2018, para 7). Meanwhile, Coordinated Access Systems standardize intake and assessment and allow for uniform prioritization policies and efficient connection of people to the right supports (Richter, 2018).

The strategy aims to double support for communities, reinforce the community-based approach, and directly fund “municipalities and local service providers” (ESDC, 2018b, para 3). The funding previously granted to the 61 Designated Communities will not be affected and new communities are planned to be included in the new strategy. *Reaching Home* also promises to further increase funding specifically to tackle Indigenous Homelessness and to support culturally adequate and holistic service provision and “responses to the unique needs of Indigenous peoples living in vulnerable conditions” (ESDC, 2018b, para 10). Before

the new strategy was introduced the funding was already doubled in 2016 (ESDC, 2018b, para 10).

Tim Richter appraises the real-time data sharing and Coordinated Access Systems as key to ending chronic homelessness (Richter, 2018). His high opinion of By-Name Lists is based on the 20,000 Homes Campaign that has already implemented “quality By Name Lists” in 10 participating Canadian communities as of 2019 (Richter, 2018; Built for Zero Canada, 2019). Further, he sees Coordinated Access as beneficial because it “streamline[s] the process for people experiencing homelessness to access and support services needed to permanently end their homelessness” (Richter, 2018, paragraph 9). Together these initiatives create a system of efficient access and triage to service provision for Canadians in need.

1.2.3.3. *The National Housing Strategy Act*

On June 20, 2019, the senate passed Bill C-97 *The Budget Implementation Act*, which encompasses the *National Housing Strategy Act* and a new Housing Policy that ultimately makes the government accountable for realizing the right to housing (Seccia, 2019). The Government of Canada appeared to have listened to the many voices claiming and fighting for a right to housing, including that of the UN Special Rapporteur, by including amendments that strengthened its rights-based foundations. Section 4 of bill C-97 declares that in respect to this new Housing Policy the Government of Canada has to “**(a)** recognize that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law; **(b)** recognize that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities; **(c)** support improved housing outcomes for the people of Canada; and **(d)** further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” (Bill C-97, 2019). Even though the Bill C-97 does not provide a claim that can be enforced in court, it is a major step towards the realization of the right to housing in Canada and therefore the prevention and ending of homelessness. In the words of Michael Shapcott in a blog post for the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness: “the right to housing and rights-based approaches are the right thing to do, and they are the best thing to do” (Shapcott, 2018).

As amended, Bill C-97 enshrines in law that there has to be a National Housing Strategy, which has to be maintained and furthered on the basis of a human rights approach (Bill C-97, 2019, para 5). The support of the NHS and of the housing policy is to be carried out by the National Housing Council. The council consists of: 1) persons appointed by the Minister, preferably: “persons who are members of vulnerable groups”, “persons with lived experience of housing need, as well as those with lived experience of homelessness”, “persons who reflect the diversity of Canadian society” and “persons who have expertise in human rights” (Bill C-97, 2019, para 8(3)(a)-(d)); and, 2) four ex-officio members: “the Federal Housing Advocate”, “the Deputy Minister of the department for which the Minister is responsible”, “the Deputy Minister of Indigenous Services”, and “the President of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation” (CMHC) (Bill-97, 2019, para 7 (a)-(d)).

The realization of the NHS and the housing policy is to be monitored and evaluated by a Federal Housing Advocate, who conducts and initiates research on housing, produces annual reports and advises the minister. The advocate can also request a Review Panel, which reviews a systemic housing issue of concern. The panel conducts hearings and prepares a report for the minister with the panel’s opinion on the matter, including recommendations. The responsible Minister must respond to the annual report of the Federal Housing Advocate and to any report of the Review Panel within 120 days, and to table the response in each House of Parliament in a timely manner (Bill C-97, 2019). The Minister lastly also has to initiate a report on the effectiveness of the NHS, to be made before March 31, 2021, and from then onwards every three years. This report is to be tabled in Parliament in a timely manner (Bill C-97, 2019, para 17-18).

The legislation also ensures that future governments “adopt and maintain a national housing strategy”, promising a long-term rights-orientation (The Right to Housing Campaign, 2019, p 3). Even though it has not entrenched as an individual right to housing in the Canadian context, with its focus on accountability and realization of the right to housing from a policy perspective, the Act “will create a vibrant human-rights culture and a space for multi-stakeholder engagement around a shared commitment to reducing and eliminating homelessness and reclaiming housing as a fundamental human right” (The Right to Housing Campaign, 2019, p2). This includes eliminating criminalization mechanisms and processes,

protecting the right to housing through legislation and regulation, policy focusing on the ones most in need, but also “progressively ensuring access to housing for all” (The Right to Housing Campaign, 2019, p6).

1.2.3.4. Housing Budget under the National Housing Strategy

After all these promises in the NHS and the enticing actions taken by the Federal Government, a new report on the Federal Program Spending on Housing Affordability (2019) breaks the enchantment. The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (OPBO) analyzed the federal funding that is actually distributed to housing affordability. In a report the office unveils that the NHS might not bring the promised success after all:

“It is not clear that the National Housing Strategy will reduce the prevalence of housing need relative to 2017 levels. Overall, Canada’s National Housing Strategy largely maintains current funding levels for current activities and slightly reduces targeted funding for households in core housing need. CMHC’s assumptions regarding the impact of NHS outputs on housing need do not reflect the likely impact of those programs on the prevalence of housing need” (OPBO, 2019, p1)

It shows the illusion the NHS created. From the praised \$40 billion investment, only \$16.1 billion is actually new federal money *planned* to be spent. The rest of the \$40 billion consists of “existing loans (\$2.5 billion), new loans (\$8.7 billion), existing planned spending (\$6.8 billion)” and, most importantly, \$11.7 billion that is supposed to be contributed by the provinces and territories through cost-matching. First, adding these amounts equals a higher sum than the \$40 billion, making the NHS’ headline figure an inexplicable number that harms the validity of the new plans. Second, the “new” investments of the NHS only maintain and do not increase funding that would otherwise expire in the coming years. In short, there is no big new stream of money coming in, only an upkeep of current funding. Additionally, the funding coming from the NHS grows over time as the “pre-2016 funding decreases”, which leads to 92% of the new funding coming in from 2020-21 onwards. There is no guarantee that the government will not roll back the NHS funding before then or over time (OPBO, 2019, p7). Third, it is unlikely that the provinces and territories will spend further \$11.7 billion, as there are “Provinces and Territories that already spend more than the federal government on housing”, e.g. the funding for BC Housing of \$209 million

consisted to 71% of funding from the *provincial* government (OPBO, 2019, p8). These provinces and territories could thus even reduce their spending and still meet the cost-matching requirement. A factor contributing to cut backs might be that any success of provincial housing programs is attributed to the Federal government and the NHS, who may falsely claim credit for outcomes funded in large part by the provinces (OPBO, 2019).

The new funding from the government for a Federal, Provincial and Territorial Partnership is not able to make up completely for the decrease in funding coming from the expiry of the Investment in Affordable Housing and of existing operating agreements within the Social Housing Agreements (OPBO, 2019). In total, there will be a large progressive decrease in funding for federal community housing, growing “larger over the term of the National Housing Strategy, reaching 60% by 2027-28 relative to average spending between 2008-09 and 2017-18” (OPBO, 2019, p15). This will especially hurt low-income households, who have benefited from federal social housing providers. Some providers might be able to continue to offer affordable rent after their operating agreement expires, but many other federal community housing providers will have to raise rents to make up for the loss. For example, Indigenous off-reserve community housing “is unsustainable without ongoing subsidies because a large portion of tenants are charged rents based on their incomes, which are not sufficient to cover operating costs and capital reserves” (OPBO, 2019, p16). The federal funding for Indigenous off-reserve community housing is actually cut in half compared to the last ten years (OPBO, 2019). The budget plans of the NHS, a strategy aimed to improve affordable housing and prevent homelessness, are ultimately producing a decrease in support for affordable housing, furthering a root cause of homelessness.

In general, direct funding for construction and renovation of existing housing is 207% higher for the next ten years than the previous ten years. However, the eligibility criteria for funding were lowered, aiming the funding more towards mixed-income housing, catering to the housing market for middle-income households rather than low-income households. The criteria “do not require units to be targeted to low-income households” (OPBO, 2019, p20). In summary, one could say that money is being distributed away from affordable housing towards middle-income housing, and that new funding streams are unlikely to increase the supply of affordable rental units, including those required by Housing First programs.

However, it also has to be mentioned that there is a substantial increase in funding for homelessness programs, which is distributed through the ESDC. It is “62% higher than the five-year historical average” (OPBO, 2019, p22), with \$413 million targeted at urban Indigenous Homelessness. In this area, the NHS has delivered an unambiguous and genuine increase in funding.

Conclusively, the report shows that “the NHS largely maintains current funding levels for current activities in nominal terms and slightly reduces targeted funding for households in core housing need” and it is thus doubtful that the strategy can achieve its goals of having “530,000 households removed from housing need” or “up to 50% reduction in the housing need of renters” (OPBO, 2019, p23). How serious the Federal Government really is on realizing the right to adequate and affordable housing after all the excitement has settled, has to be proven in the future and should be watched closely by the civil society. The Government of Canada has to be held accountable for its promises to the Canadian population.

1.2.4. Specification: Alberta’s Response to Homelessness

As mentioned above, the following study has a focus on the province of Alberta, which is why a short overview over the specific response to homelessness in Alberta is important background information.

1.2.4.1. Governmental Response

As with the Government of Canada, Alberta previously only focused on providing emergency services to people experiencing homelessness. However, since 2009 their main focus has been to help people find a way out of homelessness and into a stable home, with Housing First as the key policy. Under this approach, nearly 1,900 formerly homeless Albertans were being housed and supported in 2017-18 (Government of Alberta, 2019a). To provide immediate remedy for those living on the street or being in need, the Government of Alberta continues to provide emergency accommodations and shelters. The main and most recent strategies of the provincial government in the fight against homelessness are the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy and Alberta’s 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

1.2.4.1.1. Alberta's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

From 2008/2009 until 2019 the Alberta Government followed a 10-year plan to end homelessness. The plan centered around the implementation of Housing First, on giving power on action on homelessness to communities, and on shifting the idea of “managing homelessness to *ending* homelessness” (The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, 2008, p18).

The plan was estimated to need \$1.258 billion were to build 800 new housing units for homeless persons and \$3.316 billion to support homeless people to prevent them from falling back into homelessness. With these investments, the plan aimed to re-house 11,000 homeless Albertans (The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, 2008, p42). The plan also recognized that in order to end homelessness, it would also have to prevent it. Therefore, in addition to this new investment, existing funding was to be continued since “emergency assistance, such as rent supplements, (...) play an ongoing role in preventing homelessness” (The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, 2008, p39). The plan even links its own success to “Investing appropriate dollars in prevention efforts” as it means less people fall into homelessness, which also “translate[s] into an overall reduction in the number of additional housing spaces that must be created” (The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, 2008, p42).

The reality was that between 2011 and 2015, a four-year span within the 10-year plan, no money was spent on new social housing (CBC News, 2015). Finally, eight years into the plan, in 2017, the Alberta Government put together the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy, which aims at building 1000 new affordable housing units by 2021, two years past the original deadline of 800 new units by 2019. Due to these delays in implementing funding and in building affordable housing, it is not surprising that there is still homelessness in Alberta, namely at least 5,735 individuals according to the Point-in-Time (PIT) count from 2018. However, the plan was a good start, helping many people finding a home over the last decade, thanks to the focus on HF. The plan partially succeeded in reducing homelessness by decreasing its growth, stabilizing the numbers “during a time of significant economic pressures and continued in-migration” and during the emergence of other crises as the

opioid crisis (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2019). For now, while the 10-year plan has officially ended, the Government of Alberta announced to continue with Housing First, the emergency services and programs and services in place and to “keep exploring what’s working well and the challenges that still need to be addressed” (Government of Alberta, 2019a).

Investments in social benefit rates, which serve to prevent homelessness and further housing stability, have been scarce in the last decade. During the time of the plan, senior benefits increased only once in 2009, while Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) and income supports received an increase last in 2012 (Clancy, 2018). Finally on January 1st, 2019, after the plan had ended, the Albertan government increased social benefit rates for the first time since 2012 (or 2009 for senior benefits) (Clancy, 2018). This was achieved through Bill 26, which also ensured that benefit rates go up each year according to inflation “to help manage rising costs of living” (Government of Alberta, 2019b). The 2019 increase was also accompanied by higher limits for assets and incomes of AISH and income support recipients, as well as by a higher child allowance benefit (Government of Alberta, 2019b). These changes and long-term increases in social benefit rates fulfill claims that have been made in the 10-year plan but also in the more current Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy and raise hope that the provincial government finally follows through on its promises.

1.2.4.1.2. The Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy

In 2017, the government of Alberta released the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy, which aims to create a sustainable affordable housing system by building affordable housing, supporting tenants to improve their financial circumstances, helping seniors to stay in their homes, and “providing housing service providers with sustainable funding” (Government of Alberta, 2019a). Affordable housing is defined as “government-supported housing available for Albertans, who because of financial, social or other circumstances, cannot afford private market rental rates” (Government of Alberta, 2017, n.p.). Rent in affordable housing is thus lower than the prevailing market rent and is based on household income, as a household should not spend “more than 30 percent of its gross income on shelter” (Government of Alberta, 2017, n.p.). The strategy recognizes the importance of a home for the health, education and social lives of individuals as well as the fiscal relief of reduced homelessness

due to reduced demands on social-supports, and health and justice systems (Government of Alberta, 2017, n.p.).

The strategy plans to build 4,100 affordable housing units by 2021 with an investment of \$1.2 billion (Government of Alberta, 2017, n.p., Government of Alberta, 2019a). Additionally, old affordable housing sites, which are in disrepair due to underfunding in the past, will be fixed up to health and safety standards or rebuilt. The goal here is to rebuild 2000 homes by 2021. It further wants to respect the needs of Indigenous peoples by providing more housing that is “culturally sensitive to their needs” (Government of Alberta, 2017, p3). Another point of the strategy is integrated housing and supports. The aim is to ensure all affordable housing tenants, including seniors, have access to a tenant support worker who “will connect them to community support services that will help improve the tenant’s well-being” by 2020-21 (Government of Alberta, 2017, p5). There are also renovations planned for senior’s lodges to adapt the living spaces to the needs of seniors and allow them to age and live in dignity in their home community. Renovations include for example “widening doorways for walkers and built-in life-alert systems” (Government of Alberta, 2017, p6).

1.2.4.2. Community Responses

In 2001, seven Albertan cities came together to build Alberta’s 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness (7 Cities), an organization working towards ending homelessness in Alberta (7 Cities, 2019a). It consist of the lead organisations from Calgary (Calgary Homeless Foundation), Grande Prairie (City of Grande Prairie), Lethbridge (City of Lethbridge), Edmonton (Homeward Trust Edmonton), Medicine Hat (Medicine Hat Community Housing Society), Red Deer (City of Red Deer), and Wood Buffalo (Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo) (7 Cities, 2019a). The 7 Cities say they “provide a forum for dialogue with the federal and provincial representatives on housing and homelessness” (7 Cities, 2019a). Their approach to ending homelessness is “grounded in community-level system planning and implementation, supported by government”, and the implementation of the Housing First model (7 Cities, 2019c). The 7 cities work together in advancing “policy solutions to end homelessness with government partners”, in developing and disseminating knowledge throughout Alberta and nation-wide, “Supporting the professional development of Alberta’s homeless-serving leaders and front-line workers”, and providing “Service excellence and program development to ensure continuous improvement (7 Cities, 2019b). Individually ,the

7 cities work in their communities (among others) on implementing and evaluating local plans to end homelessness, coordinating local homelessness service systems, on managing funding according to maximized impact, assuring quality of programs, on implementing best practices and innovative programs, notably Housing First, and mobilizing knowledge, building capacities and consulting with diverse stakeholders (7 Cities, 2019b).

1.2.4.3 Conclusion

Homelessness has obviously not ended after the 10-year plan and the Alberta Government has said it will continue its efforts in collecting evidence on what works and what does not until this goal is achieved. My research contributes to the basis of evidence, which informs the practice to help homeless persons finding a home sustainably.

1.3. Research Question and Objectives

This research will investigate the degree to which the operations and processes of HF programs in Alberta are shaped by and comply with a human rights approach, using a qualitative multiple case study methodology. It has four specific objectives informed by Fukuda-Parr's (2006) identification of four principles that organizations must follow in order to respect, protect and fulfill human rights:

- (1) To investigate the degree of *non-discrimination* in HF programs' practices and processes, including in criteria for assessing client eligibility and priority;
- (2) To assess the level of client *participation* within HF programs' processes and procedures;
- (3) To consider whether and how HF programs ensure *adequate progress* towards the goal of ending homelessness, for example through benchmarking and intermediate targets, in light of contextual challenges;
- (4) To examine HF programs' accountability and effectiveness in providing *remedy* to clients whose right to housing is being violated, whether by internal or external factors.²

² At the national and international levels, remedy means 'in case of violation' – i.e. holding someone responsible when a right has been denied. It is also referred to as legal and administrative recourse. At the program level, remedy can mean "accountability" to clients for fairness, respect and adequate support within the program, and "effectiveness" in addressing housing challenges for individual clients (i.e. does it house clients quickly? Does it keep them housed? Does it (re)house them when required)?

These principles are introduced and explained in Sakiko Fukuda-Parr's 2006 article, which focuses on Millennium Development Goal 8: developing a global partnership for development. Specifically, it analyzes "if the current list of Goal 8 targets and indicators capture the essential elements of international responsibilities for development" (Fukuda-Parr, 2006, p969). In so doing, Fukuda-Parr introduces a "conceptual framework for assessing progress in realization of human rights" (2006, p970). The key human rights principles of non-discrimination, participation, adequate progress and effective remedy play a crucial role in this framework as indicators for measuring the realization of rights through policy.

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr is a development economist and renowned human rights advocate, working as professor of international affairs at the New School University in New York (Fukuda-Parr, 2006; Fukuda-Parr, 2020). Her current research addresses the politics of Sustainable Development Goals, "human rights and poverty, conflict prevention, and global technology" (OHCHR, 2020; Fukuda-Parr, 2020). Fukuda-Parr is an indisputable expert in human rights and thus a valuable and valid source for my framework. She previously worked for the UN, being "the lead author and director of the UNDP Human Development Reports" between 1995 and 2004, and is the founder of the *Journal of Human Development* (OHCHR, 2020). Furthermore, in 2019 she received the *Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order* together with Terra Lawson-Remer and Susan Randolph for their book "Fulfilling Social and Economic Rights" (Fukuda-Parr, 2020).

1.4. Case Study Municipalities

This research was conducted in the three Albertan cities of Edmonton, Calgary, and Fort McMurray (an urban service center of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo). Calgary was the first municipality in Canada to adopt HF in 2007; Edmonton followed in 2008 and Wood Buffalo in 2010 (Gaetz et al., 2013). Recorded homeless numbers in these cities have declined in recent years, although point-in-time counts conducted in 2018 identified a combined homeless population of 5,735 (7 Cities, 2018). In total numbers, Calgary had the largest homeless population in the seven municipalities of Alberta with 2,911 persons experiencing homelessness, followed by Edmonton with 1,971 (7Cities, 2018). Those two

urban centers account for 85% of all individuals experiencing homelessness in Alberta. Fort McMurray was fifth with 190 homeless persons. After Grande Prairie, these three municipalities had the highest homelessness rate in Alberta (see Table 2) – with Fort McMurray leading the pack. Calgary and Edmonton also have the highest shares of chronic homelessness in Alberta, while Fort McMurray placed sixth, with close to half the homeless population experiencing chronic homelessness. Indigenous homelessness was significantly overrepresented in all three centers.

	Calgary	Edmonton	Fort McMurray
2017 Municipal Population	1,246,337	932,546	66,576
2018 Count of Individuals experiencing homelessness	2,911	1,971	190
2018 rate of homeless persons per 10,000 municipal inhabitants	23	21	29
2018 Share of Indigenous Persons in Municipal Population	3%	6%	11%
2018 Share of Indigenous Persons in Municipal Homeless Population	20%	32%	40%
2018 Share of Chronically Homeless Persons in Municipal Homeless Population	68%	66%	47%

Table 2: Homelessness in the case study municipalities Calgary, Edmonton, & Fort McMurray (see Table 7 & Figure 2 in 7Cities, 2018, pp19, 22)

1.5. Significance of the Research

This research will assess the degree to which the operations and processes of HF programs in three Albertan cities are shaped by and comply with a human rights approach. In so doing, it will contribute to filling the gap in knowledge around the right to housing as a basis for HF programs. By providing an in-depth examination of HF practices, it will identify areas that could be improved to enhance a rights-based approach. This is important and timely because Canada’s new NHS, which aims to halve homelessness in ten years, follows a rights-

based approach. This Strategy also respects, protects and seeks to fulfil Canada's long-standing international commitments to the right to housing.

There is an inherent geography to this research, in that it is concerned with how international human rights, which are initially abstract concepts, filter down to the local scale, where they can shape actual practices, while also being shaped by place-based contexts. The meanings of housing rights-related terms such as adequacy, affordability and accessibility depend in part on local characteristics (cultural beliefs and housing market conditions). The research will explore how the right to housing articulated at the international scale (and more recently in Canada's NHS) interacts with local factors in shaping the practices of HF programs in Alberta. It also contributes to the base of evidence around ending chronic homelessness through the provision of sustainable housing.

1.6. Thesis Overview

In undertaking this research, I seek to broaden understandings of HF's efficiency beyond cost-benefit analysis and measures of success such as client stability, to consider its capacity to realize the right to housing. I also seek to identify HF practices that are rights-affirming. The present chapter serves to introduce the topic of this research, homelessness in Canada – and more specifically, homelessness in Alberta – and gives an overview over the research itself – the research question and objectives, the study sites, the research's significance, and a preview of what is about to follow.

The second chapter provides a thorough review of Housing First, the right to adequate housing, and structural violence. The first review will talk about the HF model's purpose, foundation, premises, evidence, and challenges. It is the basis for understanding how HF programs work and seek to achieve the goal of ending chronic homelessness. This is followed by a comprehensive review of the right to housing, based on publications by the United Nations and academic articles, illuminating the right's implications. The literature review closes with a definition of the concept of structural violence, which explains how systemic and historical structures often execute violence towards the socio-economically poor by breaching their rights and exposing them to harm.

Chapter three talks about the methodology, which builds the foundation of my analysis. It elucidates how interviews were conducted and who participated in the research. It further explains the method of thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke (2006), and illustrates my approach to analysing the data. This chapter will also touch upon ethics and reflexivity to ensure transparency and accountability.

In chapter four I lay out the results of my research, divided into the categories of Non-Discrimination, Participation, Adequate Progress, and Remedy. These categories are based on the principles of Fukuda-Parr's (2006) framework for realizing human rights and form the core of my analysis. They build the foundation for answering the research objectives in chapter five. Themes and subthemes within each category are explained and illustrated, as well as validated by participant quotes. Each section (one section per category) also includes a concept map to visualize the relationships between themes and subthemes.

The fifth and last chapter combines discussion and conclusion of this thesis and is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the compliance with the principles according to Fukuda-Parr. The second section takes what has been discussed and uses it to assess to what extent HF programs comply with the duties to respect, protect, and fulfill according to CESCR General Comment No. 4. This evaluation will finally lead to a definitive answer of my research question. This chapter and therefore my thesis, closes with a short reflection and recommendations for government policy and HF program changes in Alberta.

2. Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Housing First

Housing First is “at the forefront of homelessness policy and program planning” (Johnson, Parkinson, & Parsell, 2012, p2), which has been adopted with “evangelical fervour” across North America and Europe (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2012, p184). It is a policy model to house chronically homeless people, which replaced the Linear Residential Treatment (LRT) model in many locations.

The LRT model focuses on Treatment First (TF) and is also called a “continuum of care program” (Baker & Evans, 2016; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p289). According to Baker & Evans, “Treatment first models specify that clients must progress through a series of distinct, time-limited residential and treatment environments before being deemed ‘housing ready’” (2016, p28). It is based on the idea that treatment has to come first in the recovery process, which means that clients have to make progress in treatment and abstinence before being deemed ‘housing ready’, (Baker & Evans, 2016, p28; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016).

LRT models are thus compared with staircases (Baker & Evans, 2016), where clients move up steps by complying with treatment, moving through transitional housing until they reach the top where a permanent supported home (PSH) awaits (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). The LRT model is therefore a “graduated approach”, where housing is something you *have to earn*, depending on compliance with medical treatment, psychiatric stability and abstinence from drugs and alcohol (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2012; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p289). “Most permanent supportive housing provided through LRT programs comprises studio-like units in buildings that offer treatment and social services on-site” (Tsemberis, 2010, p39). HF proponents like Tsemberis, the founder of Pathways to Housing and thus Housing First, recognizes that these buildings “create jobs and a permanent asset for the community”, however he also notes that the construction and operation of these sites is very “labor-intensive, expensive, and time-consuming” (Tsemberis, 2010, p39). Criticisms of the LRT model are also aimed at its paternalistic structures, where it is assumed that clinicians have

to make treatment and development choices for clients³, as they are deemed incapable of making their own decisions (Tsemberis, 2010). Also, the constant threat of eviction in cases where LRT clients suffer a relapse into addiction is critical, as it increases housing instability and hinders ongoing support for clients who are obviously in need (Tsemberis, 2010).

Michael Allen (2003) argues that using housing as reward for compliance with treatment is coercion and “violates the therapeutic alliance, ... [and the] ethical principles of mental health practitioners” (cited in Tsemberis, 2010, p40).

HF is informed by these criticisms of LRT models. This chapter focuses on giving a detailed overview of the Housing First approach, discussing its origins, implications, implementations, its connection to the human right to adequate housing, and the criticisms that this policy model faces. Since there is already a rigorous and recent body of academic literature focusing on HF and its evidence (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018; Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016), this chapter functions as rather general information on HF than as another comprehensive overview of the approach. It is thus important to state that this chapter is based on a selection of relevant and informative publications but by no means on all the relevant available literature.

2.1.1. What? The Basics

Housing First aims to house chronically homeless people, who could not be successfully housed through TF approaches, and get them off the street as quickly as possible (Baker & Evans, 2016; Tsemberis, 2010). Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn (2016) determined three basic themes HF is associated with: “(1) no requirement for consumers to demonstrate housing readiness, (2) the provision of individualized supports, and (3) the incorporation of the principle of self-determination” (p260). These basic themes are described in the next section.

The foundation of HF is “the belief that housing is a human right and that the provision of housing should not depend on a person’s compliance with behavioural rules and obligations beyond those applying to regular tenants” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p27). Sobriety and psychiatric treatment compliance or even participation, are not a condition for receiving and

³ Persons making use of HF services are called clients in this report; Tsemberis refers to them as consumers.

obtaining housing (Tsemberis, 2010). The program abolishes “the onerous, moralising conditions that have been favoured in the past” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p30). By providing clients with access to a permanent home when they enter the program, it honours and fulfills the most common and urgent request of the chronically homeless people: the need for housing (Tsemberis, 2010, p43). HF is grounded in the belief that the constant struggle and worries about safety and survival have to be lifted from clients’ shoulders before they can start to focus on other aspects of their lives like recovery, treatment, employment, or family reconnection (Tsemberis, 2010, p43).

In 1992, the organization Pathways to Housing, founded by the psychologist Sam Tsemberis in New York City, developed the Pathways Housing First (PHF) model. It was made for chronically homeless people who are hard-to-house because of mental illness and addictions, which also make it difficult for them to comply with treatment plans of TF models. PHF offers these individuals “an apartment of one’s own in a normal community setting” (Tsemberis, 2010, p38). It places clients in scattered-site rental housing of their choice as soon as possible, all on a voluntary basis, and provides support services clients can decide to make use of (Baker & Evans, 2016). Clients are generally offered housing subject only to accepting weekly visits from support workers, and the conditions of a regular lease. In addition, they are required to contribute 30% of their incomes towards rent – with the remainder covered by public rent subsidies (Goering, Veldhuizen, Watson, Adair, Kopp et al., 2014; Tsemberis, 2010).

The cost of these subsidies, and associated support services, may be partially offset by clients’ reduced use of other public services, such as emergency shelters and hospitals (Greenwood, Stefancic, & Tsemberis, 2013; Goering et al., 2014). Even though chronically homeless people only represent a small part of the homeless population, they account for a much larger amount of the costs for public service uses (e.g. hospital emergency rooms, incarcerations, shelter use) than the rest of the homeless population (Baker & Evans, 2016; Evans, Collins & Anderson, 2016; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). Thus, housing this vulnerable group results in less public service usage and associated financial savings for the government. The idea of cost offsets (and possible net savings) has been pivotal to the

'marketing' and adoption of HF, including in neoliberal policy environments with otherwise residual and punitive welfare regimes (Sparks, 2012).

HF is partly a technocratic intervention intended to increase the economic efficiency of public responses to homelessness. At the same time, it is an innovative policy defined by unique principles: rapid access to permanent housing (without tests of readiness), separation of housing and treatment services (which means non-compliance with treatment does not lead to an eviction); self-determination (client choice in the style and location of housing); and access to standard tenancies (Tsemberis, 2010; Waegemakers Schiff & Rook 2012).

2.1.2. How? The Specifics

Baker and Evans (2016) describe HF as a social movement and philosophy, as well as a "policy field" that includes a variety of policy ideas and treatment approaches "including supportive housing, harm reduction, and assertive community treatment" instead of just a housing provision program (p27). In its essence, HF has four core elements, derived from the PHF model: "consumer choice, separation of housing and treatment, recovery orientation, and community integration" (Tsemberis, 2010, p43). Tsemberis' conceptualization is considered in detail here; it is important to note that it describes the PHF approach, which is highly influential (especially in North America), but is by no means the only HF model (Waegemakers Schiff & Rook, 2012; Baker & Evans, 2016).

2.1.2.1. Client Choice

HF is called a client-directed service as clients can choose which apartment they want to live in, as well as which support services they want to receive. It supports the argument that mentally-ill clients are completely capable of making their own decisions in life, that autonomy is fundamental for their recovery process, and that learning from the consequences of their own choices is important for their self-empowerment.

Tsemberis (2010) stresses that while other housing programs only offer limited choices, "HF programs are driven by consumer choice" (p43). With the encouragement and optional help of support staff, clients participate in choosing their neighbourhood, their apartment and interior furnishing, and if they want to live with someone – they "begin building a life they

wish to live” (Tsemberis, 2010, p44). Neighbourhood and apartment choice is only limited by the affordability and suitability of the available apartments in the desired neighbourhood (Tsemberis, 2010, p45).

The clients’ engagement with services and treatment is also under the premise of choice: they make decisions about which “type, intensity, and frequency of treatment and support services they receive” (Tsemberis, 2010, p44). As one of the few mandatory routines, HF support workers visit clients at their home to talk about how they are doing, what they need, and what could come next. However, clients decide which issues are being addressed and in which area of their life they wish for assistance. At these visits the support worker also informally assesses the clients’ wellbeing and living environment (Tsemberis, 2010, p44).

2.1.2.2. Harm Reduction

Harm reduction concerning mental health and addictions is another cornerstone of the HF model (Tsemberis, 2010). Harm reduction is based on the understanding that forced treatment is often unsuccessful and that substance use is not always harmful (COH, 2019c). As defined by the COH, harm reduction means “recognizing that abstinence may be neither a realistic or a desirable goal for some users (especially in the short term), the use of substances is accepted as a fact and the main focus is placed on reducing harm while use continues” (2019c). This does not mean that harm reduction is against treatment or abstinence as some critics may say, it is rather about recognizing that there are reasons for substance use and that they are not solved by imposed treatment and abstinence. Harm reduction means that people are supported to use substances safely. This often even results in a slow reduction of their substance use and eventually in the wish to seek treatment, which is considerably more effective when it is their own choice (COH, 2019c).

Harm reduction is thus connected to client choice. If clients face issues due to substance use, they are not coerced into clinical services, into taking psychiatric medication or into talking with a psychiatrist or substance-use specialist (Tsemberis, 2010). Staff members will rather try to engage with clients in a conversation where they openly and honestly discuss “the pros and cons of using and drinking and try to help the consumer make the kinds of choices that will reduce harm to themselves and lead to a healthier life” (Tsemberis, 2010, p44).

Tsemberis recommends that staff members should resist the urge to resolve the situation for clients. After all, “Experiential learning, in which consumers are supported in making and observing the consequences of their decisions, is one of the cornerstones of recovery” (Tsemberis, 2010, p45). The focus should be to “work with a person *where they are at*, and to give them choices and options” (COH, 2019c).

2.1.2.3. Separation of Housing and Services

Under HF, treatment is not a requirement for housing. Without having to accept treatment, clients choose from a housing stock of scattered-site, affordable, decent units, that HF programs rent from private landlords at fair market value. From this perspective, “consumers are not moving into a housing program; they are moving into a safe and affordable apartment of their choice” (Tsemberis, 2010, p45). The obligations and rights of HF clients within their new lease are the same as for all tenants with a standard lease. The only difference being is that rent in HF is geared towards income. The agreement is that clients have to pay 30% of their income – derived from, e.g., social assistance payments – while the HF program covers the remaining part of the market value rental price of the unit (Tsemberis, 2010). As an example, in major cities in the United States the average annual cost per unit is \$10,000 (Tsemberis, 2010). In Canada, annual costs for a unit plus support costs for a high need client are \$22,257 and \$14,177 for a moderate need client, which is less than half the costs a homeless person with mental illness raises on the public system (\$53,144 per person) (Distasio, 2017). The *monthly cost* for a hospital bed for a homeless person are \$10,900, while being in a provincial jail costs \$4,999, and a shelter bed about \$1,932 per person (Gaetz, 2012). The program also provides help for budgeting and can act as representative payee to ensure continuous payment of bills.

The separation of housing and treatment means that evictions only happen due to lease violations, not because of addiction relapses, continued substance abuse or psychiatric crises. Most importantly, even if an eviction does occur, it does not mean that clients fall out of the HF program (Tsemberis, 2010). In such crises, HF staff rather work towards finding a new home with the client to prevent a fall back into homelessness (Tsemberis, 2010).

Treatment, as far as it is wanted, is oriented towards mental health and is often based on Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). It comprises of a multidisciplinary team of people who takes shared responsibility for a group of high-need clients (Marshall & Lockwood, 1998; Tsemberis, 2010). These teams include general case managers who facilitate housing and access to services, medical and primary care staff, public service providers, psychiatrists, social workers, and peers (like former HF clients) to bridge gaps between the other team-members and clients (COH, 2019c; Marshall & Lockwood, 1998; Tsemberis, 2010). Team members can also include specialists on housing support and tenancies, specialists on education and employment, or staff that teaches clients basic skills like cooking, cleaning and numeracy (COH, 2019c). ACT is unique, as other treatment services usually only focus on one certain issue and do not offer a multidisciplinary team to work holistically with the client. Without ACT clients would have to go to several different service providers in their efforts to improve their wellbeing by working on their different issues (Marshall & Lockwood, 1998).

ACT team-members visit their clients either at their home, in their neighbourhood or at their workplace (Marshall & Lockwood, 1998; Tsemberis, 2010). The visits aim to ensure ongoing contact between clients and services in order to reduce hospital admissions (connected to the goal of reducing public costs), to help clients to (re)integrate and function socially in their community, to increase their quality of life, and to improve treatment results (Marshall & Lockwood, 1998, p3). If clients need support outside of these visits, ACT services are available 24/7 and are “offered as long as a consumer needs the given level of support” without a time-limit (Tsemberis, 2010, pp45-46).

If a client either does not need the intensity of ACT services, or recovers so that less services are needed, their treatment steps down from ACT to Intensive Case Management (ICM) (Tsemberis, 2010). This ensures services comply with clients’ needs and reduces costs while also increasing program capacity (Tsemberis, 2010, p46). The differences between these two treatment services are illustrated in Table 3. When a client is fully recovered, treatment services can be discontinued.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	Intensive Case Management (ICM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A multi-disciplinary team of professionals that provides wrap-around service directly to the client. ● The team members are available 24/7 and provide real-time support. ● The ACT team meets regularly with the client and with each other (could be daily). ● The team is mobile, often meeting clients in their homes. ● The staff to client ratio is generally 1 ACT team per 10 clients. ● The program components are informed by client choice, peer support and a recovery-orientation. ● Services are offered on a time-unlimited basis, with planned transfers to lower intensity services for stable clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One-on-one case manager to client relationship using a recovery-oriented approach (the team of case managers may include Housing and Complementary Support Workers). ● The case manager brokers access to mainstream services that the client identifies as needed to attain his or her goals. ● The case manager often accompanies clients to meetings and appointments in support of their goals/needs. ● Case managers are available on a regular schedule; caseloads are often shared to assure coverage of 7 days per week/12 hours a day. ● The staff to client ratio is generally 1 case manager per 20 clients. ● The duration of the service is determined by the needs of the client, with the goal of transitioning to mainstream services as soon as possible.

Table 3: Two Types of Treatment Services (content by COH, 2019c, 2019d)

2.1.2.4. Community Integration

HF generally makes use of a scattered-site housing model that places clients in market housing units in a regular community setting. As the program utilizes available rental apartments, HF does not require construction and long realization plans like LRT models. Indeed, Tsemberis claims that once funding is secured, HF programs could be functioning within three months (2010, p45).

It is recommended that only 20% of units in a building are used by HF clients, to make it easier for clients to be “immediately integrated” and to live “virtually indistinguishable” from their neighbours and community members (Tsemberis, 2010, p47). HF staff should encourage clients to visit their neighbours, reconnect with their families, join groups and classes and thereby form social connections and friendships in the community. Meanwhile “Community norms and social pressures in their environments sustain normative behaviors among [HF] consumers” (Tsemberis, 2010, p47). Scattered-site housing also reduces the potential for resistance within the community. It allows people with mental illnesses to be integrated into communities, instead of being (potentially) isolated from the rest of the population in congregate housing sites (Tsemberis, 2010).

However, Somers, Rezansoff, Moniruzzaman, Palepu, & Patterson report that scattered site housing can have the detrimental effect of leaving clients “socially isolated and with limited improvement in social integration”, which often leads to ongoing substance use (2017, p9). By contrast, HF clients in congregate housing sites, with 24-hour onsite support teams, showed “significant improvement concerning severity of disability, psychological community integration, and recovery,” with higher “subjective experiences of community belonging and participation” and “subjective appraisal of psychiatric and physical health” (Somers et al., 2017, p10). This was because the latter group “shared backgrounds and experiences ... [which] contributed to a positive sense of community,” as well as onsite recreational and vocational opportunities, and staff who engaged residents in social activities (Somers et al. 2017, p10). However, both approaches “achieved markedly superior housing stability” compared with non-HF treatments and services (Somers et al. 2017, p8). It should thus be up to the client, which housing option they prefer.

2.1.2.5. Recovery Orientation

HF is intended to help clients recover and empower them to self-directed care. The two cornerstones of consumer choice and shared decision-making not only convey that mentally-ill people are capable of setting their own goals and making important choices in their lives, for example concerning treatment, they also value learning from individual successes and mistakes in decision-making (Tsemberis, 2010). A recovery orientation also ensures that clients stay engaged, and keep communicating with the team even in hard times or during relapses into addiction (Tsemberis, 2010). The latter is also encouraged through the harm reduction philosophy and the separation of housing and treatment. They support clients to be open and honest about their substance abuse issues to receive the help they need to stay first and foremost safe without having to fear eviction or coercion into treatment compliance. Tsemberis insists that staff and team members promote the belief that recovery is possible and to keep encouraging clients to make their own decisions, “*to do things for themselves*” (2010, p47).

2.1.3. Where? The Global Success

The Pathways to Housing program in New York City was the pioneer HF program. Its success in housing the hard-to-house homeless population was the foundation for its spread as

evidence-based practice all over the U.S. (Macnaughton, Nelson, Goering, & Piat, 2017). Since the re-establishment of the Interagency Council on Homelessness under the Bush administration in the 2000s, HF has been the front-line approach of the U.S. homelessness agenda, commonly implemented through a local 10-year Plan to End Homelessness (Baker & Evans, 2016; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). Also, under Obama it remained best practice (Baker & Evans, 2016, p27) and by 2010 “more than four hundred [U.S.] cities and counties [had] completed ten-years plans to *end* homelessness and 67 percent (..) include[d] a Housing First program” (Tsemberis, 2010, p38).

Because of the compelling evidence of the model’s success, HF is also implemented beyond the U.S. – including in Canada, Australia and parts of Europe (Macnaughton et al., 2017). Baker and Evans (2016) report that in Canada, under the Harper administration, \$110 million were dedicated to the *At Home/Chez Soi* study involving 2148 homeless participants (Goering et al., 2014). This study is the largest randomized control trial of its kind and served to evaluate the implementation and outcome of HF in five Canadian Cities: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal and Moncton (Baker & Evans, 2016; Goering et al., 2014). HF is now the official federal homelessness policy (Macnaughton et al., 2017).

A similar project, *Housing First Europe*, ran from 2011 until 2013 and was supported by the European Commission. This involved the cities of Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon as funded test sites, where HF programs were evaluated with a focus on its potential, its impact and its limitations (Baker & Evans, 2016; Busch-Geertsema, 2013). To facilitate “mutual learning with additional partners”, the cities of Dublin, Gent, Gothenburg, Helsinki and Vienna served as unfunded peer sites “where further Housing First projects were planned or being implemented” (Busch-Geertsema, 2013, p14). Representatives of these peer sites attended meetings, where they discussed “commonalities and differences between the projects and common challenges in developing mutual understanding on Housing First concepts” (Busch-Geertsema, 2013, p14). Since then, HF has continued to spread in Europe (Macnaughton et al., 2017). Currently, the website of Housing First Europe lists 11 European Countries with an HF approach: Finland, Netherlands, Italy, France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Spain, UK, Sweden, and Ireland (Housing First Europe Hub, 2019).

Australia and the UK are interesting cases, as they followed an approach of providing homeless people with permanent housing, even before the PHF model was developed. As Baker and Evans (2016) point out, it demonstrates that the provision of permanent housing “has long been a component of the response to homelessness in certain places” (p27). While in the U.S. HF presented a drastic change, even a “paradigm shift” concerning treatment approaches, its introduction in other places like Australia only meant a “drift” in policy (Baker & Evans, 2016, p28).

All these global adaptations exemplify the compatibility of the HF approach with different locations and different circumstances. The key reason for this adaptability is its malleable form. Baker and Evans (2016) describe it best, as “an evolving constellation of ideas, examples and beliefs” (p27) and a “somewhat fuzzy construct around which diverse actors convene to advance their interests and agendas” (p28). It results in countless variations of the original PHF model whose only shared constant is the deviation from TF approaches (Baker & Evans, 2016). In the words of Evans, Collins & Anderson (2016), HF has become a “label” for “a wide range of programs, which share a broad philosophical commitment to providing the homeless with independent housing, but otherwise may have little in common” (p251).

2.1.4. Why? The Evidence

A multitude of studies consider the efficiency and outcomes of HF programs globally. This growing body of literature overall attests to the success of HF in housing the homeless, including those with significant mental health and substance use challenges (Kennedy, Arku & Cleave, 2016). It shows that direct access to permanent housing is more successful in helping clients to retain housing, than dictating treatment first (Baker & Evans, 2016).

The following sections review representative examples of studies on HF, drawing in particular on Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn’s (2016) systematic review of the outcomes of HF programs in North America. The authors’ descriptions of many case studies provide an insightful and noteworthy summary of HF research results. The overview of evidence below is divided into two categories. The first category consists of the consistent results connected to housing and program retention, and decreased involvement with the criminal justice

system. The second category consists of and reflects on more inconsistent results in community integration and mental health outcomes.

2.1.4.1. Category I: Consistent results

Existing research into HF is dominated by positivist perspectives, with an emphasis on experimental design and cost-benefit analysis. This approach is exemplified by the \$110M *At Home/Chez Soi* study (AH/CS), a federally funded randomized controlled trial (RCT) carried out by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (Evans et al., 2016; Goering et al., 2014; Macnaughton et al., 2017). The results were similar to those reported in the U.S. literature. The study found that HF enables clients to obtain and retain housing at considerable higher rates than LRT, and produces cost offsets via reduced usage of health care and other public services (Goering et al., 2014; Macnaughton et al., 2017). This was particularly the case for the 10% of clients with the highest needs; for this group, “Every \$10 invested in HF services resulted in an average saving of \$21.72” (Goering, 2014 in Evans et al. 2016, p4). Even though cost savings were not the sole focus of AH/CS, the main report from that study (Goering et al., 2014) repeatedly conveyed the message that “Housing First is a sound investment” (in Evans et al., 2016, p4). This sort of evidence, communicated with a significant focus on cost-effectiveness, has been crucial for convincing decision makers to implement HF policy (Macnaughton et al., 2017; Sparks, 2012).

A 1-year follow-up study of the AH/CS project investigated housing retention rates. Previous research reported housing stability for about 80-85% of participants, and Tsemberis even identified a 97% housing retention rate for a cohort of clients that had been in the PHF program for two years in 2012 (Volk, Aubry, Goering, Adair, Distasio, et al., 2016). The follow-up study for AH/CS found that “only” 60% of participants remained in their first unit while 27% were in their second unit (Volk et al., 2016). These differences aside, HF consistently shows higher retention rates than TF approaches. It has to be mentioned however that around 15-20% of HF clients are not stably housed through the program (Volk et al., 2016). Interestingly, the AH/CS follow-up study also demonstrated that the characteristics of clients do not predict housing retention after one year (Volk et al., 2016). Variables like substance use or level of cognitive impairment may lead to the expectation of lower housing outcomes, however no significant correlation was found, showing that these hard-to-house cases should not be neglected: “Essentially, at baseline, everyone has a

similar chance of achieving stable housing in the first year – and recall that that chance is very good” (Volk et al., 2016, p174). Similarly, Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn (2016) state that all of the studies they reviewed on housing stability reported a higher housing retention rate than LRT models (p293).

Resulting from eliminating the condition of treatment compliance and sobriety, HF clients were also found to use less substances and treatment services than those in LRT (e.g. Tsemberis et al., 2004; Padgett et al., 2006) (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). It also results in less use of emergency services and detox or sobering centres (Padgett et al. 2006, 2011; Srebnik et al. 2013; Desilva et al. 2011 in Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). However, even though HF clients have lower participation rates in treatment services, a study by Appel et al. (2012) found that once clients participate, their treatment retention rates may be higher than for non-HF clients (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016).

Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn (2016) furthermore found a decrease of involvement with the criminal justice system in all studies on this topic, even under different sorts of measurements. One of these studies (Somers et al., 2013) found even lower conviction rates for clients in scattered-site housing than in congregate housing. Reasons for this result might be “differing neighborhood norms, undetected differences in support services, or differences in police practices and the probability of crime detection” (Somers et al., 2013, p6). The first two points would strengthen the argument for mixed communities, while the last two reasons suggest that discriminatory criminalization processes are active even if the victims are out of homelessness but easy to locate through their special housing site.

2.1.4.2. Category II: Inconsistent results

Not all of the traits of HF are uncontested. For example, results differ concerning its capacity to reduce costs, to improve the quality of life of clients, and to improve their mental health, compared to LRT models. With regards to the first point of difference, there is an expectation that HF compared to LRT programs leads to cost reductions due to reductions in contacts with the criminal justice system, emergency rooms, and inpatient treatment (Srebnik et al., 2013 in Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). However, findings differ: Gilmer et al.’s (2009) comparison of costs between HF and “abstinence-based housing programs” actually found that there are “no significant differences in costs” after two years (Woodhall-

Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p294). In addition, the cost savings from reduced service use actually serve as cost offsets for the higher case-management costs produced by HF clients. It is also important to note that “cost savings do not even necessarily transfer between public agencies” (Tsemberis, 2010, p52). In other words, the savings that come with reduced service use do not necessarily finance the case-management costs or get invested into HF housing stock.

Another outcome with inconsistent results is quality of life, as measured by factors such as social integration and community adjustment. Greenwood et al. (2005) for example discovered in New York that HF clients with mental illness “experienced significantly greater perceived choice” than clients of LRT programs (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p292). Using the same data, Gulcur et al. (2007) found “that choice was a predictor of increased psychosocial integration” (in Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p295), supporting the consumer-choice orientation of HF. However, in a different study, Tsai et al. (2010) reported the levels of community adjustment were no higher for HF clients than for TF clients (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016).

Greenwood et al. (2005) associated choice with “reduction in symptoms of mental health illness” in New York, although no “significant differences in psychiatric symptoms between” HF clients and LRT clients could be found in an earlier study on the same data set by Tsemberis et al. (2004) (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p292). However, in 2012 Tsemberis et al. reported “a positive impact of programing on mental health outcomes” for the Pathways program in Washington, DC, (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p292). Reflecting on this inconsistency, Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn (2016) explain that differences in measurements of psychiatric symptom outcomes can stem from differences in the studied population, which can in turn be influenced by who is eligible for a specific HF program. While for example the older study of Tsemberis et al. in New York (2004) looked at individuals in HF programs with “psychiatric symptoms only”, the findings from Tsemberis et al.’s study in Washington (2012) described outcomes for HF clients with concurrent disorders . Furthermore, different geographies, different study methods, or different data collection times can influence the findings. Tsemberis et al.’s study in Washington (2012)

was for example observational, while the earlier studies were randomized trials (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016).

2.1.4.3. Summary

There is a strong body of evidence for the positive effects of HF programs on housing chronically homeless people and keeping them housed. There is also clear evidence of HF's higher program retention rates relative to LRT and its positive influence on decreased public service use and involvement with criminal justice. For other outcomes, research results tend to be inconsistent. However, it is notable that no outcome studies found HF programs to be worse or less efficient than LRT programs.

Referring to the inconsistent research results, Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn (2016) stress "the importance of understanding the needs of specific client groups prior to program implementation" (p295). The authors explain that if HF is to be extended beyond the original target of the Pathways model - i.e., chronically homeless people with concurrent psychological disorders – then "research should focus on establishing best practices for altering or employing models that meet the needs of specific sub-populations within their local contexts" (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p295). They also argue that variations in results together with the lack of research into long-term outcomes for HF clients means there is an insufficient evidence-base for recommending a unilateral implementation of HF. Instead, there is a need to ensure that programs are contextually appropriate: that they meet the needs of local populations, fit with other policies and welfare system structures. There is also a need for future research should focus on "longer term outcomes and potential future needs (e.g. palliative care)" (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p296).

2.1.5. Why 2.0? The Financial Argument

Evidence of HF's success is not the only reason for its wide and global adoption. A factor that made it far more popular, its most "politically-persuasive argument" especially amongst decision makers, is not that it "addresses a humanitarian crisis", but rather its capacity to save money (Evans et al., 2016, p249).

As mentioned before, the target group of HF are chronically homeless people. Many face severe mental illness (a requirement for clients in the Pathways model), and often struggle

with substance use issues. They only make up a part of the homeless population, however due to their conditions, exposure to the environment, criminalization processes (see info Box 1) and discrimination chronically homeless people have a heavier use of public services than other groups within the homeless population. Thus, through their frequent visits at shelters, emergency rooms and hospitals and their higher rates of incarcerations they incur significant public expenses (Tsemberis, 2010).

HF proponents argue that it is more cost-effective for taxpayers and the government to provide chronically homeless people with subsidized housing, in a program that actually seems to be able to keep this vulnerable group housed (more so than LRT models), than to leave them on the streets. The most famous example illustrating the complex problem of public costs associated with chronic homelessness is “Million Dollar Murray” (Evans et al., 2016). Murray Barr was a homeless middle-aged veteran from Reno, Nevada who gained fame because of an article in *The New Yorker* by Malcolm Gladwell (2006). The article describes Murray’s life in chronic homelessness, his regular visits at public services like the emergency room due to unstable health and addiction, and his recurrent encounters with law enforcement. Two police officers in Reno eventually started to add up the public costs for three chronically homeless people in Reno. One of them was Murray. Within six months he had accumulated bills of \$100,000 in only one hospital (Gladwell, 2006). The officers continued to calculate the costs associated with Murray’s other medical treatments and service usage, concluding that *not* providing him with housing for the ten years he had been homeless, cost one million dollars (Gladwell, 2006).

With his article, Gladwell made chronic homelessness and the costs related to it a subject of discussion, promoting alternatives to managing homeless (Baker & Evans, 2016). Evans et al. (2016) explain that “once chronic homelessness was conceived of as an economic problem, permanent housing emerged as the solution” (p250). The key feature of HF is that it rehuses the hard-to-house population, gives them the support and care they need to enable them to remain housed, and thereby decreases their use of public services and public funds (Evans et al., 2016; Tsemberis, 2010). Thus, calculations and the costs of (especially chronic) homelessness are the key reason for the popularity of HF.

Baker and Evans (2016) explain how the translation of HF using four calculative practices of counting, costing, targeting and evaluation, is crucial to its success. They mediate the “‘messy’ terrains” of homelessness into manageable numbers (Baker & Evans, 2016, p37). The first practice, counting, translates social groups into numbers to work with. Homelessness can be counted for example through street counts, but also through shelter visits. The second practice entails cost-studies and cost-benefit analysis, which “quantified the annual costs associated with the chronically homeless” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p34). Malcom Gladwell drew on this literature in his article to illustrate his pledge for changing the “inadequate, managerial responses” to chronic homelessness (Baker & Evans, 2016, p34). Referring to Willse (2010), Baker and Evans explain that “This new-found economic imperative” put chronic homelessness on governments’ and service providers’ agendas (2016, p34). They also cite Phillip Mangano, former CEO of the (US) Interagency Council on Homelessness saying, “[c]ost benefit analysis may be the new compassion” (2010, p34). Thirst for action is now inspired by cost-studies not moral reasons.

The third practice of making homelessness numerical through HF, is “targeting”, which refers to the prioritization of a certain population of homeless persons for HF services. The target population is rendered eligible due to characteristics, which are often expressed through numbers (e.g. number of months homeless) and reflect their vulnerability (Baker & Evans, 2016). The eligibility criteria are often standardized to simplify the process. Prioritization is assisted by calculations, which involve assessing characteristics such as “the chronicity of an individual’s homelessness”, or “the severity of their need for immediate housing” and “their ability to live independently,” typically through indexes and questionnaires (Baker & Evans, 2016, p35). Being defined as chronically homeless and being considered eligible for a housing program means meeting certain criteria. Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy for example, prioritizes chronically homeless people, who are defined as “individuals, often with disabling conditions (e.g. chronic physical or mental illness, substance abuse problems), who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e. have spent more than 180 nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation” (Government of Canada, 2016).

The last calculative practice is “evaluation”, which involves quantitative measurements of the effectiveness of HF programs, based on factors such as housing retention rates (Baker & Evans, 2016). By looking into how many individuals remain housed through HF, outcomes and cost-effectiveness of the model can be determined, giving the program scientific validation. Baker and Evans explain precisely how HF benefits from these calculative procedures and the scientific validation by gaining political attention: “Given its association with objectivity and truth, this calculative expertise has, not surprisingly, engendered political agency in a policy climate dominated by evidence-based norms” (2016, p35). Evans et al. outline furthermore how calculative practices render objects and problems ‘workable’ for governments, by enabling prioritization and by translating solutions into allocations of resources (2016, p3). It follows that promoters of HF like Sam Tsemberis are “accompanied by a plethora of calculative researchers, consultants and analysts, now integral to the governance of homelessness” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p35).

Evans et al. (2016) note that in this context HF speaks to both moral and neoliberal imperatives. It works on the basis of “socially progressive ideals” that respect and recognize the needs of the vulnerable group of chronically homeless people. However, it also speaks to the “neoliberal understanding of homelessness as a problem rooted in individual pathologies (...), which imposes unacceptable costs on society” (Evans et al., 2016, p251). Both sides are key to the success of HF. Therefore, cost-effectiveness is only one benefit of HF and the fight against other costs of homelessness, like “dehumanization, social isolation, and susceptibility to violence” (Tsemberis, 2010, p52) should not be lost sight of. They are a crucial argument for HF. Tsemberis remarks that diminishing these costs should be enough for the implementation of an effective housing program “from a moral standpoint” (2010, p52). He recognizes however that implementing a housing strategy needs to consider “both monetary and humanitarian costs” (2010, p52).

2.1.6. Rights elements

The principles of HF reflect an underlying view that *housing is something to which homeless people are entitled*, rather than a ‘privilege’ they must earn through behavioural compliance or sobriety (Greenwood et al., 2013). From this perspective, HF is founded on the premise that the homeless – including those with active mental illness and/or substance use problems – have a moral claim to housing. HF takes the view that a home does not have to

be earned, because it is a basic human need and right. Without housing, individuals are exposed to a constant threat of death, where the struggle for basic survival on the street leaves no room or energy for recovery from mental illness and substance use. “In order to achieve stability in other areas of life, one must first have stable housing [...] housing is viewed as an immediate need that cannot be delayed” (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p289). By acknowledging permanent housing as basic condition for every human being to live an independent, self-determined life, HF respects the right to housing. It recognizes that a permanent home means safety, privacy and comfort, which is fundamental for being able to recover (Martins, Ornelas, & Silva, 2016) – and to live a life in *social dignity* (see section 2.2.1.2.).

The client choice approach of HF is also consistent with a rights premise. By dropping the condition of treatment, HF respects clients’ right to choose and to determine their own recovery process and treatment plan (Padgett et al., 2006 in Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). It recognizes the inherent dignity of every human being by treating chronically homeless people as equals to everyone else: as self-determined, independent human beings knowing best where and how they want to live and what their needs are. HF thus challenges paternalistic treatment, instead it seeks to empower clients to lead their own recovery and an independent, self-sufficient life in dignity (Hennigan, 2017; Martins, et al., 2016).

By protecting client choice in housing, HF recognizes clients as individual persons with preferences, tastes and origins, who need to build their own routines and decorate and furnish their own place to make it *their* home and to regain control over their lives (Martins et al., 2016). Choosing your neighbourhood and unit, and making your own home, means having a personal connection with a place, where you gain comfort and privacy. Building normal relationships in the local community through scattered-site housing is intended to add to that feeling, through integration without stigma and the sense of an independent, self-sufficient life in a normal setting (Hennigan, 2017; Martins et al., 2016). As Hennigan (2017) puts it: “Their apartment is, legally, private space, even if it is rented [...] As such clients maintain that base, defining right that one inherits with private property: the right to exclude” (p1432). The independence and self-sufficiency that an apartment provides, makes their home “a place from which they can legitimately challenge the disciplining and

infantilizing forms of case management” (Hennigan, 2017, p1432). Knowing that no one can take that home away unless you yourself breach the standard tenancy agreement, gives not only freedom in treatment choice, but also security and peace of mind after a constant struggle for survival on the street. HF is based on the conviction that realizing the right to housing for chronically homeless people provides them with independence, empowerment and a basic fundamental for life.

Many studies on HF indeed acknowledge the rights-premise of HF directly, however rarely in more than one or two sentences. There is very little serious engagement with rights as a substantial part of HF. Particular reference to the right to housing usually only consists of brief observations that HF is consistent with and/or founded on the right. For example:

“[HF] responded to the call for greater housing rights for the homeless” from “scholars and activists [who] have advocated for a right to housing as the solution to homelessness” (Speer, 2016, p521).

“In contrast to linear models, Housing first separates treatment from housing, considering the former voluntary and the latter a fundamental need and human right. ... Housing is regarded as a basic human right, not something that should be earned or used as an enticement into treatment or sobriety” (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2010, pp. 6-7).

“Critics of TF models also argue against housing readiness from a social justice standpoint. Specifically, they contend that requiring individuals to prove that they are deserving of housing is contradictory to the assertion that housing should be viewed as a basic human right” (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p298).

“HF is based on a belief that housing is a basic human right rather than something the person with mental illness has to earn or prove that they deserve by being in treatment” (Tsemberis, 2010, p43).

These references broadly share the same style and serve common purposes: to distinguish HF from TF approaches by recognizing housing as fundament for recovery; to describe HF’s basic premise of providing housing without conditions; and to illustrate the progressiveness

and moral urgency of HF by linking it to social justice. Even though much evidence supports the premise that HF is a rights-based approach, this connection is never made explicit. Positive housing retention outcomes are particularly consistent with the right to housing – and illustrate the value of a rights-based approach to homelessness policy – but this is rarely mentioned. Analyses of the cost-effectiveness of HF programs even completely neglect the rights-argument. But the rights premise is part of HF’s character and one of its most crucial supporting arguments. As Padgett et al. (2006) argue: “Choice over restriction and empowerment over compliance deserve consideration as not only effective but humane” (in Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p289). The ethical cornerstones of the model should be in the centre of attention for helping vulnerable individuals, and not only for being effective in keeping chronically homeless people from the street. However, almost no research has directly examined if and how HF programs show a rights-orientation, even though it has been identified as an important premise of the model.

2.1.7. Criticism & Challenges

Positivist approaches are highly valued in an era of evidence-based policy, where policy-making is envisioned as “technical and rational process that can be determined by empirical data” (Stanhope & Dunn, 2011, p275). However, several key points of critique around the approach and its implementation have been developed in rare theoretically informed analyses of HF and need to be presented.

2.1.7.1. Neoliberal Agenda

Willse (2010) and Evans (2015) contend that HF seeks to manage the *costs* of chronic homelessness, without addressing the economic inequalities and housing affordability challenges that produce homelessness in general. This calls into question the capacity of HF to ‘end’ homelessness. Baker and Evans (2016) consider a study by Saul (2014) in New York, which looked at chronic and non-chronic homelessness numbers between the early 2000s and 2013. The results showed that chronic homelessness had decreased by 28% between 2005 and 2013, a successful result that was “highly publicised” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p31). However, the fact that the same Action Plan that supported HF also restricted support for non-chronically homeless people was neglected, as was the growth of the whole homeless population by 71% between 2002 and 2013 (Baker & Evans, 2016). The Action Plan “tightened shelter access rules, ended preferential placement into public housing for the

homeless and, after state-based funding discontinued, removed rental subsidies for people exiting shelters,” supposedly to encourage responsibility instead of passivity among clients (Baker & Evans, 2016, p31). Baker and Evans (2016) warn “that a focus on chronic homelessness may provide political cover for disinvestment in services like shelters” (p32). They point out that the progressive model of HF could also be used as cover for other neoliberal projects, like projects aiming to stress individual causes like mental health or substance use over structural causes for homelessness, fiscal projects wanting to save public costs, or “beautification” projects (also see Amster, 2008) aiming for “the realisation of ‘clean and safe’ streets by removing a small but highly visible type of homeless person (...) from public view” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p32).

It is also important to recall the limitations of HF, which have been acknowledged by Tsemberis. Even if HF programs can end homelessness, they “do not cure psychiatric disability, addiction or poverty” (2010, p52). Moreover, HF programs may “help individuals graduate from the trauma of homelessness into the normal everyday misery of extreme poverty, stigma, and unemployment” (2010, p52). To prevent homelessness and to help former homeless people to build stable lives, structural changes like increases to the “minimum wage, health benefits, entitlements, and, most of all, the availability of decent affordable housing” are essential (2010, p52). Tsemberis’ emphasis on the need for available, decent and affordable housing to end homelessness speaks directly to the importance of realizing the right to adequate housing, even though it is not mentioned explicitly⁴.

The extent to which HF controls the lives of clients, or expands their capacity for independence, has also been debated (Hansen Löfstrand & Juhila, 2012; Pleace, 2013; Hennigan, 2017). In this context, Hennigan (2017) contends “that HF is also a uniquely neoliberal form of poverty governance insofar as it attempts to reintegrate individuals into the capitalist marketplace through offering an apartment lease” (p1420). Even though the program claims to not coerce clients into treatment, Hennigan argues that the lease agreement simply takes over the compulsory role, by disciplining clients through the threat

⁴ The right to adequate housing is defined in the UN General Comment No. 4 (1991) as the call for “adequate” and “affordable housing” (para 8c), a “secure place to live”(8e).

of eviction. Having a lease means liberation from forced treatment, but it also means having to pay rent, or at least a part of it, with the “meager income and/or benefit checks” HF clients receive (Hennigan, 2017, p1432). Being faced with eviction (e.g., due to not paying bills or their part of the rent), often pressures clients to get together with their HF team (Hennigan, 2017) as they “have something to lose” – their home (Hennigan, 2017, p1432). The lease becomes a tool of discipline where the landlord-client relationship is not an equal but a disciplinary one and where the threat of eviction serves to “reform [...] the chronically homeless individual into the realities of capitalist economy” (Hennigan, 2017, p1432). Thus, even though the lease is formally separated from treatment, it can be a tool of compulsion as the fear of losing their home might pressure clients to request treatment services. Realizing that HF is “very much still in ‘the real world’”, makes clients “amenable to self-reformation, open to the case manager’s decision on how they may reform themselves to avoid eviction, how they may keep their visible deservingness” (Hennigan, 2017, p1433). This pressure is even more “forceful given that HF clients remain, by definition, extremely poor, dependent on state assistance, service providers, landlords and a precarious labour market” (Hennigan, 2017, p1435). As mental illness is often a reason for falling out of the economic system and thus into homelessness, it seems likely that putting people back into the economic system through market housing forces them to get treatment if they want to remain housed. Hennigan (2017) criticizes the lack of a rights orientation of HF programs in this regard. He argues that even though a lease “opens the space to imagine a type of homelessness policy wherein housing is prioritized and paternalism deemphasized” (p1434), by connecting housing to lease conditions in neoliberal societies “Housing, (...) is by no means a right, not even for those within HF” (Hennigan, 2017, p1434).

Another critique Hennigan voices is that even though HF claims to be less paternalistic than LRT, its case management is often linked to a mandate for rehabilitation (2017). Referring to his own experiences as HF caseworker, Hennigan explains the use of matrices in many HF programs. These matrices analyze and categorize clients in six-month intervals. They are made to discover clients’ short-coming, to help clients recognize what they have to work on, and to encourage them on their way to self-sufficiency. Instead of letting clients decide for themselves what they want to work on and what they need to grow independent, they are told what is expected on the basis of a standardized matrix. Hennigan further explains that

based on his experience that these matrices were “paramount”, “the pivot around which case management revolved” (2017, p1429). At weekly visits, caseworkers would ask clients questions on their “progress towards self-sufficiency” and “subtly objectify the client” by setting “their deficient reality against a normalized ideal (e.g. the ‘self-sufficient’ adult)” (Hennigan, 2017, p1429).

Since these visits are voluntary and psychological assessments can be rejected, assessments and recommendations sometimes also occurred under the guise of recreational and social activities. For example on weekly field trips to museums or Nintendo Wii bowling nights, case workers would observe the behaviour of their unknowing clients and note down their assessment of the clients’ status. It is also used for “non-threatening”, casual engagements of case-workers, in the form of “by the way, ‘if you want to pop in I got some brochures that could be interesting to you...’” (Hennigan, 2017, p1430). All of this is motivated by the maxim of rehabilitation, which is omnipresent in HF and does not stop even when clients reject treatment. The outcome of these psychological assessments is a “global score”, which consists of the scores derived from evaluating different segments of each client’s life and represents the state of their overall progression or regression (Hennigan, 2017). Weekly presentations among staff in Hennigan’s program identified deficiencies shared by most clients, and led “caseworkers [to] organize particular teachings to facilitate a numerical jump toward self-sufficiency” (e.g. employment skills, budgetary skills, cooking) (Hennigan, 2017, p1429). Assistance was thus not organized around what individual clients wanted, but what the matrix said they needed as a group. Caseworkers tried to “normalize” clients according to an imposed self-sufficient ideal, which had not necessarily anything to do with the expressed needs of the clients: “HF, then is in many ways a program of treatment (...), of normalization and the caseworker telling the client what is best for him or herself” (p1431). Also HF caseworkers therefore end up imposing treatment on clients in a paternalistic manner due to the inherent focus on rehabilitation (Hennigan, 2017).

2.1.7.2. Practicalities

Studies have identified and analyzed a number of practical challenges around the implementation of HF. The success of HF can be heavily impeded from the outside by structural or societal difficulties, like shortages of affordable housing and the “unwillingness of some landlords and property owners to participate in the programmes” (Kennedy et al.,

2017, p409). But it can also be counteracted by the choices made in program design and delivery, for example through a fixed graduation date.

Shortages of affordable housing and supportive landlords were found in Alberta by Anderson-Baron & Collins, who highlighted “the housing market’s fundamental role in shaping the operations of HF programs” (2019, p1300). The authors noticed that the shortage of affordable scattered-site units on the housing market influences clients’ choice in finding a home, a core principle of HF. While all HF providers considered housing choice as crucial, in practice it was either heavily restricted or even unworkable because of the lack of affordable market housing and willing private sector landlords. This can force clients to take the first unit that is offered instead of waiting for a more suitable one, in order to escape their vulnerable situation. Due to the market conditions, they fear that this is their only chance to access housing or that the wait for another affordable unit would be too long. At the same time, HF agencies may prioritize “*either housing choice or rapid rehousing, but not both*” (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019, p1300). To improve the situation, agencies started to dedicate positions and time to fostering relationships with private landlords. This study shows that scattered-site affordable housing can be a scarce resource, which has severe consequences for housing choice and quality of life for the client. Anderson-Baron and Collins thus recommend that more “housing options – including HF-program owned sites, congregate living arrangements, and living with roommates” are needed and should be accepted (2019, p1301).

Zerger, Pridham, Jeyaratnam, Hwang, O’Campo, et al.’s (2016) study on housing choice, housing stability and recovery in Toronto, Ontario, speaks to Anderson-Baron & Collins’ recommendation. Interviews with HF clients, case managers, and housing staff showed that client choice in housing may lead to delays in housing the individuals. However, in this study clients preferred to wait for housing in certain neighbourhoods, for example with lower drug activity or closer to their families, even though waiting could be tough and frustrating, as they “knew it would be best for their recovery and result in better housing stability” (Zerger et al., 2016, p50). Housing choice was “defended it in terms of long-term recovery” (Zerger et al., 2016, p50). Respecting the choice of housing over rapid rehousing was crucial for case managers and staff to show clients that they were indeed in control of decisions, to foster trust and encourage them to stay engaged with the program (Zerger et al., 2016). Available

and “appropriate interim housing” in HF may hence become “more important than originally anticipated” if clients predominantly choose to wait for permanent housing instead of rushing into an available unit (Zerger et al., 2016, p50). Like Anderson-Baron & Collins, the authors thus advocate for a reflection on client needs when implementing HF, rather than a blind adaptation of the original PHF model.

Another exemplary and severe threat to the success of HF is the implementation of graduation requirements. While graduation is not part of the original PHF model, Anderson-Baron and Collins (2018) found that eight out of the ten surveyed HF agencies in Alberta had a set graduation date for clients, instead of the open-end support that is promised in PHF. Further, the authors observed that graduation does not comply with provincial or municipal policies. What graduation looks like – a complete cut off from all services at a set date, or fading out supports from a certain date onwards – as well as the graduation date itself varied greatly between agencies, providing “further evidence of policy drift in HF” (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p601). This can lead to programs that only support clients for a very short time to identify as HF and receive HF funding, without delivering real HF services (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p601).

HF service providers themselves disagreed with graduation expectations for clients, worrying about “clients’ wellbeing and trust in HF agencies” and warning that clients get disincentivized to be successful in HF and motivated to “self-sabotage” and disengage in order to keep the needed supports up (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p601). Many clients need their own pace and time to become self-sufficient and are often not ready to lose the mental and financial supports of HF services at a dictated graduation date. Thus, it is unsurprising that graduation can have negative effects on the housing stability of clients. Premature graduations oriented on program guidelines rather than clients’ progress left clients vulnerable as they could “readily lose their housing because they still required supports, or because they remained economically marginalized and dependent on subsidy” (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p601). Premature graduation thus impedes HF’s core goal of providing a way out of homelessness into a sustainable home for chronically homeless persons. Instead “a HF-supported apartment may become just one more temporary stopping point in

lives already characterized by involuntary circulation between street life, insecure housing and public institution” (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p601).

As to why graduation dates were being set by HF programs, Anderson-Baron’s & Collins’ study provided another interesting finding. The Albertan “housing and economic system that continues to generate new cases of homelessness, and thus demand for HF services” leads to constant demand for spots in HF programs (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p602). HF clients are thus being graduated to open up a spot to help the next chronically homeless person. This means “graduation may involve prioritizing the needs of one group of consumers (future clients) over another (current clients)” (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p602). It is another example of how local adaptations of HF, which are necessary to make the program successful and tailor it to the needs of the local population, need to be attentive to the impacts on client outcomes. In particular, adaptations should increase housing sustainability, not decrease it.

2.2. The Right to Adequate Housing

Safe, adequate and affordable housing does not only mean having a roof over one's head with good sanitation and access to services – it also means having a home, making it not only crucial for survival but also “necessary for human life” (Heffernan et al., 2015, p11). It safeguards the realization of other human rights, like the right to health, as it supports physical and mental wellbeing. A home moreover provides for social inclusion, a connection to community and the possibility to participate in society (Heffernan et al., 2015; Alexander, 2017a). Having a home furthermore gives people identity, purpose and ties to a place (Alexander, 2017a). In Kenna's words (2008) “‘home’ itself [...] involves more than a permanent or temporary dwelling, but includes the human dimension of living and having relationships” (p468, in Kolocek 2017, p49). The realization of the right to adequate housing is thus important and valuable for every human being.

On November 22, 2017, the Canadian Federal Government launched a National Housing Strategy (NHS), which adopts a “human rights-based approach to housing” (NHS, 2017, p2) and signals the federal government's return to housing leadership (CAEH, 2017). This leadership entails a \$40-billion plan to realize the right to adequate housing over time (i.e. progressively). The strategy seeks to reduce chronic homelessness by half in ten years, to prevent forced evictions and discrimination and to provide affordable, safe, and adequate housing for all Canadians. It also promotes socially-inclusive housing to reduce the “stigmatization and discrimination of low-income households” (NHS, 2017, p. 8). These goals refer back to the right to adequate housing and are informed by the “core principles of inclusion, accountability, participation and non-discrimination” (NHS, 2017, p. 2). This section aims to illustrate what a realization of the human right to adequate housing means, in order to be able to assess the meaning of rights-based strategies like the Canadian NHS and whether they can do justice to their claim of progressively realizing the right to adequate housing.

2.2.1. Background

2.2.1.1. *What are Economic, Social & Cultural Rights?*

Human rights are valuable because they protect the equality and autonomy of all human beings. Since 1945, there has been growing consensus in the international community that

such protection depends not only on classical liberties (e.g. freedom of speech and assembly) but also on the material conditions of existence. This was first recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and then developed and reinforced through the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) (Heffernan et al., 2015, p22; Moons, 2018). Later international human rights agreements, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), also emphasized the importance of material conditions.

Collectively, these international legal documents recognize Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights, which seek to ensure an adequate standard of living for all people. The underlying purpose of this rights paradigm is to secure *the preconditions for individual dignity and participation in society* (Hohmann, 2013). Its potential lies in its ability to advance “human capability, and the substantive freedom to function and achieve goals” (Williams, 2010, p87). It encompasses a broad set of rights, including the rights to social security and social protection, and to an adequate standard of living – which entails the right to food and to be free from hunger, the right to adequate housing, the right to water, the right to clothing, the right to health, the right to education, and cultural rights. As human rights they follow the fundamental principle of non-discrimination and are a “birthright of every human being” (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), 2008a, p8).

All ESC rights are “effectively a socio-economic claim on some scarce resource” (King, 2003, p661). They present competitive claims where someone’s possession of the resource entails costs for someone else. Interestingly, both the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) were created in 1951, in order to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (King, 2003). However, the attention and urgency with which these two Covenants have subsequently been addressed differs. The competitive nature of ESC rights and their demand for *progressive* action, has often led to their demotion. Meanwhile, the rights protected under the ICCPR serve to protect classical liberties and autonomy, resources that are unlimited and indivisible, and thus enable and demand immediate compliance. These differences have led to the assumption that rights guaranteed by the ICCPR are more fundamental, and merit more urgency (Heffernan et al., 2015; King, 2003). However, King remarks that this underestimates the importance of material resources in achieving of

indivisible resources: housing for example is substantial for the autonomous and free exercise of basic needs like sleeping or urinating. Homeless people lack a private place in which to perform these activities, which are often prohibited in public space, and are thus not free (King, 2003). Hence the realization of Civil Political Rights (CPR) can be connected to the realization of ESC rights.

Moreover, ESC rights are strongly embedded in international law, and almost all states – including Canada – are party to these agreements. As such, they have made binding commitments to fulfill ESC rights through both immediate actions, and progressive steps that “address broader structural patterns of disadvantage and exclusion” (Porter, 2014, p10). Interestingly, some countries had already been paying respect to these rights through national and international treaties, before they were even formulated within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (OHCHR, 2008a). By the 1840s for example, Costa Rica had already acknowledged the right to education. In the late 19th century, several European countries already started to acknowledge and protect some of the rights now known as ESC rights and in the 1930s, more countries, including the US, enhanced workers’ rights and made the State responsible for providing accessible basic social services (OHCHR, 2008a, p6). The Universal Declaration built upon these early recognitions of ESC rights and the corresponding duties of the state to protect (aspects of) an adequate standard of living.

ESC rights can be understood as imposing three types of duties on governments: the duty to respect (“*Refrain* from interfering with the enjoyment of the right”), to protect (“*Prevent* others from interfering with the enjoyment of the right”) and to fulfill (“*Adopt* appropriate measures towards the full realization of the right”) (OHCHR, 2008a, p11). Neglecting one of these three responsibilities counts as breach of ESC rights (Kolocek, 2017). Both immediate and incremental actions are required. Immediate requirements include abolition of discrimination and ensuring rights that do not depend on significant resources, for example the right to form and join trade unions and to strike (OHCHR, 2008a). In other areas, where scarce resources are required, the ICESCR demands a “progressive realization” of ESC rights. States are obligated “to take appropriate measures towards the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum of their available resources” (OHCHR, 2008a, p13). The ICESCR recognizes herewith “that the realization of these rights can be hampered by a lack of resources and can be achieved only over a period of time” (OHCHR, 2008a, p13).

However, States have to prove “that they are making every possible effort” within their limitations (OHCHR, 2009, p30).

States should follow these obligations in all three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judiciary. Each legislature should ensure “that national laws conform with international or constitutional norms on economic, social and cultural rights” (OHCHR, 2008a, p28); beyond that, within its task of authorizing Government spending, it should make sure that the appropriate amount of resources goes into the realization of ESC rights. The executive has to put appropriate policies and programs in place to support the legislation and to safeguard the budget spent on supporting ESC rights; furthermore, it should facilitate collaboration between different actors and governments sectors to protect the rights. Lastly, the judiciary has to ensure “that the State and others respect economic, social and cultural rights and provides remedies if such rights are violated” (OHCHR, 2008a, p28). In addition, it should elaborate on “the legal contents of economic, social and cultural rights in its specific national context” (OHCHR, 2008a, p28).

National human rights institutions as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, trade unions, and various other civil society institutions work on a national level to promote, protect and monitor the ESC rights and to hold Governments accountable for their actions. They work together with those whose rights have been breached, analyze policies and budget spending, monitor the domestic implementation and realization of ESC rights, and recommend policy changes (OHCHR, 2008a). In addition, media provide important education and information on human rights, and offer a forum for discussion (OHCHR, 2008a). This is consistent with the duty of civil society to respect and protect ESC rights; they are not the responsibility of governments alone.

Internationally, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights is the main monitoring treaty body (OHCHR, 2008a). The Committee consists of 18 experts in the field of human rights who operate independently from any governments (OHCHR, 1996). They are elected for four years, with the option of re-election. The Committee’s tasks include to “periodically review reports on States’ implementation of treaties” (OHCHR, 2008a, p35) and to formulate “concluding observations”, which entail their decision on the status of the ESC rights in each reporting State (OHCHR, 1996, p16). The Committee moreover formulates

“General Comments” on the rights and obligations of the Covenant (OHCHR, 2008a). General Comments are of critical importance as they offer “interpretative clarity as to the intent, meaning and content of the Covenant”, providing crucial guidance for jurisprudence, and are meant to help the States in their duty to report. They further draw “the attention of States parties to insufficiencies disclosed by a large number of States parties’ reports” and thus promote the implementation of the ESC rights (OHCHR, 1996, p17). In addition, the Committee offers a platform for, and encourages, civil society groups to report on the status of the Covenant in their States (OHCHR, 1996). It has the authority to “examine complaints”, and “conduct inquiries, under certain conditions when they receive reliable information of grave or systemic violations” (OHCHR, 2008a, p35).

The importance of protecting and realizing ESC rights is reflected in the severe consequences of a rights breach for individuals. If ESC rights are violated or cannot be realized, people face serious risks of death, homelessness, loss of livelihood, and psychological and physical harm. Lack of access to the resources guaranteed by ESC rights can impair healthy child development, foster conflict and discrimination, and impede the realization of other human rights (OHCHR, 2008a). For instance, it is harder for someone to recover after being released from a hospital, and thus realize their right to health, if they do not have adequate housing – a home where they can gain strength in a safe and healthy environment (Russolillo, Moniruzzaman, Parpouchi, Currie, & Somers, 2016). In addition, when the right to housing is secured, people also have a permanent address. This makes it “a precondition for the enjoyment of several human rights, including the rights to work, health, social security, vote, privacy or education [...] Without proof of residency, homeless persons may not be able to vote, enjoy social services or receive health care” (OHCHR, 2009, p9).

2.2.1.2. Dignity

As mentioned earlier, the underlying purpose of ESC rights - and human rights in general - is to protect and uphold human dignity. It is thus important to define what human dignity means in this context, in order to understand fully what rights mean to secure. Moons (2018) offers two understandings of dignity in the human rights context. In the first application, dignity is perceived as the source of human rights. Referring to Immanuel Kant, Moons defines dignity here as an inherent worth of every human being “without any equivalence” and as something that is “inviolable, constant, inalienable, unconditional and

equal for all human beings” (Moons, 2018, p15). Dignity and its recognition function as the basis of human rights. This is reflected in both the ICESCR and the ICCPR, which recognize that “rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person” (Moons, 2018, p16).

The second application Moons describes is contrary to this first approach, but is well represented in many constitutions and jurisdictions. Here, dignity is seen as a value or right in itself, “that needs to be legally respected and protected” (Moons, 2018, p17). This contradicts Kant’s perception of dignity as being unconditionally inherent to all human beings. In this second approach, instead of dignity being the basis of human rights, it is much more the (realization of) human rights that build the foundation for a life in dignity (Moons, 2018).

In practice, both applications “exist side by side and are used interchangeably”, leading to human dignity being “both source and purpose of fundamental rights” (Moons, 2018, p20). To resolve this conundrum, Moons differentiates the classical Kantian *human dignity*, referring to the dignity inherent in all human beings, from a *social dignity* that “envisions a right to live a dignified life.” The latter “entail[s] a right to personal development, to be able to fully participate in society,” which is only possible if socio-economic wellbeing is guaranteed (Moons, 2018, p20, 28). Thus, the realization of ESC rights, which aim to guarantee socio-economic wellbeing for all human beings, is necessary to ensure social dignity.

2.2.2. The Right to Adequate Housing

2.2.2.1. Foundations

The right to adequate housing is part of the ESC right to an adequate standard of living, and is first referenced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (OHCHR, 2009):

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age and other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” (UN General Assembly, 1948, article 25(1))

The most direct protection for the right to housing in international law is Article 11(1) of the

ICESCR (Hohmann, 2013).

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on free consent.” (ICESCR, 1966, article 11)

It articulates the right to an adequate standard of living, of which housing is identified as a necessary dimension. A subsequent interpretation, *CESCR General Comment No. 4* (1991), provides a substantive understanding of the entitlements and obligations associated with the right to housing. It gives *specific meaning* to an otherwise imprecise commitment and defines the minimum criteria for “adequate” housing (see next section).

As of November 2019, 170 countries have ratified the ICESCR and four more are signatories – which means that they agree to it, but are not yet legally bound to its terms (UN, 2019). The right to adequate housing for women and children is also supported and protected under *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (Article 14 (2) and Article 15 (2)) and *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Article 16(1) and Article 27), which, once ratified, present legally binding documents. Moreover, there are several non-legally binding international principles, which present guidelines for the implementation of the right to housing, particularly in regards to vulnerable groups like refugees, displaced persons, workers, Indigenous persons, and older persons (OHCHR, 2009).⁵ In addition, several countries – including Belgium, South Africa, and Uruguay – mention the right to housing explicitly in their constitutions (OHCHR, 2009).

2.2.2.2. Meaning

The purpose of the right to adequate housing is to promote and protect housing security, peace and dignity for everyone (OHCHR, 1991). Adequate housing itself comprises seven

⁵ The *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons* (2005), the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (2004), *ILO Recommendation No. 115 concerning Workers’ Housing*, *The United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples* (2007) (Article 21 (1) and Article 23) and the *United Nations Principles for Older Persons* (1991) (Principle 1, Principle 14 and Principle 6) all specifically address the securing of access to and retention of adequate housing for the respective group.

essential components, outlined in Table 4. It is also fundamentally connected to other freedoms. Living in adequate housing means being protected from “forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one’s home” and “from arbitrary interference with one’s home, privacy and family”. It entails being free “to choose one’s residence”, and to have “freedom of movement” (OHCHR, 2009, p3). It further entitles everyone to “Security of tenure; Housing, land and property restitution; Equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing; Participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels” (OHCHR, 2009, p3).

Right to Housing Component	Content
(a) Legal security of tenure	Legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats.
(b) Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure	Reliable provision of (access to) necessary resources and services, including: safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services.
(c) Affordability	Recognition that housing costs must be commensurate with income; provision of subsidies and support for those in need; protection against rent changes.
(d) Habitability	Provision of housing suitable to environment, adequate protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind etc., also structural hazards and disease vectors
(e) Accessibility	Accommodations to ensure equal access by all groups including those historically disadvantaged (mobility impaired, sick, etc.)
(f) Location	Housing located so as to ensure access to employment options, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities; also distance from potential health hazards
(g) Cultural adequacy	Offering a diversity of housing types, with built forms that enable expression of cultural identity; inclusive of modern technologies.

Table 4: Content of the Right to Adequate Housing (OHCHR, 1991 article 8)

2.2.2.3. Homelessness as Rights-Breach

As with all ESC rights, the right to housing is a competitive claim on a scarce resource - in this case adequate housing - where an individual’s (or household’s) socioeconomic status determines how difficult it is to access and to retain this resource (Sánchez, 2017). The emphasis of the ICESCR on fighting discrimination based on socio-economic status is

therefore crucial for the realization of ESC rights, particularly for the right to housing (Sánchez, 2017). Members of certain socio-economic groups – including women, migrants, Indigenous persons, children, homeless persons, slum-dwellers, persons with disabilities and displaced persons – can have substantial difficulties accessing housing “as a result of who they are” (OHCHR, 2009, p16). In the U.S. for example, “black families are seven times more likely to be homeless than white families” (Farha, 2015, para 39). These difficulties are consequential, as when someone cannot afford adequate housing, or has to share living space out of lack of socio-economic resources or because of discrimination, their “*autonomy*, understood as the ability to develop a life plan that is in some sense one’s own and execute that plan” (Wells, 2019, p409) is impaired. The basic human right to housing is valuable in part because it serves to protect autonomy, which is a substantive freedom.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing from 2008-2014 Raquel Rolnik clarified that homelessness is “perhaps the most visible and severe symptom of the lack of respect for the right to adequate housing” (OHCHR, 2009, p21). In addition, *General Comment 4* specifically identifies homelessness as a breach of the right to housing, and emphasizes that “housing should be ensured to all persons irrespective of income or access to economic resources” (para 7). The severity of the rights infringement experienced by homeless people lies in the consequences that follow from being deprived of housing.

Being homeless goes along with “an all-encompassing social identity or social label for individuals” (Sylvestre in Jackman & Porter, 2014, p30). Being homeless does not only define a person’s lack of the material possession of housing, it also puts them in a social construct, where their identity and personhood changes and they become target of severe discrimination. The simple fact of being homeless associates them with criminality and disorder, leading to demands for their control and policing (Sylvestre in Jackman & Porter, 2014). Behaviour or activities like sleeping on the street or building a shelter out of cardboard, usually carried out by homeless people in order to survive, are often criminalized and subject to fines. These punitive measures are often justified by public health or safety concerns, however their actual purpose is to “beautify” streets to attract tourists, businesses and higher income citizens (Farha, 2015, para 24). Society and politicians “tend to treat them [homeless people] as a ‘problem’ to be kept out of a neighbourhood by denying basic sustenance or other services, rather than equal citizens to programs and services to meet

their unique needs” (Sylvestre in Jackman & Porter, 2014, p30). Thus homeless people’s whole livelihood and autonomy can be impaired because of their socio-economic and housing status.

A rights-based approach sheds light on this injustice, it “undermines ‘moral’ explanations of homelessness as personal failures to be solved with acts of charity and instead reveals patterns of inequality and injustice that deny those who are homeless their rights to be equal members of society” (Farha, 2015, para 18). Hardly any other social group experiences a social branding in connection to the denial of their rights, as homeless people do. People deprived of their right to water for example do not face a new social identity that is imposed on them and results in discrimination and further rights violations (Farha, 2015). Indeed, “Instead of being treated as a group of rights bearers whose rights have been systematically violated, homeless people have become a stigmatized group subject to criminalization, discrimination and social exclusion” (Farha, 2015, para 88). This shows the scope of the significance of the right to housing for the realization of other rights and for a life in dignity. However, it often receives less attention and is addressed with less urgency than other human rights, even at the international level where the right to housing has been formulated. The Millennium Development Goals as well as the Sustainable Development Goals do not even mention the right to housing (Farha, 2015). The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing thus “urges that the elimination of homelessness be affirmed as a cross-cutting human rights priority in socioeconomic policy, planning and development” (Farha, 2015, para 5).

The UN estimates that there are increasingly around 100 million people homeless worldwide (as of 2005) and over one billion inadequately housed (as of 2015) (Kothari, 2005; Farha, 2015). The reasons for this global crisis are manifold, but for Farha they are anchored in “the failure of governments to address growing inequalities in income, wealth and access to land and property and to effectively respond to the challenges of migration and urbanization” (Farha, 2015, para 2). That governments do not prioritize the right to housing and addressing homelessness “is rooted in a global privileging of wealth and power, and scapegoating and scorning of those who do not have a home” (Farha, 2015, para 86). This manifests in a failure to protect citizens from real estate speculation and unregulated housing markets. No country is exempt from flawed policy making and negligent decision-making in this area

(Heffernan et al., 2015). In some high-income countries, for example, fiscal crises and corresponding austerity policies have resulted in widespread unemployment and a new category of “highly educated individuals who had a good standard of living” and are now rendered homeless (Farha, 2015, Para 33).

2.2.2.4. Why is it important?

General Comment 4 provides a specific international standard for assessing housing policy, and is accepted as “the point from which housing rights analysis begins” (Hohmann, 2013, p31). As described above, such assessment and analysis is valuable and important because of the critical role of adequate housing in meeting fundamental human needs – not only shelter, but also privacy, autonomy and health and thus a life in dignity. Indeed, the right to housing can be understood as “bedrock” for the realization of other human rights (King, 2003, p666). Conversely, to be homeless is to lack a necessary resource for personhood. As Waldron (1991) explains in a seminal essay on homelessness and freedom, “everything that is done has to be done somewhere” (p296), and to lack a place of one’s own is to be “comprehensively unfree” (p303).

This is not to suggest that a rights-based approach is a panacea for homelessness. First, there are challenges in translating the right to housing into policies and programs that address homelessness (Hohmann, 2013); the right to housing is a normative framework rather than a how-to guide. Second, a focus on rights may lock campaigns for housing reform into domestic legal systems that remain hostile to ESC rights (Heffernan et al., 2015). The latter point resonates in Canada, where, in the past, courts consistently dismissed claims that *Charter* rights to life and equality – which ensure basic material needs are met – require public policies (Young, 2015). Indeed, a long-standing criticism of *Charter* jurisprudence is that it privatizes and thereby safeguards vast socio-economic inequalities (Hutchinson & Petter, 1988). Nevertheless, rights provide a powerful – and international – vocabulary for making ‘private’ suffering visible. There are few if any other discourses available to marginalized people to articulate publicly their needs and citizenship.

2.2.3. Practical Implications & Execution

Rights present duties that come with responsibilities and the demand for action (King, 2003). As noted above, human rights and the international treaties that guarantee them assign

governments the duties to respect, protect and fulfill (Kolocek, 2017; OHCHR, 2009; OHCHR 2019). For example, in regard to the right to housing, the state has to *respect* people's home and inter alia must not participate in forced evictions, while it also has to *protect* people lawfully from forced evictions by third parties (Kolocek, 2017; OHCHR, 1997). The obligation to *fulfill* is probably the most complex duty of the realization of the right to housing. It entails different kinds of obligations of a positive character. In the case of forced evictions, an example discussed in further detail below, it may include steps from education to purchasing housing.

It is also important to acknowledge that human rights duties extend to non-state actors in civil society. The main responsibility of civil actors is to respect and protect the right to adequate housing in everyday life and to hold governments accountable if the right is breached, including through reports back to the Committee on ESC rights or to other human rights institutions or NGOs (OHCHR, 1996; OHCHR, 2008a). These reports are often crucial for the work of the Committee and the UN Special Rapporteur, and lead the way for evoking change (OHCHR, 1996; OHCHR, 2008a; OHCHR 2009). It is also the duty of the civil institutions to act in a non-discriminating way towards people whose rights have been breached, like homeless people, and to recognize their inherent dignity and respect (Farha, 2015). Farha directs this demand also to media, which has to ensure that "homeless people are never depicted in a discriminatory or hateful manner", adding that "oversight and regulation" is needed to ensure this happens (2015, para 92).

2.2.3.1. To Respect and Protect

It is not surprising that the right to housing has a strong emphasis on the State's responsibility to protect inhabitants from forced evictions (see OHCHR 1991; OHCHR, 2009). This is rooted in the evidence "that eviction is part of a chain of events that can ultimately lead to homelessness" (Kenna, Benjaminsen, Busch-Geertsema, & Nasarre-Aznar, 2016, p8), the most severe breach of the right. To underline the seriousness of the issue, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released *General Comment 7*, which focuses solely on forced evictions (OHCHR, 1997). It defines "forced eviction" as "the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the permission of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection" (OHCHR, 1997, Para 3).

Not every eviction falls into this category: *General Comment 7* states that “evictions carried out by force in accordance with the law and in conformity with the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights” are not prohibited (Para 3). In paragraph 11 it is further stated that “evictions may be justifiable (...) in the case of persistent non-payment of rent or of damage to rented property without any reasonable cause” (OHCHR, 1997). In the European Union for example “Evictions are legally justified on the basis of enforcing property, mortgage, contract or tenancy law as well as building or property condition regulations” (Kenna et al., 2016, p1). However, there are rules and standards that must be followed when evictions are carried out, and it is the duty of the state to ensure compliance.

One important requirement to respect the right to housing is that evicted parties must not be “rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights”, for example the right to non-interference with privacy, family and home (Kenna et al., 2016, p2; OHCHR, 1997). Thus, if an eviction (forced or not) takes place, there is a duty to ensure that another solution is not feasible, and that adequate alternative accommodation is provided (Kenna et al. 2016; OHCHR, 1997). Legislation and other measures against forced evictions, which apply to private as well as government actors, have to be put in place. The state has a duty to “prevent and, if appropriate, punish forced evictions carried out, without appropriate safeguards, by private persons or bodies” (OHCHR, 1997, Para 9).

Protection by the government against forced evictions furthermore entails the provision of the following: consultation opportunities, legal remedies and legal aid, adequate and reasonable notice of the eviction before it is carried out, and information on the eviction and its purpose. Forced evictions are moreover not allowed to be carried out in particularly bad weather, in winter or at night without consent; Government officials or representatives have to be present during the forced eviction and make sure the evictors identify themselves properly; it has to be ensured that evictions are only carried out under the principle of non-discrimination and that the affected households have access to their “right to adequate compensation for any property, both personal and real, which is affected” (OHCHR, 1997, Para 13; OHCHR, 1997, Para 15; Kenna et al., 2016).

Forced evictions are in many cases against the background of violence, for example because of armed conflicts or ethnic violence. But they are often also the result of various forms of

development (OHCHR, 1997). For example, gentrification processes frequently result in evictions and displacement. While attracting revenue and improving cities' liveability for those who can afford it, gentrification is "threatening legal security of tenure, decreasing affordable housing options, pushing the urban poor further from services and city centers, and compromising habitability" (Ponder, 2016, p382). Ponder (2016) therefore calls for a "large-scale policy reform" in order to protect the right to housing, where "Instead of encouraging gentrification, the national housing policy should aim to revitalize dilapidated communities through providing adequate housing for the urban poor, meaningful employment opportunities, and the access to schools, transportation, grocery stores, hospitals, and other services" (p382). Even though this was written in reference to a US context, it is applicable to realizing the right to housing in the face of gentrification processes all over the world. In context of countries in the European Union, Kenna et al. (2016) for example emphasize that especially when evictions are "justified by the public interest" (p4) (e.g. at gentrification efforts) governments should ensure adequate alternative housing or financial assistance for the victims.

2.2.3.2. To Fulfill

The obligation to *fulfill* requires the state to enable adequate housing for example through legislative, administrative and budgetary measures (OHCHR, 2009, p33). It is "interpreted as the obligation to adopt housing policies or a national housing plan that included lots of single measures, inter alia the provision of physical infrastructure for housing" (Kolocek, 2017, p46). *General Comment 4* explicitly states that every State "almost invariably require[s]" a National Housing Strategy, which "defines objectives for the development of shelter conditions, identifies the resources available to meet these goals and the most cost effective way of using them and sets out the responsibilities and time frame for the implementation of the necessary measures" (OHCHR, 1991, Para 12). Heffernan et al. (2015) elaborated on the state's duty to fulfill the right to housing in Canada, stating federal and provincial governments should take "deliberate actions to amend laws, policies and programs in the areas of: (a) affordable housing; (b) income support to ensure affordability of housing; and (c) physically accessible housing for persons with disabilities and housing with supports for community living for persons with disabilities" (p23). Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing from 2000-2008, stressed the importance of

participatory processes and effective representation of marginalized groups in evaluating and creating strategies and programs to ensure validity, actuality and accountability and respect for “individual dignity, security, and autonomy (Jackman & Porter, 2014, p16; OHCHR, 2008b). This is not only a call for governments to include civil society in the making of a National Housing Strategy, it is also a call for civil actors to engage in this process as their opinions and experiences are significant to evoke positive change (Farha, 2018c).

Furthermore, as an ESC right, the right to housing demands governments take immediate action to guarantee it is realized on the basis of non-discrimination, and to minimize the number of homeless people and people living in inadequate housing, according to available resources (OHCHR, 2009). The UN’s *Fact Sheet No. 21 (Rev. 1) on The Right to Adequate Housing* specifies that the realization of the right to housing has to “include taking measures to prevent homelessness” (OHCHR, 2009, p23). The right further obligates States to achieve progress over time through plans of action, budgeting, and building partnerships with private actors, as the right cannot be suddenly realized overnight (Alexander, 2017a; OHCHR, 2009). Additionally, States have to make sure to avoid retrogression, even in economically difficult times, and to always use the maximum of available resources (Alexander, 2017a).

For an example of measures taken to fulfill the right to housing in respect to evictions, it is instructive to look at the European Union. Here, States and other public bodies “can, in the public interest, prevent evictions related to unsustainable mortgage debt and arrears by purchasing foreclosed homes and renting these out to the over-indebted occupants” (Kenna et al., 2016, p14), thereby providing adequate and safe housing for vulnerable groups. Furthermore, there are measures that fulfill the right to housing while also providing its protection. An example in the EU is the quasi-judicial agency the Private Residential Tenancies Board, which provides legal remedies for tenants. It “resolves disputes cheaply and speedily between private rented sector landlords and tenants [...] [and] can award compensation for breaches of tenancy law, including illegal eviction” (Kenna et al., 2016, p14). It also provides tenants and landlords with information “on obligations, legal procedures and standard/sample forms relating to evictions, as well as on its own complaint procedures” in eight languages on its website and thus provides vulnerable groups with access to information about their rights (Kenna et al., 2016, p14). The provision of these services itself can be seen as fulfilling the right to housing, while the offered remedies and

information are a protection of the right.

2.2.3.3. Jurisdiction & Monitoring

Moons and Hubeau (2016) describe two ways fundamental rights can be realised. One way relies on “justiciability” and leaves it to a court to decide in individual cases if rights have been breached. The other way builds on “invocability”, where the quality of regulation facilitates the realization of rights (p660). It can therefore be said that if invocability is weak, for example due to poor quality legislation, it is more likely that rights are breached and rights claimants have to rely on justiciability and the decisions of the courts (Moons & Hubeau, 2016). However, vulnerable groups often have great difficulties accessing the court system (Moons & Hubeau, 2016). Thus strong and efficient legislation, which prevents rights breaches in the first place, is of high importance. This is where a national housing strategy fits in. Its purpose is to set a framework for legislation “that imposes clear-cut and strong obligations on the responsible actors (both in the public and private sector) that engages them to support this fundamental right” (Moons & Hubeau, 2016, p661). If a housing strategy provides for effective legislation, “the need for individual conflict resolution will, although obviously still eminent, decrease” and vulnerable groups’ access to the right to housing will be less dependent on judicial decisions (Moons & Hubeau, 2016, p661). On the other hand, a housing strategy also has to make sure that individuals can pursue adequate remedies through the courts and have access to these judicial mechanisms in cases where their right to housing is violated (OHCHR, 2009). However, as Leilani Farha notes: “*ensuring access to justice*, is the component that is most frequently missing in housing strategies. Strategies must include access to hearings and remedies in courts or elsewhere” (2018c, p4; emphasis added).

A national housing strategy or policy is also of value for monitoring progress, participatory processes and budget plans made by a government to put the right to housing into practice (OHCHR, 2009). It provides benchmarks, which can be used to hold the government accountable (OHCHR, 2009), and which can be critically discussed and observed by organisations and institutions. These benchmarks should be connected to the available resources and the housing needs of specific groups within the population. The concept of need is central to social policy in general, and is “a key organising principle in the design and delivery of housing and homelessness policy employed as a tool for rationing resources and

prioritising certain claims over others” (Watts, 2013, p45).

There are also many international actors that are monitoring the right to housing globally (Kolocek, 2017). The three most important monitoring bodies, which have published several international case studies, are the European Federation of National Organisations Working with Homeless (FEANTSA) (see Box 2), UN-Habitat (see Box 3), and the UN-Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, whose work is discussed in the next section.

Box 2: FEANTSA

FEANTSA was established in 1989 and is now a cooperation of “over 130 member organisations from 30 countries, including 28 Member States” (FEANTSA) European and Non-European, as well researchers and national organizations (Kolocek, 2017, p46). With the aim of ending homelessness in Europe, it focuses exclusively on the fight against homelessness and “brings together non-profit services that support homeless people in Europe” (FEANTSA). It monitors and analyzes policies and homelessness numbers and gives recommendations to States (Kolocek, 2017). In order to provide and spread information on issues, causes, effects, and solutions of homelessness FEANTSA publishes regularly research papers and reports on the topic. For example an “Overview of Housing Exclusion” in Europe in 2015, 2017, and 2018, or the EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness in 2017.

Box 3: UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is a program of the United Nations, mandated by the UN General Assembly (Kolocek, 2017), that is based in over 90 countries (UN Habitat, 2019a). “UN-Habitat's objective is to advance sustainable urbanization as a driver of development and peace to improve living conditions for all”. (UN Habitat, 2019a). The focus lies on promoting transformative change by providing “knowledge, policy advise, technical assistance and collaborative action” for urban centers, cities, and settlements (UN Habitat, 2019a). It fights poverty and spatial inequality while aiming to increase urban and regional prosperity. It further targets to prevent and respond to urban crises and to create sustainable settlements through enhanced climate action (UN Habitat, 2019a). UN Habitat created an independent evaluation unit to assess how well its interventions are achieving the intended results (UN Habitat, 2019b).

2.2.3.4. The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing

The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing was first appointed in April 2000, by the Commission on Human Rights (Kolocek, 2017). In 2006, the Commission on Human Rights was replaced by the Human Rights Council, which had from then onwards the task of appointing this position (OHCHR, 2009; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 2006). The Special Rapporteur acts as a global “watchdog” (Press, June 25, 2018b) over the human right to adequate housing, and has a mandate to investigate related issues as expert in the

field (OHCHR, 2001). The mandates are unpaid, as the experts “take on their functions out of a commitment to human rights and a conviction that the United Nations work in this field could make a difference “ (OHCHR, 2001, para 8). Thus working conditions are often under time and financial restrictions (Hohmann, 2016). The mandate of the Special Rapporteur is for three years, with the option of reappointment to a maximum of six years (OHCHR, 2001). Miloon Kothari held the position from the year 2000 until 2008, thus longer than six years as the time limitation for Special Rapporteurs was introduced during his mandate (OHCHR, 2001). He was replaced by Raquel Rolnik, who has been in place until 2014, until Leilani Farha, the current Special Rapporteur, took over (Hohmann, 2016).

Following Hohmann (2016), the work that is attached to the mandate can be divided into four main areas. First, the Special Rapporteur’s task is to report throughout the world on the progress and status of the right to housing and the realization of rights relevant to the mandate (Hohmann, 2016, p6; Kolocek, 2017, p47; OHCHR, 2001). The mandate recognizes the interrelatedness and interdependence of human rights and thus works towards the aim of realizing the right to housing inter alia by supporting the realization of related rights (Hohmann, 2016). The Special Rapporteur has to submit an annual report about their efforts to the Human Rights Council (former the Commission on Human Rights) (Kolocek, 2017; UNGA, 2006). They also report to other intergovernmental bodies, like the United Nations General Assembly, and have to stay in dialogue with other actors involved in their mandate (e.g. governments, UN institutions, financial institutions) (Kolocek, 2017, p47; OHCHR, 2001, para 9). Second, the Special Rapporteur looks into financing opportunities and creates connections and dialogue for a “cooperation between and among different agencies of the UN system, other national agencies and national Governments” to assist the latter in the realization of the right (Hohmann, 2016, p6; Kolocek, 2017). Third, they promote the right “within the field operations and national offices of the UN [...] to mainstream housing rights issues into a host of other UN Special Procedures” (Hohmann, 2016, p6). Lastly, the Special Rapporteur works under the premise of gender sensitivity and thus applies a gender perspective onto their work (Hohmann, 2016; Kolocek, 2017, p47).

Two major issues all Special Rapporteurs have focused on are women’s right to housing and the “prevailing paradigms of economic globalisation and the financialisation and marketization of housing” (Hohmann, 2016, p3). The former is of high importance, as

women all around the world face injustice, discrimination and a significantly higher risk of becoming homeless, due to “discriminatory customary and statutory laws on divorce, inheritance and matrimonial property – as well as social practices that attribute housing to male heads of households” (Farha, 2015, para 40). They face a high risk of falling into poverty and losing their homes when widowed or getting divorced, they are more likely to flee their homes because of domestic violence than men, and they have to confront higher barriers of discrimination when getting evicted or searching for a new home (Farha, 2015). Moreover, homeless women all over the world are highly vulnerable as they get exposed to “high rates of violence, including rape” (Farha, 2015, para 42), greatly worsening the consequences of homelessness for this group.

Also the issue of financialisation and marketization of housing is a global challenge. Miloon Kothari noted that the benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed across the world leading to increasing economic inequalities and homelessness (Hohmann, 2016). Raquel Rolnik continued with a critique on the “privatisation and marketization of land” and “called for a ‘paradigm shift’ from a financialised to a human rights-based approach to housing policies” (Hohmann, 2016, p14). Since 2014, Leilani Farha has emphasized the importance of a shift in the perception of housing as a commodity. In her report from January 2017 she explains that housing has become “a means of accumulating wealth” and further distanced “from its social function of providing a place to live in security and dignity and hence undermines the realization of housing as a human right” (Farha, 2017, Para 1). The perception of housing as a commodity turns it into a financial instrument, an investment that is traded on the global market for wealth accumulation and wealth securitization. Housing as investment offers “huge increases in wealth for property owners in prime locations while excluding moderate- and low-income households from access to homeownership and rentals due to unaffordability” (Farha, 2017, para 4). Utilizing the opportunity for monetary growth, housing became the “commodity of choice” for corporate finance and with their “massive amounts of capital” they dominate the rental market (Farha, 2017, para 2-3). This financialization turns housing into a luxury instead of a necessity and a basic human right. It turns away from the original meaning and basic social function of housing: the secure provision of a safe and affordable place, a home where persons or families can live in privacy and in dignity, without the fear of eviction.

The most recent report of the Special Rapporteur blames Governments for supporting financial markets without making them accountable to human rights obligations. Farha demands a shift in the relationship between Governments and financial institutions and for the latter to respect the right to housing and respond to the needs of especially vulnerable communities. In order to achieve this shift she calls for: (a) A strategy developed by States, human rights bodies, international financial institutions, organizations and other experts for engaging financial actors in the realization of adequate housing for all by 2030; (b) Taxation, regulatory and planning measures to promote housing as a social good and to prevent speculation and wealth accumulation; (c) Recognition of the human rights by trade and investment treaties, and full empowerment of the State to regulate private investment; (d) Business and human rights guidelines specifically for financial actors in the housing system; (e) A review of all laws and policies on foreclosure, indebtedness and housing by the State to ensure the right to adequate housing is protected and homelessness due to eviction is prevented; (f) Domestic legislation and policies that recognize and comply with the primacy of human rights in their execution; (g) All human rights bodies to put more attention on financialization and clarify States' obligations in relation to the financialization of housing (Farha, 2017, Para 77). Farha urges governments to protect the right to housing from monetary interests of financial actors and investors and to fulfill the right by changing the conditions under which housing is treated as a financial asset and neglected as a social good. A prioritization of the social instead of the financial aspect of housing has to take place through strategic planning, treaties, regulation, taxation, and policy and legislation reform. Her recommendations are not only directed towards the responsibilities of governments but also towards the responsibilities of civil society, in this case financial institutions, to respect and protect the right to housing. These civil institutions have to be held accountable for engaging in housing trade that prioritizes the right to adequate housing by recognizing housing as a social good, by keeping housing affordable, and by preventing evictions.

2.2.3.5. Examples of Practice

To see what effect an efficient and enforceable right to housing can have, especially for vulnerable groups, it is useful to look at States and cities which included the right into their law and policy making, or even in their constitution. One of these States is South Africa. To overcome the aftermath of the apartheid, the new democratic government of National Unity

led by the African National Congress included the right to adequate housing in the constitution in 1994 (Sunstein, 1999; Miraftab, 2003). It prioritized housing “to address the injustices of the past” (Miraftab, 2003, p226).

In 1998, the *Grootboom* case made the consequences of what entrenching the right to housing in the Constitution meant for the obligations of the State visible for the first time – possibly in global history (Sunstein, 1999). The case encompassed 900 plaintiffs – including Irene Grootboom and her family - of whom over 50 percent were children (Sunstein, 1999). After they had applied to their municipality for low-cost housing, the plaintiffs were on a waitlist for various years, leaving them living in highly inadequate circumstances – namely, in shacks in Wallacedene, an informal squatter settlement. In 1998, the plaintiffs could not tolerate the living conditions anymore and built their shelters on private, vacant land, “earmarked for formal low-cost housing” (Sunstein, 1999, p126). Not long after, they received an eviction order, but many of them, including Grootboom, refused to leave since they had nowhere else to go. This led to their forced eviction and the destruction of all their shelters and possessions by bulldozers (Sunstein, 1999, p124). After ending up “on a sports field in Wallacedene, under temporary structures consisting of plastic sheets”, they claimed that their rights were breached and went to court (Sunstein, 1999, p127).

Referring to sections 26⁶ and 28 (1)(c)⁷ of the South African Constitution, the court decided in their favour. It recognized that the constitution imposed “a judicially enforceable duty on [the] government”, which “not only [requires] a long-term plan to provide low-income shelter, but also a system to ensure short-term help for people who had no place to live” (Sunstein, 2000, p127). The Government however had failed to provide such a plan or system. The duty created by the Constitution did not mean that the Government had to provide a shelter on demand for everyone in need, but was required to work within its available resources; in other words, it did not create an absolute claim to immediate housing

⁶ 26. (1) Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing.

(2) The State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.

(3) No one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances. No legislation may permit arbitrary evictions.

(Sunstein, 2000, p127)

⁷ 28. (1) Every child has the right –

...

(c) to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services

provision, which would neglect domestic resource limitations. Rather, the court determined that the State had violated the constitution on the basis of the obligation to have a plan that provides relief for homeless people or people living in adequate housing (Sunstein, 2000). In the absence of such a plan, the plaintiffs' right to housing was violated. The anchoring of this right in the Constitution made it justiciable, and enabled the plaintiffs to find legal remedy.

A second example of the right to housing in practice is from Scotland. In 1999, housing powers were transferred from Westminster to the Scottish Government. Even though budget limitations were still set in London, this transfer enabled the development of a Scottish agenda in housing policies (Watts, 2013). Key to this agenda was a deviation from the UK *Homeless Persons Act 1977*, which had already introduced an enforceable right to housing but only for specific groups of homeless and potentially homeless people (Moons & Hubeau, 2016; Scottish Government, 2012; Watts, 2013). This law granted a settled housing entitlement only to 'priority need' groups, "namely households including children and pregnant women" (Watts, 2013, p43). The *Housing (Scotland) Act 2001* and the *Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003* changed this system drastically: "Scotland ambitiously expanded the enforceable right to permanent housing for homeless people" (Moons & Hubeau, 2016, p664). The 2001 Act amended the Act from 1977 and ruled that local authorities had to provide temporary housing to *all* homeless people during and shortly after the processing of their application and the assessing of their priority need status (Watts, 2013; Scottish Government, 2012). They also had to come up with multi-agency responses to homelessness and "new legal duties were imposed on Registered Social Landlords to provide accommodation for homeless households nominated or referred to them by local authorities" (Watts, 2013, p43).

With the Act of 2003, a phasing out of the "priority needs" status was initiated (Moons & Hubeau, 2016; Watts, 2013). This started with an expansion of the status to give priority to a wider selection of vulnerable groups, like persons with mental illness or disabilities, before this criterion was finally abrogated in December 2012 (Moons & Hubeau, 2016; Watts, 2013). This meant that local authorities finally had to make settled housing available for all homeless people often through offering social housing tenancies (Watts, 2013). As "[t]hese rights are individually enforceable through domestic courts (and ultimately, by judicial review)" (Watts, 2013, p44), the right to housing was finally open and justiciable for every

homeless person in Scotland. Under current legislation, local authorities have a duty to provide “temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation has been secured” for households that are “unintentionally homeless” (Scottish Government, 2018, p39).

Permanent accommodation comprises a Scottish Secure Tenancy or an Assured Tenancy. A short Scottish Secure Tenancy is offered to households with an anti-social behaviour order or who have been evicted due to anti-social-behaviour. Temporary accommodation, advice and assistance have to be provided to households that are “intentionally homeless” (Scottish Government, 2018).

The value of a rights-based approach to addressing homelessness is underlined by the results of Watts’ study in Edinburgh, Scotland (2013). Although interviewees did not believe this approach diminished stigma – instead, it was seen to draw attention to the label of homelessness, as the public discourse mentioned homelessness more often - it also seemed to enhance an alternative discourse. This alternative discourse opposed the stereotyping of homeless persons as undeserving or “failures in a society” (Watts, 2013, p56) and recognized “structural and social inequalities and exclusion from the housing market as causes of homelessness” (Watts, 2013, p56). Furthermore, the rights-based approach in legislation and policy made homeless people in Edinburgh much more aware of their rights. Even when knowledge of legal claims or rights was missing, Watts reported a stronger feeling of entitlement to housing and social services among the homeless population. This makes it much more likely for them to demand services from authorities, which in return are also more likely to provide housing, since it is their legal duty (Watts, 2013).

A number of cities have also adopted the right to adequate housing; in the United States these cities include Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh PA, Eugene OR, Chapel Hill NC and Carrboro NC (Alexander, 2017b, p442). Here the guiding maxim is that cities are obligated to take measures towards realizing the right to housing, rather than having to provide everyone with housing at once. Especially interesting is the case of Eugene, OR. After declaring themselves a human rights city in 2011, they created an efficient Task Force on Homelessness, which called on the city “to create safe spaces for the homeless, revise zoning laws that criminalized homelessness, and increase homeless people’s access to basic health care, among other initiatives” (Alexander, 2017b, p443). Furthermore, they started a micro-housing project for homeless people, where a tiny home village was built on a city-

owned lot in an industrial area. Landlords are from non-profit third-sector organizations. The tiny homes village includes facilities like a common kitchen, a bathhouse with showers, flushing toilets and a laundry room, and gathering places as well as a front office and a tool shed (Alexander, 2017b, p443). The 60 to 80 square foot big homes cost the residents \$30/month for the utilities and are easy to disassemble (Alexander, 2017b, p443). It further requires its residents to volunteer ten hours a week, attend weekly village meetings, and participate in village self-govern. There are no violence, alcohol or illegal drug use, or drug-use utensils allowed and a rule break can result in eviction (Alexander, 2017b). Following the city of Eugene, other cities in the U.S. like Portland, Austin, San Jose and Detroit have embraced this idea and have now started tiny homes projects (Alexander, 2017b). In summary it can be said that the tiny homes village provides the vulnerable group of homeless people with a safe, adequate and affordable place to live. However it is tied to obligations concerning the residents' drug and alcohol use, limiting the right to housing to only those who comply with a certain lifestyle.

2.2.4. Conclusion

In conclusion the right to adequate housing is fundamental in securing a life in peace, safety and dignity and is crucial for the realization of other human rights. Its breach therefore has serious consequences, and homelessness is its most severe violation. To prevent these outcomes, States have to recognize their obligations and responsibilities in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the right. Measures have to be taken which prevent discrimination immediately, and realize the right to housing progressively within the limitation of the State's financial resources. Housing strategies have to be made with the participation of communities, which further and enable realization of the right to housing by efficient legislation and policy-making. Human rights and the right to adequate housing have to be recognized as standard throughout the State apparatus, legal processes have to offer remedy and legal aid to victims of evictions, and efficient housing policies have to be put in place that fight the financialization of the housing market and displacement through gentrification. States like South Africa and Scotland show that a legal enforcement of the right to housing is possible and working. Canada's introduction of a National Housing Strategy based on the Human Right to Housing aims to recognize the State's duties and

obligations, but it remains unclear whether this will be a genuinely rights-based strategy, which includes justiciability.

2.3. Structural Violence

Falling into homelessness and struggling to exit homelessness can be closely interconnected with structural violence. Homelessness itself is often a result of flawed systemic structures, where certain populations are more at risk or have a harder time exiting homelessness than others. It is further known to “exacerbate pre-existing medical conditions, make it more difficult to recover from wounds and fractures, impede treatment and recovery and increase the risk of both infectious and mental health issues” (Patrick, 2014, p. 50). The combination of structural issues leading to homelessness and the horrific effect homelessness has on an individual’s health, indicates that homelessness is structural violence, as will be discussed in this chapter.

2.3.1. Definition

“Structural violence” is a term used and characterized by Johan Galtung (1969) and later picked up and elaborated on by Paul Farmer (1996). Structural violence manifests itself in “social structures—economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural—that stop individuals, groups, and societies from reaching their full potential” (Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac & Keshavjee, 2006, p1686). The term describes the difference in access to resources - like health care, power, or education - within a population (either local or global) and the resulting constriction of “agency” (Farmer, 1996) – e.g. opportunity, ability, or health – of the victimized population. It has been defined as:

“one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way (...) The arrangements are *structural* because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are *violent* because they cause injury to people (typically, not those responsible for perpetuating such inequalities).” (Farmer et al., 2006, p1686)

Put another way, if a negative outcome (injury) for the victimized population could be prevented by political or economic change, then structural violence is at work: “If people are starving when this is objectively avoidable, then violence is committed” (Galtung, 1969,

p171). If individuals from lower classes suffer and die from illnesses that could be cured and are commonly treated in upper class individuals, then that is violence. If women do not have the same access to education as men do, then that is violence. In all these cases it is violence because these differences in access result in harms such as disease or lack of opportunity. Violence in this context is not born out of personal conflict, but out of “insidious assaults on dignity, such as institutionalized racism and sexism” (Farmer, 1996, p261).

The concept of structural violence explains extreme suffering and its distribution by embedding “individual biography in the larger matrix of culture, history, and political economy” (Farmer, 1996, p272). There may be no specific actor that commits violence; it is rather a result of the social structures born out of historical developments, the (world) economy, and power distribution: “the violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969, p171). Structural violence can be understood as an outcome of social inequality.

2.3.2. Who Suffers from Structural Violence?

Farmer identified that structural violence harms especially the health and wellbeing of the socio-economically disadvantaged. The victims of structural violence “do not share culture, language or race. Rather, what they share is the experience of occupying the bottom rung of the social ladder in inegalitarian societies” (Farmer, 1996, p263). Class is often the dividing point, determining for example which women – the poor – are more likely to suffer from maternal mortality, from domestic violence, or AIDS (Farmer, 1996). The same is true for health outcomes based on race: “for the major causes of death [in the US - heart disease and cerebrovascular disease], class differentials were significantly larger than race differentials” (Farmer, 1996, p275). As Farmer adds, also the World Health Organization (WHO) “acknowledges that poverty is the world’s biggest killer” (Farmer, 1996, p279-280). The World Health report of 1995 opens with the words:

“The world’s most ruthless killer and the greatest cause of suffering on earth is listed in the latest edition of WHO’s International Classification of Diseases (...), under the code Z59.5. It stands for extreme poverty. Poverty is the main reason why babies are not vaccinated, clean water and sanitation are not provided, and curative drugs and other treatments are unavailable and why mothers die in childbirth. Poverty is the

main cause of reduced life expectancy, of handicap and disability, and of starvation. Poverty is a major contributor to mental illness, stress, suicide, family disintegration and substance abuse” (WHO, 1995, p1).

Thus, an individual’s socioeconomic status is the most important predictor of their exposure to structural violence. As the former director-general of the World Health Organization Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima states: “Growing inequality is literally a matter of life and death for many millions of people, since the poor pay the price of social inequality with their health” (WHO, 1995, V).

Farmer adds that the structural implications of minority status on an individual’s health are wiped out if the person is wealthy or powerful, while poverty can in turn eradicate “the ‘protective’ effects of status” (1996, p279) which for example white, heterosexual men enjoy. However, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation remain crucial factors in “the mechanisms of impoverishment” (Farmer, 1996, p276). Discrimination, racism, and sexism increase the likelihood of economic exclusion and poverty, and therefore increase their likelihood of experiencing structural violence: “Any distinguishing characteristic, whether social or biological, can serve as pretext for discrimination, and thus as a cause of suffering” (Farmer, 1996, p278).

2.3.3. Structural Violence and Rights

Structural violence also causes severe harm to people by denying basic rights. Farmer exemplifies: “Structural violence is embodied as adverse events.... The adverse events to be discussed here include epidemic disease, violations of human rights, and genocide” (2004, p308). In this study the denial of the right to housing is of special interest. As will be further explained in section 2.2.2.3., some populations are more at risk of experiencing barriers in accessing their right to housing – e.g. women, refugees, children, Indigenous peoples – which is based on social inequalities and thus structural violence.

2.3.4. Structural Violence and History

History, especially “the erasure of historical memory” (Farmer, 2004, p307) contributes greatly to structural violence. Power structures and dynamics built up and harden over time, so that old hegemonies still reach into today’s politics and distribution of wealth. “Those

who look only to powerful present-day actors to explain misery will fail to see how inequality is structured and legitimated over time” (Farmer, 2004, p310). The erasure of the memory of how today’s power structures came to be often serve the legitimization of these structures, allowing them to stay unquestioned. Moreover, “erasure or distortion of history is part of the process of desocialization necessary for the emergence of hegemonic accounts of what happened and why” (Farmer, 2004, p308). In Canada, such erasure or distortion of history could be seen, where the brutal and violent actions of settlers against Indigenous populations were neither acknowledged nor the responsibility of settler colonialism in the ongoing suffering of many generations of Indigenous peoples recognized. But as Anderson & Collins (2014) elucidated, colonization continues to contribute to “disempowerment, cultural erosion, social deprivation, loss of social and psychological well-being, and diminished political power and collective rights” (p970) of Indigenous people in Canada. It contributes greatly to their vulnerability towards homelessness and therefore towards poor health because of structural oppression. Ongoing efforts in the course of reconciliation have to be very powerful to work against the ingrained prejudices and hegemonic power structures that currently harm Indigenous people’s agency and ability to fulfil their rights.

2.3.5. Structural Violence and Homelessness in Canada

What all homeless people have in common is their low socio-economic status, the catalyst for being a victim of structural violence. Homeless people’s status presents the most severe breach of the right to housing and leaves the population vulnerable to discrimination and abuse. The breach of the right to housing results in the breach of many other basic rights, like the right to sanitation, the right to be free from discrimination, and most of all the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Homeless people’s health suffers greatly: they often face discriminatory or systemic barriers when accessing adequate health care, due to the lack of a home; they often lack proper sanitation to maintain hygiene, due to the lack of a home; they simply have no safe and clean place where they can get better after being released from a hospital, due to the lack of a home. They are 150 times more likely to be killed in an assault and 80 percent of homeless persons reported to struggle from mental health issues, while 39 percent reported to either take drugs or recover from drug usage (COH, 2014). Their social isolation, poverty, inadequate shelter and hunger further worsen their health and make them less able to cope with their conditions. All of these pathways demonstrate how deeply homelessness is connected with suffering through structural

violence.

Powerful examples for the structural mechanisms that put low-income households at risk of homelessness in Canada and thus present structural violence, are the financialization of the housing market and inadequate welfare. The systemic financialization of housing (see section 2.2.3.4.) turns having a home into an investment or financial instrument, instead of seeing it as a basic human right that *everyone* should be able to access. It disadvantages the poor and enriches the affluent upper class, reproducing hegemonic power structures and causing suffering through price-based exclusion from the housing market. Low welfare (social assistance) rates do their part in keeping the lower class at the bottom, leaving many recipients with inadequate financial supports to fight the structural barriers produced by neoliberal housing markets. By not limiting the ability of the upper class to benefit from housing investments, and by insufficiently supporting the basic and crucial needs of the poor to be able to access adequate housing, public policy on the provincial and federal level in Canada is implicated in supporting and exercising structural violence.

3. Chapter 3 Methodology

Previous research has produced ‘robust’ quantitative evidence that HF stabilizes clients’ lives and reduces their demand for some services, but has given very little consideration to its legal or moral dimensions (Stanhope & Dunn, 2012; Willse, 2010). This research employed a different epistemological approach, in order to analyze HF through a rights-based lens. Specifically, a qualitative multiple case study methodology was developed to assess whether, and to what extent, HF policies and programs in Alberta respect, protect and fulfill the right to housing. The key strength of case study research is its ability to develop in-depth, situated accounts of social phenomena within bounded contexts (Yin, 2003). Multi-case studies have the advantage of offering varied perspectives on a core category or question, and the potential to develop generalizable knowledge (Stake, 2013). It is through comparison that multi-case studies generate instrumental knowledge of the broader phenomenon being examined (Stake, 2013). This capacity is well-illustrated by recent studies of homelessness policy involving multiple cities, both within countries (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019; Bretherton, Hunter, & Johnsen, 2013) and across international borders (Collins, 2010; Watts, 2013).

This research was based on key informant interviews with participants working in Housing First, either as frontline staff – providing services and supports directly to HF clients – or as managers (all of whom had experience as frontline workers). Interview data were analyzed thematically, using a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. The following sections explain each step of the research process.

3.1. The Municipalities

This research focused on three of the seven municipalities in Alberta that have adopted a HF approach to addressing homelessness: Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray. This selection includes two census metropolitan areas with populations over one million, and an urban centre of 70,000 people within the largely rural Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. It is consistent with a critical case sampling approach, in which sites are selected on the basis that they will “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton, 2001, p236). This consistency is due to HF policies and programs being well-developed in all three centres.

3.2. The Participants

This research assessed the degree to which the operations and processes of HF programs are shaped by and comply with a human rights approach. In Alberta, HF programs are managed and provided by local NGOs (various agencies, centres and charities). The responsibility of these organizations for delivering HF services speaks to a broader phenomenon, whereby civil society ('non-state') actors are increasingly responsible for the implementation of public policy (Lévy-Vroelant, 2015). It follows from this responsibility that *these actors are duty bearers, because it is they who interact with the rights holders* (Williams, 2010). However, such organizations may adopt practices that are inconsistent with human rights – either because they are unaware of their obligations, or because of a lack of clarity surrounding the operationalization of rights. For NGO staff, the legal language and structures that surround rights can impede practical engagement (Williams, 2010).

Before contacting potential participants, I looked into the organizations working with the homeless population in each of the municipalities in order to understand the structures of service delivery. Based on these online searches, I created a list of HF agencies and programs in each municipality: nine in Edmonton, 11 in Calgary and four in Fort McMurray. I sought to make initial contact with all organizations offering HF programs, either by email (when an address was found on the agency's website) or via phone call. In my initial contact I briefly explained the background and focus of my study ("The study looks at Housing First programs and the right to housing in Alberta"). Once I received a response expressing interest in participating in the research, I sent an official Interview Request (see Appendix A).

In subsequent email exchanges, I coordinated to meet at a date and time, which accommodated the participants' schedules, at a place of the participants' choosing. I aimed to do one-on-one interviews to give participants time, space, and privacy to talk freely, but in some cases additional persons joined in – spontaneously or because they were asked to join by the person I was in contact with. Either way they were welcomed by the primary participant and did not take away from the open environment of the interview. These additional participants therefore contributed to the study by adding their own experiences and insights, and by supplementing the information provided by my initial contact.

Of the contacted agencies, organizations and programs in Edmonton, four responded with

expressions of interest in the study. Two interviewees each referred us to one more participant, leading to six participants in Edmonton from five different agencies. Two of the participants also furthered my knowledge outside of the interviews by offering opportunities to learn more about their work. One participant invited my supervisor and I to visit them at their workplace to see and understand their programs and initiatives, and a tour of their community centre. Another participant offered me the unique and very educational opportunity to participate in a Sweat ceremony, helping me experience Indigenous ceremony and its healing and positive effects, including for non-Indigenous persons. It greatly helped my understanding of this participant's work with non-Indigenous staff, so that they can better understand their Indigenous clients. It also made me see how the wellbeing of staff can benefit from these healing ceremonies.

In Fort McMurray, I initially received two positive responses from those contacted. Fortunately, one of these participants was well connected in the HF sector in Fort McMurray and offered to send my request out to more people. This way I was able to gain the participation of two more agencies as well as with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, which is the designated system planning organization for HF in Fort McMurray. Unfortunately one person was later unavailable, leading to interviews with three HF service providers, and one with the municipality. The latter was not directly relevant for answering my questions about service provision, but was very helpful in providing an understanding of the funding structures and set up of programs. In total, I interviewed six participants in Fort McMurray.

In Calgary, I received positive responses from seven agencies or organizations, however due to insurmountable difficulties with scheduling, interviews were held with staff of only five agencies. In total I had the opportunity to hear the experiences and opinions of 11 people working for or managing HF programs in Calgary. Seven of these participants worked solely with clients identifying as Indigenous. To hear about the experiences of Indigenous HF clients through the participating staff of Indigenous agencies was very important for me. I wanted to ensure that their experiences were reflected in my research and their needs were addressed in my recommendations, as they make up a large proportion of the chronically homeless population (see 1.1.3.1.). The information and stories I heard from the staff in Calgary complemented and validated what I had heard from the Indigenous cultural guide in

Edmonton.

In total, I conducted interviews with 25 persons from 13 different HF agencies and one regional municipality, between November 2018 and March 2019. An overview of participant characteristics, and participant codes used in subsequent chapters, are provided in Table 5.

Participant Code	Municipality	Job Description
Staff E1	Edmonton	Manager of HF program
Staff E2	Edmonton	Manager of HF program
Staff E3	Edmonton	Manager of HF program
Staff E4	Edmonton	Manager of HF program
Staff E5	Edmonton	Support worker
Staff E6	Edmonton	Indigenous cultural guide + Former support worker
Staff FM1	Fort McMurray	Manager of HF program + Support worker
Staff FM2	Fort McMurray	Manager of HF program + Support worker
Staff FM3	Fort McMurray	Manager of HF program + Support worker
Staff FM4	Fort McMurray	Support worker
Staff FM5	Fort McMurray	Support worker
Staff FM6	Fort McMurray	Support worker
Staff FM7	Fort McMurray	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
Staff FM8	Fort McMurray	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
Staff C1	Calgary	Manager of congregate housing site
Staff C2	Calgary	Manager of congregate housing site
Staff C3	Calgary	Manager of HF program
Staff C4	Calgary	Manager of congregate housing site
Staff C5	Calgary	Manager of Indigenous HF program
Staff C6	Calgary	Manager of Indigenous HF program
Staff C7	Calgary	Support worker in Indigenous HF program
Staff C8	Calgary	Support worker in Indigenous HF program
Staff C9	Calgary	Support worker in Indigenous HF program
Staff C10	Calgary	Support worker in Indigenous HF program
Staff C11	Calgary	Support worker in Indigenous HF program

Table 5: Research Participants

3.3. Data collection

The interview questions were informed by Fukuda-Parr's (2006) identification of four principles that organizations must follow in order to respect, protect and fulfill human rights: non-discrimination, participation, adequate progress and remedy. By way of example, non-discrimination centres on equitable treatment and equality of outcomes, and "implies greater priority to improvement of the most deprived and excluded" (Fukuda-Parr, 2006, p974). To explore this principle with HF staff, questions centered on program eligibility criteria, processes for assessing clients' priority, and whether notions such as client readiness or deservingness influence agency practices (see Johnson, 2012; Bretherton et al., 2013). This approach was replicated for the other three principles, enabling the research to ascertain whether HF programs are rights-oriented as a matter of practice.

All questions were discussed between me and my supervisor and a test-run was conducted with a fellow graduate student who has knowledge in the field of homelessness and could give feedback on the clarity of questions. Afterwards final changes and cuts were made in collaboration with my supervisor to limit the time of an interview to around one hour (see Interview Guide in Appendix B & Appendix C). I undertook semi-structured interviews with the participants. The interview questions were used as a guide to hear about the aspects of the participants' work that were relevant to any of the four categories (Non-Discrimination, Participation, Adequate Progress, Remedy). However, I tried to build up a conversational environment, within which the participants could feel free to talk about aspects of their work that were not asked for but seemed important for them to mention. All interviews were audio-recorded, with consent (see Ethics section, below). The resulting audio files were then transcribed in full. The anonymized transcripts were uploaded into NVIVO, a computer software program for content analysis.

Before the interviews started, the participant and I signed an Information letter and consent form (see Appendix D), which also asked for permission to audio record the interview for later transcription. Next, I would start the interview by clearly stating I was about to switch on the audio recorder (on my cell-phone). During the interview, the audio record was stopped in instances where a participant was receiving phone calls, or when the participant had asked for the recording to stop to share a story or information they did not want to be disclosed. Immediately after the interview, the recordings were uploaded to a password

secured online-drive and deleted from my phone.

Lastly, some notes on how the interviews went: the participants were all very responsive, helpful and open. Most questions were understood easily, however, some Interview questions concerning the right to housing had to be clarified, as the concept was not always understood in the way the UN defines it. However, many participants had read a little about the right to housing in preparation for the interview. As soon as questions were clear, all participants answered thoughtfully and provided examples when needed. Some participants also voiced their appreciation for questions that were asked (e.g. “oh that is a good question, I will ask that my staff too”, “interesting question”, “I like this question, I will keep thinking about it”). I perceive this as evidence that my research is relevant and of interest for HF practitioners. It is also a reassurance that participants benefited from taking their time to answer my questions. Further, some participants used the interview to talk about something unrelated to the question but important for them. These emphasized topics were given close attention during data analysis, as they seemed urgent for our participants.

3.4. Analysis

To answer the question if HF programs in Alberta provide a right to adequate housing, I based my analysis on the framework of Fukuda Parr (2006), which is oriented around four key principles. These principles (Non-Discrimination, Participation, Adequate Progress, Remedy) were a priori categories for our analysis: relevant data were assigned deductively into these categories. *Within* each category, inductive thematic analysis was conducted, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) step-by-step procedure.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

I familiarized myself with the data by conducting the interviews and by taking notes of interesting thoughts during and immediately after the interview. Due to time-restrictions, I did not transcribe all of the interviews myself, and made some use of transcription services. However, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) recommendations for such cases, checking the transcripts against the audio, and reading all transcripts thoroughly. During that process, I again noted down evaluative and interpretive thoughts and impressions.

To evaluate if HF programs realize the right to housing, I needed to assess if and to what extent they complied with Fukuda Parr's principles. I therefore made a category for each principle and divided and sorted the content of each interview (in the form of textual extracts) into these categories, with help from the NVIVO software program. In addition to these four analytical categories, I also compiled extracts that talked about the background of the participant in a fifth folder and extracts where participants talked about rights in a sixth folder. Extracts could be sorted into multiple categories if what was said touched on more than one. This first part of data sorting was therefore done deductively as it was driven by theory.

Next, I proceeded to analyze the compiled data *within* each category separately, employing inductive thematic analysis. Inductive means that themes are based on the content of the data and are not pre-determined by a theory or by the interview questions. Braun and Clarke describe it as "a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" and themes "may bear little relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants" (2006, p83).

The data were read and evaluated from a realist position, meaning my analysis was based on the "experiences, meanings and the reality of participants" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p81). Within the realist epistemology I followed a critical approach, which "reject[s] the idea that there must be a single correct account or interpretation of a complex reality" (Maxwell, 2015, p91). It rather "admits an inherent subjectivity in the production of knowledge" (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000, p3). This means I recognize that the participants' knowledge and the way they perceive and do things is partial and based on their own understandings. But since they are the experts in HF service provision and their knowledge and understandings influence the way HF services are delivered, it is exactly their reality I am interested in as basis for my analysis of HF programs in Alberta.

Step 2: Initial Coding

Having a basic knowledge about what the participants had described, I started to create codes within each of the pre-determined categories. As Braun and Clark explain, "codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the

analyst” (p88) and “may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set” (p89). For research purposes, I looked into the semantic, explicit content of the data, which means that “the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p84).

I started by coding all data extracts within the category “Non-Discrimination”, before proceeding to “Participation”, then “Adequate Progress” and lastly “Remedy”. The data in the category “background” was not analysed and only compiled to gather information on the participants to inform Table 5. The category “rights” was also not analysed through thematic analysis, but informed me on the knowledge participants had on rights, which in turn was of interest for the analysis of their answers. The coding was done with the NVIVO software “by tagging and naming selections of text within each data item” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p89). I read through the data set and coded each extract’s content with one or more titles or short sentences describing the theme. In the coding process, I followed Braun and Clarke’s advice, coding “for as many potential themes/patterns as possible”, keeping surrounding content in a tag to ensure the context was not lost, and tagging extracts for multiple codes if needed (2006, p89). I also looked out for data extracts that could fit into other categories but were not already included in them.

Step 3: Creating Themes

In the third step of the analysis, I started to identify themes within each category, based on the codes made previously. Braun and Clarke describe that in this phase “you are starting to analyse your codes and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme” (2006, p89). At this step it was very helpful to create a concept map for each category in NVIVO (for an example see Figure 1). Within each concept map I collected the different codes I had made and started to organize them. I aggregated (combined) codes that were close in meaning and put them into relation with other codes. These accumulations of codes each presented preliminary themes in the analysis and through the concept map I could start making sense of some of the relationships between themes, making a first step into interpreting the data by determining overarching themes (blue ovals in Figure 1) and subthemes (blue spheres connected by black arrows to indicate their relationships and interplay).

Some codes were easy to assign to any one theme, while others were initially put aside into a pile of non-fitting codes. After the first division of codes, I looked into the non-fitting codes to see if some could build their own coherent theme, or if some at second sight could be put into one of the existing themes after all. If neither of these steps was possible, they were kept aside at this point.

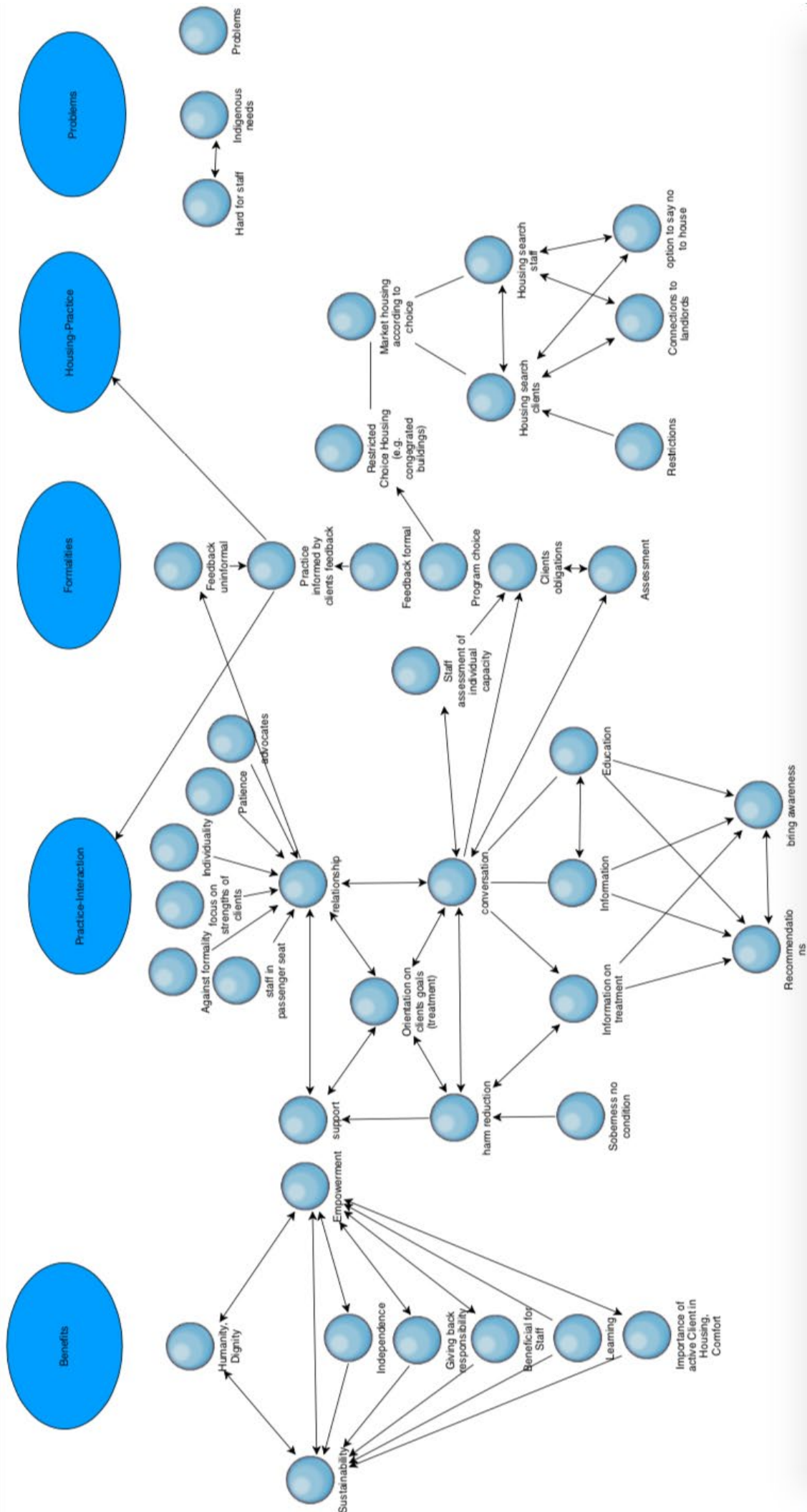


Figure 1: Initial Concept Map for the Category "Participation"

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

In the next step, I checked all codes within each theme and subtheme⁸ (in each category), making sure that the coded extracts indeed fitted and supported the theme. In cases where that was not apparent, I considered if either the theme was not presenting the codes validly, or if the unsupportive codes had to be taken out and re-assigned. By redefining themes and shifting codes, I created some new, more suitable themes and deleted some former preliminary themes that did not get to the heart of the presented data. Most codes in the non-fitting pile could eventually be distributed to themes, with only a few being left unsorted. In general I determined a theme was valid when it was either supported by codes from at least five interviews or when it was strongly emphasised on in at least two interviews and was a substantial indicator for a principle. In so doing, I aimed to comply with Braun & Clarke's definition of a theme:

Box 4: Overview of terms used in this section

- > Principles/Indicators: *Non-Discrimination, Participation, Adequate Progress, Remedy*
- > Categories: *There is one category per principle, each with their own themes, sub-themes, & piles of non-fitting codes*
- > Data extracts: *Quotes from the interviews; were sorted into the categories they provided meaning for (as indicators for compliance with each principle)*
- > Data set: *All data extracts in one category*
- > Codes: *Based on what is being said in each data extract (coding was done separately for each category)*
- > Themes: *Key topics of the codes of a data set (themes were build separately and independently in each category)*

“A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. [...] Ideally, there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial. [...] A theme might be given considerable space in some data items, and little or none in others, or it might appear in relatively little of the data set. So, researcher judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is.” (2006, p82).

Eventually, I ended up with a complex concept map for each category, containing many relevant themes. Once I was “satisfied that ... candidate themes adequately capture[d] the

⁸ To simplify the reading experience I will refer to both subthemes and overarching themes as “themes”.

contours of the coded data” and that I therefore had “a candidate ‘thematic map’”, I proceeded to the second phase of this step (2006, p91).

In the second phase the thematic map for each category had to be further solidified by back checking: 1) if the themes in a category were a fair representation of the category’s data set; 2) if the themes’ relationships, as reproduced on the map, were a fair representation of the content of the data sets; and 3) if the themes worked as indicators for their respective principles. As Braun and Clarke explain: “At this level, you consider the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also whether your candidate thematic map ‘accurately’ reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (2006, p91). In a final step of this phase, I looked at the few codes left in the non-fitting pile to check one last time if they belonged with one of the themes, before discarding them.

Step 5: Refining and Defining Themes

After determining the themes, they needed to be further refined. By reading through each theme and subtheme I tried to “identify ... the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” and “the ‘story’ that each theme tells” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p92). I reflected on my conceptual maps and on the key messages of each theme within its category. I asked myself what each theme conveyed about the fulfillment of their category’s respective principle and looked into how all themes and subthemes formed a coherent replication of the story of the data. I used these reflections and key messages to develop and refine a concise and apt name for each theme and subtheme.

Step 6: Writing the Report

Lastly, the concept maps, notes made during each step of the analysis, and the meaningful names given to themes, helped me to produce this thesis and to tell the story of the data. The reporting of results in this thesis (see chapter 4) is accompanied by my concept maps, to visualize described connections, and interview extracts, to substantiate my findings.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

Upon completion of the analysis and the writing of the results, my supervisor and I produced a visually-appealing and condensed summary to send out to participants for review (see

Appendix D). Through inviting their feedback, I sought to ensure the validity of my results. Seven participants responded to my email, all with positive comments. Two of these participants did not work in their former position anymore but were both very interested in the results. Three others asked if they could hand my report to the rest of their team, which I agreed to. Only one person proposed a change, which involved a reformulation of one recommendation (while validating other two recommendations). This will be further explained in the Discussion chapter.

The open approach to recruiting research participants also contributes to the validity of the study. Rather than creating a sampling strategy, *every* HF agency, program or organization that was identified in the three municipalities was invited to participate. I therefore did not select my research participants, but sought to reach willing participants within the entire population of HF workers in Edmonton, Fort McMurray and Calgary. This selection of three case study cities widened the population of potential participants. This means my results are more reliable and generalizable as they reflect the conditions of HF programs in Alberta more generally, and are not based on practices found in only one municipality. In addition, participants did not receive an incentive, outside of being offered a coffee if they wished to be interviewed at a coffee shop. Interviews were thus conducted on a completely voluntary basis and depended upon the interest and engagement of the participating Housing First support workers and managers.

To further ensure reliability, my thematic analysis followed Braun and Clark's (2006) step-by-step guide in a careful and deliberate manner. Adopting "clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis" is important for avoiding "the 'anything goes' critique of qualitative research" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p78). This does not mean that the flexibility of qualitative research is constricted, but rather ensures that the results are valid and reliable, and the researchers held accountable for their interpretation of the data. In this study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines ensured interpretations were clearly organized and solidly based in the accounts of participants.

3.6. Ethics & Reflexivity

To ensure the research was ethical and avoided causing harm, participants were informed on the background of the study (including its SSHRC funding), on what I and my supervisor were doing, what happens with their interview recordings, on their rights, and on the voluntariness of their participation. We therefore handed out two information sheets on my study (Appendix A and C) and a consent form (Appendix D), which had all important information on the possible risks of participation, on the audio recording and on the anonymization of the interviews. After each participant had signed the consent form, I asked again whether they agreed to be audio recorded and understood the anonymization process. All participants agreed to be recorded and noted when to pause the recording so that sensitive information remained off the record.

My position in this study was to hear about the experiences of the experts in the field. As an outsider, never having worked in HF, I relied on their information. This was made clear to the participants and they took their role as experts very seriously, being open about positive as well as negative aspects of their work and their HF programs. In order for participants to feel comfortable about sharing criticism, I ensured their anonymity and offered the possibility of removing their information from the data set if they wanted. First, all information that could reveal a person's identity or their place of employment was altered. In this thesis, participants are identified by codes only, and whenever they named their workplace, I deleted it in the transcripts and substituted it with the filler "[agency name]". In one case, ensuring complete anonymization proved difficult because of the unique nature of the participant's work, which was very strongly reflected in their comments. It is possible that others working in HF could infer this person's identity from those comments, which is always a risk when conducting research in a relatively small sector. I have sought to minimize this risk by providing a generic description of their job title, and by lightly editing their remarks, where quoted in this thesis. Second, participants had the choice to withdraw from participation at any point before and during the interview as well as within 30 days afterwards, meaning that their recording and transcript would have been deleted immediately, without being included in the analysis (see Appendix D). However, none of the participants chose to withdraw.

Lastly, my participants were not part of a vulnerable population, meaning that their participation in our study was unlikely to marginalize or exploit them. I could further assume that they understood the risks and benefits of their participation, as they were laid out in the information letter (Appendix D), and were fully aware of possible consequences. Some participants asked for the interview questions prior to the interview, and these were provided. I did not expect that this would have an impact on the answers, and it also made sure that concerned participants could decide in advance if they wanted to share the information and experience that was asked for. None of the participants who received the questions beforehand decided to opt out and I also did not find any difference between their answers, and those of participants who did not know the questions beforehand. All participants therefore agreed to participate in a fully informed and aware manner, and their participation and answers were not biased by incentives, by an unequal power relation between researcher and participant, or by misinformation.

3.7. Summary

Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically, following the procedure set out by Braun and Clark (2006). Categories were identified on a largely deductive basis (as the core concerns of the research were already determined by the principles of Fukuda Parr), and reviewed to ensure they are distinct and adequately supported. Themes were determined through an inductive approach, in order to evaluate if, and to what degree, HF in Alberta fulfils each of Fukuda Parr's principles, which is decisive for answering the question at the centre of this study. To enhance rigour, our findings were shared with participating individuals and agencies before being finalized.

4. Chapter 4 Results

4.1. Non-Discrimination

To assess to what degree HF programs' upheld the principle of *non-discrimination*, I examined responses on the eligibility criteria to enter the program and barriers clients face obtaining housing once in the program.

Of interest were especially the problems that staff reported on, which jeopardized the process of housing someone sustainably and the solutions that were presented to deal with these problems. I looked at gaps in HF service provision and possible solutions. Figure 2 is the final concept map I created for the category of Non-Discrimination. It lists which themes (blue spheres) are building an overarching theme (blue rectangles) and illustrates the connections and relations of subthemes.

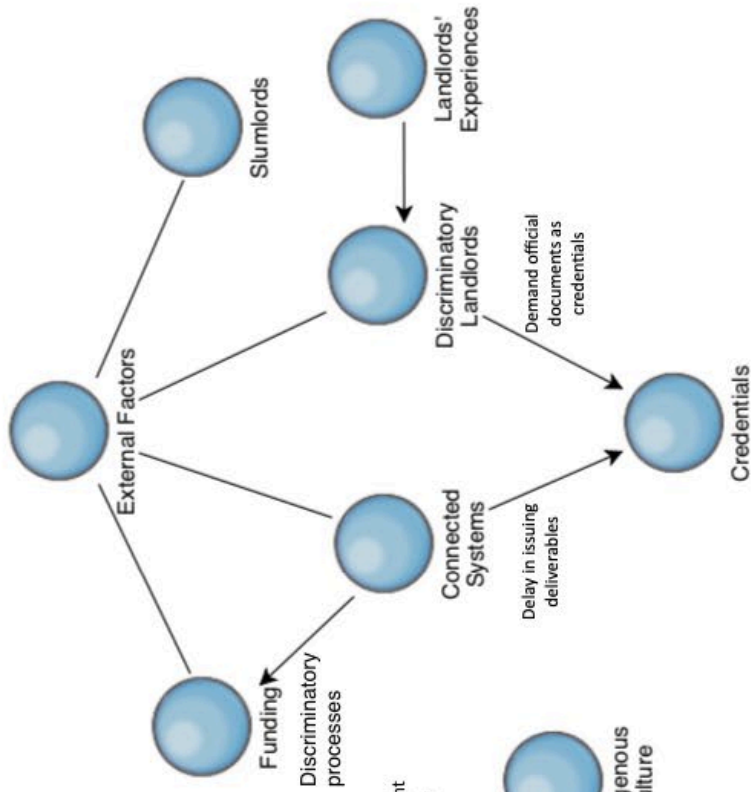
4.1.1. Internal Factors

Results for program internal factors showed discriminatory practices against violent clients and structural discrimination against Indigenous clients and clients with very high or very low acuity.

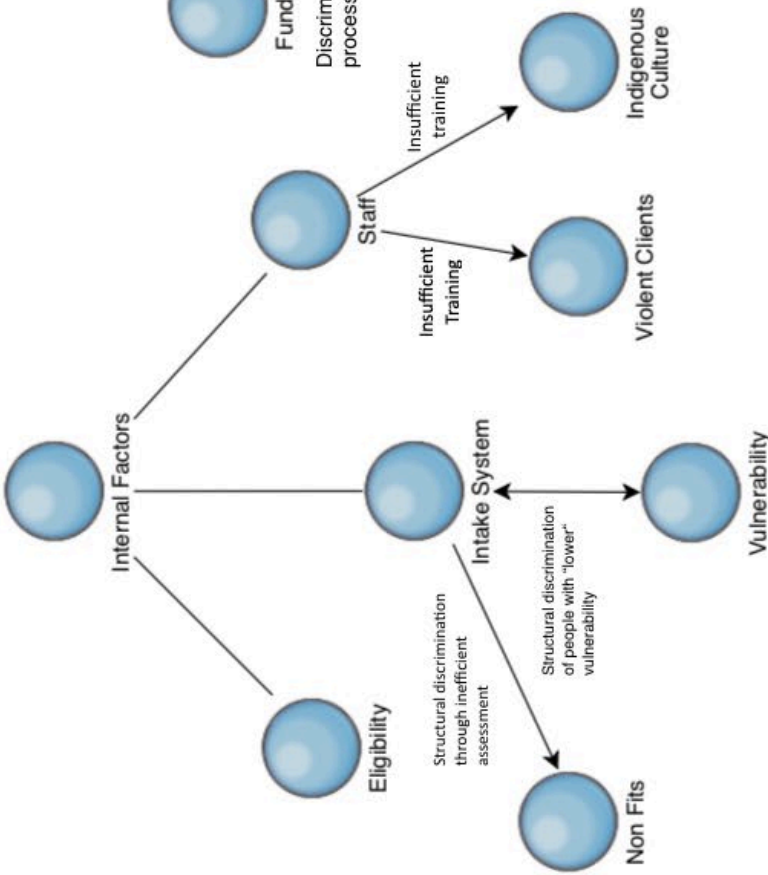
4.1.1.1. Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria were non-discriminatory. The only eligibility criteria placed on clients are the criteria set by the general HF principles, as the program is specifically made for chronically homeless people, who often struggle with mental illness and/or drug addiction. Some agencies specialize in certain populations like chronically homeless males or Indigenous persons, to be able to cater better to their clients' needs. But since there are many other agencies providing services for people who do not fit into these special programs, these service providers should be understood as offering positive diversification not as being exclusionary.

Barriers associated with the Availability of Affordable Housing



Barriers to Housing associated with the Structure of HF Programs



Barriers to Housing associated with Clients

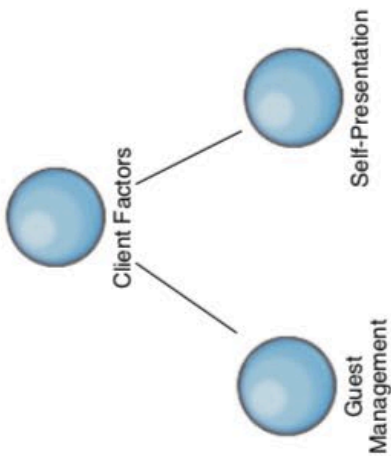


Figure 2: Final Concept Map for the Category “Non-Discrimination”

4.1.1.2. Intake System

Since the need for HF services is higher than the capacity in the programs, there is a prioritization process. HF staff from all locations described a centralized intake system in their municipality, which is used to register clients and sorts them according to a vulnerability index. This index is assessed through a questionnaire called the SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool). Thus, agencies do not prioritize clients themselves, but often receive clients assigned to them through the system. Once they have an available place, agencies reach out to the intake system operator who often allocates the client on top of the waiting list to the agency. As there are limited places it makes sense and complies with HF principles that those assessed as being most vulnerable are being served first.

However, the intake system also causes problems. First, the prioritization might make sense because of the limited space, but it still leaves people who score low longer in their vulnerable state and thus exposed to a decline of their conditions until they are “vulnerable enough” to be on top of the list. The prioritization process can, therefore, be seen as a barrier to accessing housing for clients with lower scores.

STAFF C4: Clients that have lots going on...the list is very long at the CHF, so we're looking at people who have long shelter stays, rough sleepers, what's going on with that client, and it's crappy that we have to do it that way, we just don't have the capacity to house everybody at once, so we try to get the clients that are the most complex.

INTERVIEWER: 'Cause they are in the greatest need?

STAFF C3: The most vulnerable.

Some agencies reported that the time on the waiting list is being considered in the ranking of the clients, which could help to address the potential decline in waiting clients' situations:

Staff C1: Some people have been waiting for housing for a really long time, so we also take that into account, how long they have been waiting.

STAFF C2: Their triage is based on how long they've been homeless, how ill they are, and very often they're referred by an agency that has determined that the situation is so serious and has been for a long time. So, sometimes we get really really serious situations where we will triage in earlier just for

that person's health and safety, so it's something that's determined in partnership with the referring agency.

Another staff member reported that agencies try to alternate complex and non-complex clients:

Staff E5: We also take into consideration, like, how fast could we house this person? Maybe it can be a very fast housing for them, and we can move onto other folks. Those pieces are important. ... I don't want to speak for everybody, but I'd like to say that I think all of our Housing First agencies, we try to have a nice balance between folks who are complex and folks who are less complex.... We wanna give the complex folks an element of focus and quality that they deserve, without [us] getting burnt out, and housing somebody who is less complex

This approach comes with two benefits: first, non-complex clients can find housing before their situation worsens and second, it balances the caseload of staff so that they can take better care of their complex clients without burning themselves out. However, some highly vulnerable people may have to wait longer when lower acuity clients are picked.

A complementing solution to all the attempts to remedy this situation would be the set up of more programs and funding for more staff, to shorten the time on the waitlist as much as possible since the demand for a place in a program is high and to spread the caseload more between many people.

As noted above, the SPDAT questionnaire is used to determine clients' acuity and ranking. Many agencies reported that the intake system is not very accurate in assessing people, who are then assigned to programs that do not fit their needs. This inaccuracy means that these "non-fit" clients go through more cycles of eviction until they are finally sustainably housed or have to wait longer to get housed because they get pushed around from one program to another until they find one that fits their needs.

Staff E1: We do get participants however, that are not a fit for our program, right? There are the two levels of Housing First. There's the intensive case management and then the acute care, so the ICM and the ACT teams. Sometimes we get a participant that's been screened in at a lower acuity, so they don't present as having serious mental health or needing high levels of intervention. But then we find

that out three months later and we're like, "Okay, this wouldn't have been a fit. You would have been better served by a higher acuity program or permanent supportive housing, but we didn't know about it at the time," so then it's really the struggle to get them connected to the appropriate resource. It's not necessarily turning them away. Like we wouldn't be the appropriate program for them. We're not offering the level of service that they need.

Staff FM3: So rapid rehousing is supposed to work mainly with clients that are lower barriers than Housing First.... We've done Housing First and rapid rehousing and clients are ... they're almost jumping. It just all depends on how they score when they come into the program. And the scoring isn't really accurate all the time, so they might not tell the truth or ... Because we get a lot of clients that might score super low, but when they come into the program, they could've scored a 50, which is almost the highest. (...) Our Staff are fully trained in Housing First, they've all done it. So if we do get a higher risk client, then that's- Yeah, we just do it [place them in HF]. It's no different than someone ... A point score is really hard to determine their needs and their barriers. So someone ... It might be a 20 point gap, but the person that scored super low might have extremely bad mental health, while the person that's scored really high might have mental health, addictions, physical health [problems]. So their score is completely different, but this person might be high as need as the person that's scored really high. It all depends on their needs. And I find a score on a paper doesn't do justice to what they need.

Being sorted into the wrong program can have devastating effects on these clients' housing sustainability since they do not get the support they need and can open up a cycle of evictions.

Staff E1: There is no hard and fast rule on our inability to continue to rehouse people. But it gets to a point where people can burn our staff out. It's a lot of work to house them and then house them again. And now they have that landlord reference of, "Well, he just trashed my apartment and cost \$40000 worth of damage." What landlord is going to rent to that person, right? It just really can burn our staff out really quick and getting to the point again, after like three re-housings, where you're going, "I don't think this program. I don't think the Housing First is a fit. You might need higher acuity supports. You might need permanent supportive housing. We're just not seeming to be able to address and provide the support that you need."

Staff E2: There are times where we recognize that that person requires a higher level of service than our program is designed for. For instance the person might be very engaged, they're calling us all the time, but they're calling us and saying, "Have you found a place for me yet?" Well no, that's not how our program is meant to work. You're meant to be working together to find a unit. That could be an

indicator that something else is going on there. I might actually ask to meet with them personally as a program manager to assess what's happening. Sometimes what we find is that person is experiencing more severe mental health than maybe was previously indicated in the assessment, the original assessment. Or that their circumstances are such that they're in crisis or something to that effect which makes providing the services that we're designed for difficult.

Staff E3: We support individuals at ICM level. So those individuals are independent lease holders. We support them in securing and maintaining to a point but we are- my support workers work from nine to five. At the beginning, yes, they visit people one, or two, or sometimes three times a week in their home, but they're not there 24/7. So in order to be appropriate for our program, you have to have a certain level of independent living skills; an ability to maintain your home without constant staff support. So we have had to escalate some individuals who may be too high acuity for our program where they may be more appropriate for supportive housing where there is 24/7 staff support, medical support. Where the fact that they're using isn't going to get them evicted, that kind of thing.

Higher acuity clients need more supports, which can be tough to provide for staff within their parameters as HF workers. It can burn out the staff, whose caseload is supposed to be oriented to lower acuity clients, and takes away a place as well as reducing staff energy for other clients. Ultimately, it demonstrates that the right to housing of these non-fit clients is rarely realized quickly, which suggests discrimination through an improper assessment tool. Additionally, some staff reported that the SPDAT questions are intrusive and they would rather use a less brash questionnaire.

Staff C1: We're using NSQ as like the new SPDAT. It's supposed to be a little less intrusive than the SPDAT, SPDAT goes into a lot of detail, so this one is aimed to not do that, but still answer the questions we need to know. So they're not telling their story over and over again to everyone.

Interviewer: Who would you prioritize for housing?

Staff E4: I mean, we you know, we basically work off the bi-names list, for our housing first work. For the individuals that we're not housing through housing first, it really is kind of using a least intrusive alternative to provide resources for them. So it's a bit of a mish-mashy system, we're learning as we go, but we really. For the housing folks it's really based on the by name list, for the non-housing first folks it's based on first come, first serve and we ascribe to a least intrusive alternative model which means we basically support people only as much as we need to in order for them to be successful.

Staff also explained on how they deal with non-fit clients, as they refuse to let their clients down. A structural upside is that clients that get referred from other programs are at least prioritized, which speeds their re-housing process. But there are also reports of struggle to find the right program for some clients or to get them in there since they have been wrongly sorted in the beginning. One participant put an emphasis on the importance of collaboration between agencies and programs, in particular with respect to non-fit clients, to ensure they are helped to the best of the agencies' ability.

Staff E5: We work with each other. Lots and lots and lots of collaboration. That's very important; collaboration is very important, and also in terms of finding our participants.... it can speed things up for the participant, and it can also give us a little bit more insight into the person's life. I'm seeing that as Housing First has evolved, we're really becoming community-minded about ... Not that we weren't before, but it's just ... I guess we just realized that we're all in this together. We'll all here for the same. And it's important to work together. ...there are still gaps in the system for some complex folks where there isn't quite a good fit, so they stay stuck for a while in the system, and then that's also where collaboration is very important. Then you try to come together to find ... of all the options available, even though it's not ideal, it's the least harmful if that makes sense.

Participant E5 answered the last question of their interview (“Do you want to add something?”) by pleading for better options and program additions for all these non-fit clients and repeats how important collaboration is to make their service provision work.

4.1.1.3. Violent Clients

Some agencies stated that they would not work with violent clients and either drop them or refer them to agencies that will.

STAFF C1: Some of them we don't [rehouse]. ...If there's a lot of violence, that's probably the main one or engaging in illegal activities that we're not stopping in our program that we couldn't get a handle on. We wouldn't advocate for them in another program, it doesn't mean they wouldn't get picked up somewhere else. ... We provide them the resources to do that and let them know where they can go to facilitate them again, but we won't help them in the process. ... I think that we're really good at being creative and trying to find solutions to issues that we've faced, that doesn't mean that it works for everyone, but yeah usually like the violence is the one that we can't work with. If it's a danger to everyone else in the building, then it's hard to justify keeping them in that program.

Interviewer: Is there an occasion where you would not seek to house someone?

Staff C5: If they happen to have an extremely violent past, right? You know, coming from jail, and they stab-

Staff C8: -sexual assault.

Staff C6: Like sexual, or pedophile. You know just....It has to do with safety, right? We're not trained to take care of that stuff. It's not our you know, so we have to be-

Staff C8: -we have to be safe. And we do have the escalation training and all that sort of stuff. We do have to be safe.

These concerns about client violence were focused on safety of staff and of neighbours, and although one agency mentioned staff having received escalation training, staff did not feel trained or safe enough to deal with these situations. While it is understandable that caution is advised where violent criminal activity is detected, not all violent clients are involved in crime or should be turned away due to crime in their past.

The above quoted cases were more severe, as they were perceived to present a risk for staff and neighbours, and are thus valid to be turned away. However, There are also cases where violent clients are turned away by one agency while another one is able to work with them (as the next quote will show), indicating a problem in service provision. The difference between these agencies seems to be the ability of staff to navigate these situations, based on more experience or knowledge.

Staff FM1: We have never turned anybody away for violence. We've never turned anybody away ever. As a matter of fact, we have a reputation of taking individuals who have been turned away from other agencies. Again, we're very immersed in the chronic homelessness, it's what we do in the community. All of the Staff here have spent time – hours, days, months – at the drop in. We're very familiar with these individuals and one violent outburst or verbal attack is not who that person is. Oftentimes, we can find a way around that. Not to say that we tolerate verbal abuse or anything because we don't, but what we don't do, is what we don't engage it. There's no punishment, but again, we would just say, "okay, this is not a healthy conversation, we'll pick this up at our next appointment." Oftentimes, an individual or a participant learns very quickly that through aggression and things like that, they're not gonna gain ground. They're not gonna gain what they want because the staff don't have to tolerate that type of behaviour. We treat people with respect, we expect that back. But, we've never, ever not housed somebody.

Staff C2: We have Staff meetings every month, we go over all possible health and safety issues, we review all the incident reports for the month about could that have been prevented? If not, should it have been handled differently? And we talk as a group about all these things every month and that's part of supporting people to be

safe and feel safe. And we talk about all the tenants and how to approach them, and how to work with them. It's no different than the people who come to live there, it's a process. And I think that's a very important piece, that Staff communication.

Violent outbursts do not seem to be rare and working with violent clients should be anticipated as inherent to the work as HF worker and thus be accompanied by proper preparation and training. As described by staff, the value of experience in these situations cannot be underestimated. Training and stability (in regards to job fluctuations) of staff is a crucial part of successful HF service provision. The inability of some agencies to work with violent clients often originates in a lack of support and training of Staff, which results in the discrimination against violent clients in HF service provision. Staff need to be properly prepared for difficult and overwhelming situations and have to be supported and encouraged to take care of themselves to prevent burnout and agency hopping. Only then are they able to confidently navigate these situations and to build long-term relationships with clients instead of dropping them:

Staff C2: Stabilization of staff is very very vital, and in this world, it's hard, because this is a tough arena that we are subjecting ourselves to every day, and not everybody can do that

STAFF C2: How are you looking after yourself? What are you doing for you? Cause you're still gonna have to face people cursing, swearing, do whatever...a hallway that somebody just vomited in, or...the reality is that this is the population and this is what comes with it. It doesn't matter if you agency hop, you still have the same group of people. So how are you looking after yourself? What are you doing to educate yourself? What are you doing to just take care of yourself? And that's an important piece that [agency] really makes an effort for the Staff. And I feel part of looking after people is reviewing health and safety, is reviewing the incidents. ... The other thing [agency] does is immediately on hire, you have counseling available that you don't have to pay for. [Agency] pays for counseling. I think it costs us \$10 a person per month to make sure that they all have counseling immediately available. So there's a variety of ways of having people look after themselves. ... and it's knowing that it's having that same person around makes a huge difference.

Knowing how to communicate with violent clients was the key component in all presented answers. Communication is also the first step in relationship building and crucial for staff to understand where violent behaviour is coming from and how to help the clients best.

Staff C2: I actually sat and talked with them (laughs) and I said to him one day “what makes you the most angry?” “I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” he said. “I go to the doctor and they use words I don’t understand, they keep doing this, they keep doing that, I’m still in pain and I don’t even know what’s wrong with me.” So I pulled up a body on the computer and he brought me his paperwork. So I showed him the words, and then I showed him on the body where that was and what it meant. “Can I call you when I go to my doctor so you can be there for when I see my---” “sure, I’m fine with that if the doctor is.” So that’s what we did. Every time he had a doctor’s appointment his doctor, I was on the phone, and while he was there they'd have their appointment and then he didn't break things anymore. He stopped breaking things. And he used to come to see me when he was emotional, and he would cry. He would literally cry. Then he moved into a much more independent living situation.

In this example, violence is often just a symptom of a larger problem, and care and conversation can help the client and will often stop the violence. Communication ensures clients know the consequences of their behaviour, which can turn the situation into a learning experience. It can include reminders to clients that they can choose if they want the support of the program, and if they do, they have to work with it to stay housed:

Staff E1: If it's the participants themselves that are trashing their units and being evicted and when we do these rehousing meetings, there is no acknowledgment or no understanding of or accountability for what happened in the behaviour, we'll try again. If it happens again, okay, we'll try again. If it happens again, okay, we'll try again, but at that point, we're going: "This is it. There's not a lot else we can do. We're trying to offer you these supports and connect you to these resources. You don't seem to want to." So, at that point we're saying: "Do you even want to be in our program?" And again, we leave it to that client choice. We're going: “we’ve tried everything we can the last three times. Obviously, what we're doing doesn't work for you, maybe you need to connect with something else.”

In some cases violence can also indicate that clients’ acuity might be too high for scattered-site HF housing programs. In such cases congregate housing sites with 24h support might be more helpful as Staff C2 explains. Here, evictions because of destruction of the unit can more often be avoided: firstly by having a closer relationship with landlords, who can rely on the financial support of the agency and thus might be less likely to evict a client right away; and secondly by using hardier materials for the structure of the units to limit damage.

STAFF C2: People are violent, and places are continually being flooded and destroyed, what should a landlord do? And that’s our guys, right? Which is why I said we need the cinder block buildings and we need (laughs)...All these things so that the damage is minimal and easily repairable. And in fact, I just

said to the landlord because I have one guy that we've come to learn from him being in the assessment room, which is the other bonus of an assessment room, is that we get to know their behaviours. So we have one fellow when he's angry, he'd always break the window. So we've had to replace that window like three times in the span of two months. So moving forward I contacted the landlord and I said: "I think that [agency] will pay for plexiglass, because clearly this person keeps breaking windows and there's no way they're going to be able to afford replacing the window every month." And they're actually very willing and open to look in. They recommended a different kind of glass, they can't do plexiglass because of fire reasons, but there's another type of glass that is a lot more durable, and we're just gonna do it. [...] And the reason for that, and this is how places operate, Stepping Stone is still dealing with it, is it's supposed to be to the benefit of the landlord so they can always be fixing whatever damage happens and then charging us for it. [...] You get damage. You're gonna have damage. You've got 2-year-old behaviour without a parent to wrap their arms around them and hold them and let them get through their emotion, so you're going to have smashing, banging, busting, breaking, whatever goes on. But it is...it's a moment in time. It's a moment in time. Now, clean up your mess, this might cost you, especially if it was a broken window. This may cost you, but let's move forward. Versus you're out in 24 hours, right?

But also here the training and experience of staff plays a crucial role, as violent behaviour still has to be navigated and de-escalated.

Staff C2: So and again like I say, this isn't easy for staff, because on paydays which we had recently, you now..., we house 53 men, so out of the 53 you have a minimum of 30 that are overindulgent, and because it's been a long time since they were paid, since December was a month where they got paid around the 20th, before Christmas, so they have now gone like 6 weeks, so you better believe they're going nutty. And you get the behaviour that comes with that, and they're men, so you get testosterone, and you've got a group of people who've lived on the street for years who don't take shit from anybody, including each other, and so you really have quite an environment to work in and to try and keep...you're continually de-escalating a lot at payday, but because there are relationships that are developed over time, we're able to do that. New staff use what we all turn to when we panic and that's authority and control, right? I believe it's a natural human reaction when we're in a panic situation.

It shows that no matter the acuity of a client, proper training and experience in de-escalating such situations is key, not only for staff to feel safe, but also for clients to receive a chance in the program. Staff C2 exemplified the value of congregate housing for high acuity violent clients, and the experience of staff for dealing with violent situations. They provided a

counter example to the congregate housing site of Staff C1 further above, which seemed to evict violent clients.

Although all agencies reported that they try to work with these individuals to some extent initially, if every attempt to convince the client to end criminal affiliations fails, they have to pull back to ensure staff safety. In effect, the client is offered a choice between staying in the program or continuing with their activity. This is not a gap in HF service provision as such; rather, it is necessary to protect another set of human rights – those of workers.

Staff E1: But there will be times where individuals will have to be turned away due to safety concerns. Individuals with gang affiliations are usually the most ... individuals that have to be turned away, just because it's a kind of unmanageable situation for one FSW [Follow-up Support Worker] to go in if you don't know who's in the apartment, you don't know what's happening, if there are weapons and dealing and stuff like that. So in that case, we might not rehouse someone, but we always work with them initially.

A solution to this situation could be a co-operation with police or parole officers, as in a case Participant E5 described. With the consent of the client, HF agencies can work with law enforcement to ensure HF staff safety and continued support of the client. Communication and client choice are again the key elements - the client can choose to consent to this solution or can choose to try to work with another agency:

Staff E5: So safety, Staff safety, is important to us as well, so we take into consideration if someone has a violent past. Somebody comes out of the federal system. ...if someone has a violent past we won't necessarily turn them away - we will say: "Okay, let's look at the context of what has happened to this person, and let's look at ..." We can double-up the Staff. If we have to, with consent of the participant, we can use the help of the police. With consent, again, we can do things like contact the parole officer to create a safety plan, and we can kind of gauge, okay, so what would it look like if this person was to live in an apartment? Or would they maybe need some kind of permanent supportive housing? Or would it have to be something like a halfway house, or what does that look like?

Staff safety should be paramount in service provision. They therefore need more training to be able to assess how dangerous a situation might be after offering a client the choice to either stop the violence/criminal activity and be part of the HF program or to exit the program. Dropping a violent client without giving them a chance means their needs (which

might be the cause of violence) stay unaddressed and their housing process gets in the best case delayed, leaving them in their vulnerable state. Staff from agencies who do not work with violent clients are not as well trained or prepared for working with this population, and need more support to deescalate situations to better assess the situation. Staff also need a better support system to take care of themselves, so that they are stable and able to support clients as best as they can. This also benefits agencies (through greater staff retention) and clients (through greater continuity of care).

4.1.1.4. Indigenous Culture

Indigenous clients experience another important aspect of discrimination within service provision. This was highlighted by one participant - an Indigenous cultural guide, who plays a special role within HF agencies in Edmonton. The guide's work is to bring HF Staff to a closer and deeper understanding of Indigenous culture so that they can, in turn, provide better services and have meaningful culturally informed conversations with their clients. The guide helps HF Staff experience Indigenous culture by taking them to sweats and medicine pickings so that they can see and feel for themselves what Indigenous spirituality means:

Staff E6: Another key component to it is that the opportunities that we provide are away from their participants, so the workers come without having to wear that worker hat. So if they're bringing a participant with them they would have to be in that supporter role and they're not really gonna get out what they need. So it's away from their participants, it's 100 percent voluntary and traditionally the culture is learned by, we learn by doing, we learn by participating. And if you think about a classroom session, we'll engage our mind. [But] when you actually go to a sweat or you go medicine picking, you see it, you smell it, you taste it, you hear it, you feel it, it touches more senses. I think when you look at Indigenous training what it is, for me I think that's the only way to really educate workers, front line workers, is by them doing it.

The guide was the only person I talked to providing these sorts of services. Some other agencies specialized in working with Indigenous clients and only employed Indigenous Staff:

STAFF C5: Yeah, so with intake we always ask like are there things that the youth is interested in culturally, it could be ceremonies with sweat lodges, it could be doing beading or crafts, arts, it could be going to events like pow wows or round dances, so we ask from the beginning if these are things they're interested in, also our consent and our rights, they have a right to a cultural and Indigenous resource too, so if youth ever need anything, if they want an elder, we can provide that.

Staff C8: Coming off the reserve yeah, you don't know any of that stuff. You don't know how to, advocate for yourself, talk for yourself, you don't know how the system works and you know, because people think you get everything for free, they're not gonna help you or tell you.

Staff C6: Don't get me wrong, we do have our way of communicating, but the expected way to communicate in this population is-

Staff C8: Yeah, natives coming off the reserve don't know much. And that's a lot of reason why our clients like aboriginal case managers because they feel at home with us. They can tell the difference, and they have that homey feeling.

Around 28% of homeless people in Alberta are Indigenous and these specialized HF agencies are not capable to take care of them all. Thus, many Indigenous clients are in HF programs that are not specialized in their needs. Moreover, non-Indigenous Staff often receives only brief Indigenous awareness training in a classroom setting, which does not prepare them sufficiently to provide adequate services for Indigenous clients. The Indigenous guide explained the situation before his position was created and how workers and ultimately their clients benefit from the cultural experience:

Staff E6: At that point, cultural interventions was the frontline worker handing the participant a calendar of events. And that was kind of the extent of cultural conversations that was across the board. Workers felt uncomfortable even bringing it up, some of the workers said that you know as a non-Indigenous person I don't feel I have the right to talk about somebody's culture. They were uncomfortable even bringing it up because they didn't know anything about it. And a couple of them had a bad experience bringing it up with a participant and that was enough for them to say I don't ever want to have that conversation again.

[...] If you look at the demographic that make up the teams across the sector primarily not Indigenous workers, a lot of them you know ... would have their Indigenous awareness or aboriginal awareness be either a half day or a full day in a classroom setting. And essentially all that this was check a box saying hey we provided that training for our workers, but it didn't do anything to inform them on what a sweat lodge was, what the medicines did, what is a pipe ceremony, what happens in individual one on one traditional healing with an elder. So those workers were not having those in-house cultural conversations. A lot of our workers weren't properly taught in social work school, in whatever school they are, about what Indigenous culture is, what it looks like, how distinct it is, that's another thing to right?

[...] Yeah, so this is actually a really cool example of you know a spiritual intervention that never would have happened if this person hadn't been going to these things. There was a worker she was a follow up support worker and she was working with a mom and a kid, they were housed together and the child was having trouble sleeping. The child was speaking to herself in the room. And the mom was concerned, right? Because, you know my kid is speaking to herself, she must be crazy, right? And I think for a lot of workers that you know are only trained in those western interventions that 'ah oh she needs to see a psychologist, there is something going on'. But the worker said 'well what if there is a spirit in there' because we are taught, as children they are very pure and they can often see and sense things that we as adults can't. So she said well I can bring in an elder to smudge the room with prayer to maybe release anything that's here. And the mom was like 'ah okay let's try it out'. And the frontline worker was a new Canadian not from Canada new to this you know way of believing, but she was continually going to these sweats and sitting down with elders and they brought in an elder, they smudged they place, they did a prayer, and she stopped talking to herself, right? And I heard that I was just like that would never happen without her going to these things.

[...] I think our push to engage with Indigenous culture has dramatically affected our program and specifically in the connection to doing a home blessing. I wholehearted believe in the concept of place making, so creating a sense that this unit is mine. This is my home, right? And I'm going to be living here and I need to take care of it [...] We found anecdotally, this isn't the case anymore, but for the first year that every unit we home blessed was successful. There were no evictions based on people that were willing to engage with this and have this ceremony in their home and connect to that elder right off the hog. Whether that's driven by the participant being ready for that kind of support and connection or whether the support and connection helped them to move forward, we don't know because it's anecdotal information, but that really shone a light on my staff of going, "Hey, there's really something to this that just harping on about paying the rents isn't getting us or hasn't gotten us where we need to go, but this totally different aspect of support is showing a positive result. Let's do more of that." It really opened the door for my staff to, one, engage with spiritual and cultural learning, so they really understand what they are offering and then two, to be able to be comfortable in offering that as an avenue of support. It really changed our practice that way in seeing the success of the participants by offering something a little bit off of the clinical norm.

The importance of adequate cultural training of Staff for the housing success of clients cannot be underestimated. Staff needs to be given the right tools and knowledge to be able to help clients best and adequately in regards to their mental health, their physical health, their emotional support needs, but also in regards to their spiritual needs:

Staff E6: most of us know the medicine wheel, the wheel of life, with those 4 components of us human beings: Our mental, emotional, physical and our spiritual. And again, in this sector our workers are so well trained at mental interventions, go to a psychologist a psychiatrist, if they're having emotional problems, having that support worker, somebody to talk to. Physical elements are ensured, finding housing, access to doctors, but in social work school that spiritual component is not talked about. ... So how do you re-engage people culturally, with that spiritual conversation, because always using this analogy too, so you're working with a participant that has an addiction with alcohol. And you bring up treatment once and he says fuck you I don't want it, are you gonna say 'okay I never have to have that conversation again phew'. No, no because we are so well trained at knowing the importance of having interventions for addiction that we're gonna re-engage, we are gonna bring it up in a different way, that's where we hope to get with that spiritual. And like I said, it could be, spiritual could be Catholic, it could be Christian, it could be...some people are spiritual about yoga, some people are spiritual about gardening. Right, but there is that one thing within every one of us, where we do those ritualistic things that provide that spiritual well-being. And they do a lot for it to any client regardless of their race or nationality.

Spirituality in any form is important for well-being. But the question that the interviewee raises is how can Staff help Indigenous clients if they barely learn about Indigenous culture and about how to have a cultural conversation. These conversations can be complicated by history and prejudices. Historically, social workers were the ones who took Indigenous children away and brought them to residential schools, leaving understandable distrust and a power imbalance in today's social work. Additionally, Indigenous clients often face daily discrimination within systems and have negative experiences with other social or government workers, furthering their distrust in HF workers. This is where the work of the participant comes into play, who guides Staff to an understanding of Indigenous culture from where they can have genuine conversations with their Indigenous clients by sharing their own experiences of sweats and medicine pickings.

Additionally, the guide stressed the importance of self-care of Staff. Describing how strenuous and emotionally demanding the work of a social worker can be, the interviewee stresses the multiple benefits of Indigenous ceremonies. They can not only serve as a learning experience but also provide self-care for Staff:

The frontline workers - our follow up support workers, our housing outreach workers - those frontline workers are exposed to huge amounts of trauma, vicarious trauma. It's one of the hardest jobs in the

entire city, I have no doubt about it. ...I don't know how many times in my past frontline roles, you know I told people what I did and 'oh that must be so rewarding' or 'that's so nice that you're doing that. And it's like no, it's a hard job and it requires professionals to do it. And our workers are realizing how much they're relying on the sweats, on the medicine for themselves, for their own self-care. And again that it's gonna go a long way for that knowledge to be filtered down to our participants when our workers are utilizing this stuff and feeling it for themselves, they will be able to talk from an informed perspective and share their experiences and that's gonna be enough for our participants to say 'hey, my white worker can go to a sweat or go you know, utilize the smudge and this is what it feels for them, I want some of that, because that's part of who I am'. Ceremony and culture are in the DNA of Indigenous people like I said it's longer than the last couple of hundred years that it's been kind of stripped away and lost, but it's there and again we just got to take that long-term committed approach to solving the problem.

It was talking with the Indigenous guide in particular that raised my awareness for the discrimination of Indigenous culture in the service provision of HF. This interview was more set up as an expert interview and entailed questions different from the other interviews, based on the guide's different work from HF Staff. The results reveal a lot about the cultural adequacy of HF programs in Alberta. It is important to note that all agencies reported mandatory Indigenous awareness training, showing the intention to provide adequate services, but this went barely over the 1.5 days the guide described. There are some Indigenous agencies in Alberta, but they cannot take care of all Indigenous clients, which is why cultural adequacy in non-Indigenous HF agencies is so crucial to ensure every client gets the same level of support. This interviewee was the only person I heard of, providing these sorts of services for Staff, in Alberta. It suggests that there is a lack of cultural provision for Indigenous clients, due to a lack of cultural experience and education of the Staff. This becomes more alarming when looking at the large population of Indigenous HF clients, and the importance of spiritual well being for overall wellness, which ultimately influences sustainable housing.

4.1.2. Client Factors

Many staff members reported factors associated with clients that turn into barriers when trying to access or sustain housing. These factors mostly cause problems during the transition from the street to a sustainable home. Access problems often involve struggles of clients to make appointments and the presentation in front of landlords at first meetings. Struggles to settle into their new life and to keep their home in many cases originate in

loneliness, and in the fact that many of the client's street friends and family are still living in homelessness.

4.1.2.1. Self-Presentation

The transition from living in homelessness into navigating the process to housing successfully can be hard for clients. Staff reported that clients often struggle with making appointments or to present well in front of landlords because of addictions and mental health challenges and because of the unpredictable circumstances that come along with homelessness.

Staff E4: I mean we work with humans, and humans are human. They have all kinds of challenges that they face and you know things they have to overcome and those kinds of things, ... I mean they battle with things like addictions and mental health challenges and those kinds of things so sometimes making it to appointments and those kinds of things can be fairly difficult for them.

Staff E1: Mental health and addictions would be probably the next biggest barrier. The issue or the barrier there is when you go to meet with a landlord, they don't necessarily present very well, right? Because they may have again, been sleeping rough. They may have been using the night before or morning of. They might show up intoxicated. They might show up with social anxiety or depression or paranoia. When they're sitting with a landlord and the landlord who's not trauma-informed or not necessarily sympathetic to working with someone who has these barriers starts drilling them on, "Well, do you use drugs?" There can be a bit of a panic. That relationship can break down really quickly. Yeah, poverty, mental health would be the big ones.

These issues were reported by many staff and are therefore not isolated incidents. It is understandable that clients struggle with these problems, as the very condition of being eligible for HF lies in being chronically homeless, facing addiction and struggling with mental illness. It is also understandable that landlords should treat HF clients as any other prospective tenant since they are supposed to sign the same lease as non-HF tenants. Staff reported that they try to navigate these situations by advocating for their clients in front of landlords, but they are not always successful. This means that there is an unaddressed barrier for many HF clients in transitioning off the street, which staff cannot always remedy.

Staff C2: And when Calgary housing evicts, sometimes I can convince them to let us give the people another chance. So sometimes. But there's a number of different higher-up bodies in Calgary housing,

so you have, you have your property managers, then you have your maintenance supervisor or directors, then you have the person that is responsible for all the property manages, so once you're at this level, they never let you. That's it, it's over.

Interviewer: What do you do when there are problems between clients and landlords?

Staff E1: [...] so sometimes our participants get targeted for issues that are happening in a building that's not actually them. Again, being that advocate for them. [...] We had a family just recently, they were housed for five months and they were graduating from our program [...] We said, "Your year's up, so we're taking a step back. It's now between you guys," and he [landlord] was not happy, so he was like, "No, I'm evicting them," because their unit wasn't in the best condition, but they worked really hard to get it cleaned up. He's like, "Nah, I can't take the risk. They're gone." We had to go and talk to the landlord and talk him of the ledge and talk to the participants about the expectations from the landlord and get everybody in the same room and try to break it down item by item, what are the concerns? How do we resolve the concern? How do we resolve it until there's kind of an agreement between everyone that okay, this is the timeline and what we're going to do and how it's going to work.

A possible solution would be more housing that is owned by HF agencies, who then take on a landlord role or sell it to private landlords that are non-discriminatory towards HF clients. This is a departure from the reliance on scattered site private rental apartments that traditionally characterizes HF, but more diverse housing options have been noted as beneficial in the literature before (see section 2.1.2.4.).

4.1.2.2. Guest Management

The change in living conditions also often comes along with feelings of loneliness in a new home between unknown neighbours. Additionally, clients often have street friends and family, who are still living in homelessness. It is only "human" and therefore understandable that clients let them sleep at their places. But guest management is one of the biggest problems between landlords and clients and often leads to eviction.

HF clients sign standard tenancy leases, which ensure that they are treated the same as non-HF tenants, but it also means that they have to uphold the same standards as other tenancy leaseholders. These leases usually forbid non-tenants living in the apartments.

Staff C6: And then you have landlords being mad at their tenants for letting other people stay with them when they're family. Where are they gonna stay? How can people humanly sleep when your cousins sleeping outside? Or your aunt, or your uncle, or even your parents or your children?

Staff E6: And what other cultural barriers they face, you know...family. You look at Indigenous people in the city, high rates of homelessness, high rates of poverty, you know who is gonna- lot of times when someone will get housed and then their family members that are in the city that are struggling need a place to stay, they're not gonna say no, they're gonna come over, right? And from a landlord perspective that's a no no. That if you're not on the lease you can't stay. So that gets a lot of our participants in trouble that they get evicted because they're having family members over, they're having friends over. That's another cultural barrier they face.

Staff E3: Most of the folks we're housing are individuals who are sleeping rough, [but] no one really sleeps rough or camps by themselves. Everyone has a lot of street family and so if we are housing one individual, but we are not given any accurate information about what their network looks like, usually those folks will move in. Because it's hard. They've lived together in their valley for a number of years and now one's housed, but the other ones aren't; they feel responsible for their family. Our street outreach works with individuals sleeping rough, so they are usually pretty well versed in the networks of that individual that might be referred. So we'll ask, "Do they have a partner? Do they have acquaintances they are camping with?" so that we can just work with that entire group separately so that we're trying to prevent those issues that we've seen happen before. So by working with housing them in the same neighbourhood, if we have that capacity.

STAFF C4: So the biggest barrier is guest management, it's huge. So you're living on the street with folks, the first thing you wanna do is bring them home. It's establishing boundaries, healthy boundaries, what does that look like? And do you need to get by? Isolation is huge. People are lonely. So you start to go through those kinds of processes, we can give them...Alberta Works sets them up with furniture... But when you work around what does it look like, working with community, being a good neighbour, you're kinda starting there.

Guest management is a big barrier, mentioned by nearly all interviewed staff. It is again only "human" and thus understandable that clients let their friends and family sleep with them, as they care for them and feel responsible. Since landlords hold clients to the same standards as other tenants it is also understandable that this presents an issue for them and can be a legitimate eviction reason. Staff often try to avoid this situation by being aware of the street network of clients, so that they can possibly house them as well. They also report

that they support clients to create bonds with the new neighbours and community, which can help the feeling of loneliness, and reduce the need for overnight guests.

4.1.3. External Factors

Another major obstacle to housing is discrimination by landlords and external systems, which are in touch with HF programs and influence the programs' success in housing clients.

4.1.3.1. Discriminatory Landlords

There is some sort of available affordable housing stock in all municipalities but the unwillingness of many landlords to work with HF clients and insufficient financial supplements narrow the options, impairing clients' chances of finding long-term sustainable housing.

Staff E1: As much as Edmonton has a wealth of vacancy at the moment, a high vacancy percentage, the percentage of landlords that are willing to work with our population, cuts that in half.

Interviewer: What would you say are some common barriers to successfully house a client?

Staff FM3: That would be the landlords having their stigma. It's an ongoing issue. And there's a major landlord in town [company name], they won't even accept our clients. They are the biggest landlord in town, they have several units everywhere. And they hold the social housing for all of Fort McMurray. So they pick and choose who gets social housing, so none of our clients in over a year received social housing. They just say they're not a priority because they're in a program. They wanna pick on our clients. About six, seven months ago they said they were going crime free buildings. So they associate all of our clients with crime. (...) Sometimes housing is one of the biggest barriers, trying to find landlords on board with our program. We do have a few that will call us and be like, "Hey, I have an empty unit. Do you have anyone?" Which is awesome, but I wish we had more of those.

It is important to mention, that Indigenous clients have to fight with additional stigma due to racism. The interviewed Indigenous guide described that Indigenous clients on average have to go to two or three more landlords to find one that is willing to rent to them:

Staff E6: Well I think a really big one, well they face multiple barriers to housing. Well, racism is a huge one. Our housing outreach workers talk multiple times of how for an Indigenous client they have to go to two or three more landlords than they would for a non-Indigenous client. Because of the stigma that attaches to a homeless Indigenous person. The immediate default reaction from landlords is they

are going to be partying, there's going to be- they're bringing in multiple family members, it's going to be a drug house, it's going to be a flop house, I am not renting to that person. So racism is a big one.

Another issue is that many landlords lack knowledge of Indigenous culture. This can lead to evictions based on misunderstandings. As many staff reported, one of the biggest reasons for eviction is when Indigenous clients smudge their unit. Smudging is part of many Indigenous cultures and can be an integral part of home-making. The landlords unknowingly mistake the smell for drugs and evict the clients. However, the Indigenous guide also reported, that after explaining smudging and its meaning to landlords this problem can often be solved.

Staff E6: I think if there is an issue, after that initial kind of conversation about what it [smudging] is and the benefit of it, it really- the issue is usually solved there. I can't really even think of one example where a landlord has ... said 'no I don't care'. So it may have happened but I don't think it's that big of an issue.

The discrimination HF clients face is thus often associated with prejudice, racism or ignorance. Many Staff members try to work against these stigmas by advocating for their clients and by attempting to educate landlords on their clients' situation, on trauma and on mental health.

Staff E5: We have some people who have been on their bands, their reserves for so long, came into the city and started in homelessness or started couch-surfing that way. We've experienced ... Some of the barriers are as well, unfortunately, racism. Just the stereotype of homelessness itself, of, "Oh, why don't you just get a job?"-kind of thing, and are they gonna be lazy? I mean, I hate to say it. I mean, it's there. It's an ugly reality, but it is a barrier, and we have to work through that, and we work through that by educating and through continual advocacy.

Staff C6: Well, they come from vulnerability. People like to take advantage of them just because some people think they're better than others. So I guess I like to think that we kind of protect them and like you said we advocate for them. 'Cause they got a lot of hoops to jump, and some of them don't have the resources to live up to those hoops and to live up to those things that people put on them, those expectations. They're already beaten down, they've already been hurt enough. They don't feel very justifiably okay to do those things.

It shows again the vital role and the efforts of Staff to smoothen barriers to the right to housing, which are not addressed by the way HF programs are set up.

4.1.3.2. Landlords' Experiences

Next to racism and prejudice, landlords also discriminate against clients because they had bad experiences with former HF tenants and lacked support from HF agencies. As a result, landlords felt left alone and feared having to bear the costs for demolitions through clients by themselves:

STAFF E4: landlords are starting to increasingly grow disillusioned about the Housing First program as a whole, and I think it's related to just how things like exceptional costs. So those are ... opportunities to help landlords fix up their place if it's been left in a lot of damage. It's been a little bit murky around how we manage that. ...landlords are feeling like they're kind of being left to fix these messes that agencies are creating for them. So it's this constant trying to figure out how to deal with landlords, it's actually, my staff have talked to me about, have learned that there's a website that landlords use, it's kind of like an America's Most Wanted type of list, but it's really these are people you don't want to rent to. Quite concerned about that. So we're really continuously trying to figure out ways to work around that and those kinds of things, so that's one barrier.

Staff FM7: Biasness towards the program is a big barrier to housing as well because individuals associate a particular vision with regards to Housing First clients for the program and then they don't want to take anybody in because they don't want to take the risks of having their apartment neglected.

Staff FM8: And some people have just had bad experiences with the program, unfortunately. And sometimes that is out of our control when things like that happen, but I think some of our landlords have had bad experiences where now it's kind of good because the city will kind of kick in and we can submit a request to get damages paid. And they will pay for that. So that's helped a lot of landlords come on board now. Because they know no matter what happens there it's going to be covered. But prior to that, it was hard to get the private landlords because of the bad experiences that we had.

As one of the interviewees stated, a solution to the problem of damages is funding from HF programs or from the municipality to cover landlords' repair costs. It is a crucial step for landlords and necessary to further future co-operation and thereby to expand the housing stock available for HF clients instead of minimizing it.

4.1.3.3. Slumlords

In addition, not all landlords that are willing to work with HF, fulfill their tenancy duties. Many Staff reported issues with what they called “slumlords”, who are out for financial gains but do not provide safe and adequate units. Trying to avoid these landlords diminishes the number of available units further:

STAFF C3: we have had landlords that are just out there for financial gain, and we’re starting to notice...When we’ve noticed that in the past we’ve cut ties with them. They’re not maintaining their property despite multiple attempts at contact, or yeah, not fulfilling their duties as a landlord, despite us trying to step in and trying to make sure that they’re doing it. They’ll just keep coming back with “where my money?” even though we’re talking to them like they have to address these things. That’s one example I can think of.

Staff C9: It's really hard, especially for our agency. Because there's a misconception out there in the general public that natives get everything for free. So, our landlords think that we're getting all this free money from the government when our funding comes from the [Calgary] Homeless Foundation. We don't get free money from the government. So, they'll charge us for repairs, or things that are what they should be paying for, but they'll charge us for it.

Staff C6: So if there’s someone else who's in the building, then they busted something, "well let's just charge [Indigenous agency] because."

Staff C7: -"Your client was drunk". And how can we say anything either? 'Cause we don't know if he was using, or he's blacked out, it's hard to defend.

Staff C9: Plus it's hard enough to house our clients as it is. We have landlords that are those slumlords, and they're the only ones that would take our clients.

Staff C8: Yeah, and then the landlord would charge us for things that are his, like maybe a furnace, or windows, or upgrading stuff.

Staff C7: (...) if I walked up to the door and it's busted, I would have to take a picture just to show where my location is and that the damage was there when I went there. So then, say we have one, or more than one client from our agency, they [landlords] would be blaming me [that clients’ damaged the door].

The discrimination against Indigenous clients from other landlords means that agencies are often forced to work with these “slumlords”. A bigger housing stock owned by HF programs could help find adequate units for clients that are heavily stigmatized and remedy the situation. An example of such a building was presented by one agency:

Staff C5: so we own a building though, we call it [Name], we have 10 units, 9 of them is for the youth, 1 is for a staff, as a property manager, and for those we're very particular about who's in that housing, so those ones we're kind of like those are the hard-to-house kids. There are multiple barriers, like we recently had one youth who just had extreme mental health and addictions who was not capable but rough sleeping, so for safety and just concern, did not have the capacity where we literally had to set up the unit, get everything so as soon as we found him we got him in there, so that's rare, but that's helpful because we could have control over that, right, if it was scattered housing we couldn't do that.

4.1.3.4. Credentials

Another instance where prejudice and discrimination play together is the demand for certain credentials like credit checks, landlord references, former addresses or criminal records. For HF clients, many of these credentials may either be non-existent or very dated, which means landlords may not even give clients a chance. This sets them up for failure:

Staff E5: The common barriers of housing a client, participant? Oh, gosh. So I'm gonna start with the very basic ones, like why some people come to us. No credit, no ID. No landlord references, and then some people have never had an apartment before. They've couch-surfed their entire life.

Staff E3: So a lot of the barriers include things like credit checks. So often when someone's applying, and the landlord is saying, "We ran a credit check." So we try to supplement that concern by saying things like ... or writing letters of support, which often detail things like, "Okay so they might have a poor credit history." We set up their rent payments third party, your cheque would come directly from Alberta Works or AISH. And then if they are qualifying for a subsidy, the rest comes from Homeward Trust to ensure their rent is paid. And then we follow up before the fifth of the month to make sure that you've got the rent checks and if you haven't, we do that legwork to find out where it is kind of thing. So we try to combat that barrier.

Staff E3: We'll also be ... sometimes certain housings will require things like crime checks, landlord references, or previous addresses. A lot of folks don't have it. They've been living in the River Valley for five, six, fifteen years so they don't have landlord references or previous rental history; previous addresses. So those are barriers.

Meanwhile, having a criminal record can provoke prejudices and rejection, no matter if the record only stems from unpaid transit tickets, as the following Interviewee describes:

Staff E1: With a lot of the application process, they do request, "Hey, do you have a criminal record?" A lot of our folks do and it's often misrepresentative of who they are, so a lot of the criminal history we have is people with unpaid transit tickets that they failed to show up for court. They spent time, so they have to put, "Yes, I have a criminal record," and as soon as a landlord sees a yes on there, they say, "No, no thank you. We're not interested."

Another issue with deliverables is that many credentials or documents have to be issued by organizations or public services external to HF, for example, income verifications through AISH or Alberta Works. These systems can take a long time to approve applications due to bureaucratic reasons:

Staff FM6: Another struggle we're having right now is with AISH ... I mean, I sent an application in I think it was August. Now I know the client, it took some time for the client to follow through to get her medical completed but they're not even reviewing applications. They're coming back and saying, "We need A, B, and C to proceed with the applications." But I haven't got so much as that back. I talked to an AISH worker at the beginning of October and was told that it hadn't even been reviewed. So that's another struggle we're running into.

Interviewer: The formal side just takes too long?

Staff FM6: [Yeah], and that's a lot of services that we tend to run into, right?

Staff C7: In order to get help, from social security, you gotta have a health card, you gotta wait, what, 90 days? To get that. You gotta live in this province before you can get that. 90 days. And what do you do in 90 days?

Staff C8: Yeah, and then you need a picture I.D.

Staff C7: Yeah, and from our people that come from the reserves, they're not brought up with what a credit card is, or what just a debit card is used for. Banking, all that, those kinds of things. That's something that's new when you come here.

Staff C6: And they don't have the references.

Staff C7: And they don't have the identification. Yeah, the references, [there is] so-called housing up there, but like you said, no references, no nothing.

Bureaucratic processes, like an application for financial subsidies and proof of income, often also demand an address. But many clients do not have an address until they can provide the landlord with that very proof of income, which is needed to be eligible for a unit.

Staff E3: Income verifications. So prior to getting someone housed, we would have to get them set up with income if they don't have an income source. However, if we go to Alberta Works to try to set someone up they will be like, "Okay, well that's all good but we need their lease." So it's kind of like a ... sometimes we will have to be submitting applications saying, "This is the income they are going to be eligible for once we can secure housing." So there's ... some landlords are uneasy with that. There's also like ... most of our individuals, like I said, come from marginalized populations, visible minorities. So we work with landlords... we try to get them to understand the work we're doing, where we're coming from, what supports we can provide. So those are some of the bigger barriers.

This paradox of bureaucracy is inefficient and discriminatory against homeless individuals. It leaves many clients ineligible for housing, unless they find a sympathetic landlord, and thus presents a systematic barrier to their realization of the right to housing.

4.1.3.5. Direct Discrimination in External Systems

These systems do not only discriminate through inefficient systems, but also expose clients to direct discrimination through persons that work in these systems. These people can present real barriers in clients' daily lives. As an example, one agency reported discrimination in hospitals, where clients are often not taken seriously because of prejudices:

Staff FM8: Just as an example, recently, I had an individual who came in and we took to the ER and we were sent down to Queen Street, which is the walk-in clinic, to see a mental health counsellor at that location. ...and the nurse [there] did advocate on her behalf and called to the hospital here and said like, "Why are we pushing this client off? This client needs help." So two days later she got a call with an appointment with a mental health counsellor. So that was one of the successes but that doesn't often happen.

Staff FM5: I think that some of the nurses at the emergency department at the hospital just don't understand mental health. When you go in and say, "I have suicidal ideation," then they go, "Oh, well, Queen Street has mental health therapists there go there," instead of saying, "Oh, we better get somebody professional in here to see you." Because this woman could have killed herself if [staff] wasn't with her if she got to Queen Street. So I don't think it's a lack of staffing I think it's a lack of knowledge.

Staff FM6: Yeah you're right.

Staff FM8: And again I think it's they look at our clients as homeless and Housing First clients and I think they're just looked at in that manner-

Staff FM9: Which is really sad but it's the reality.

Staff FM8: And it's not seen as a priority. Where if probably some head honcho from Suncor walked in and identified with suicidal ideation they probably would have been admitted immediately. That's what I think.

Prejudices against homeless people can have a devastating effect on their lives, but are not a singular and spread over many public sectors that play a crucial role. A staff member who described their own prejudices before they started working at HF, exemplifies this situation:

Staff FM1: Before I started with the [agency], I'd never dealt with a homeless population. I dealt with corrections and youth, so I was very much hired with the stigma of people who are homeless are addicts, they're drunks, they're drug users and things like that. It's quite an eye-opener to work with individuals who are homeless they're probably the most genuine, honest people I've ever met. Nobody ever chooses to be in addictions and I have seen such an incredible ... It's been a big eye-opener for me. I certainly never would trade my experience in working in this population for anything. I would choose it, again and again, to deliver services to this particular sector.

Prejudices and discrimination in the public sector present most importantly for this context a major barrier to housing. As illustrated by many staff members, on their way to sustainable housing, clients do not only come in touch with HF Staff but with many other workers (e.g. AISH, Alberta Works, etc.) and rely on their services. However, many workers base their judgment on prejudices or lack an understanding of this vulnerable population. This attitude can influence their work and the outcome for the client highly, for example when assessing the “deservingness” of a client for financial support. An Indigenous guide illustrated such a scenario tellingly:

Staff E6: when you look at that homeless Indigenous person on the street that has been there 10 to 15 years. He or she is gonna have to interact with multiple systems to get housing. And within each of those systems, they're gonna face different barriers. Whether it's cultural or communication or discriminatory barriers, you know accessing, you know getting income for one is a huge barrier. [...] There are so many other systems involved, that- yes it should be a rights-based - 100 percent housing should be a right, but how this looks in practice is that it's gonna touch systems and people that have no idea what this is and frankly don't give a shit, because 'I have my own building and I'm running a business', or you know Alberta Works. Our whole welfare system is based on that British poor laws system, that there is a hierarchy to need, that only the deserving will get help. And if you're deemed undeserving of help or you're poor because of the choices you've made, like our entire system is based off of that. And you see it still now with our frontline Alberta Works workers - well they will look

at persons and say: 'They don't deserve that. They don't deserve help, because they're doing it to themselves, or these are choices, or you know I've seen this person I don't know how many times and all they do is ask for money.' You know what I mean... workers within the system that help people are judging people. And saying they're there under their own because it's a choice.

The influence of financial support on the client's realization of the right to housing is tremendous as will be discussed in the next paragraph.

4.1.3.6. Financials & Funding

One of the biggest challenges many staff identified is finding a place that clients can afford and thus sustain once they exit the HF program, and no longer receive a rental subsidy on top of their income (such as Alberta Works, which includes a housing allowance of just \$323/month).

Staff FM7: You want to set an individual up for success. And you want them to be able to afford their housing when they graduate from the program.... And that's difficult to find as well. So that even when you're aiming for housing within the budget that the program has you still need to think of the individual when you're housing them when it comes time for graduation because you want them to be able to continue financially.

Staff FM8: Well even as an example, I just had a client who started working, is in a one-bedroom unit for \$1000 a month plus he pays electricity. So he's making minimum wage. Even at minimum wage, he would not be able to afford his housing, medications, to get food and whatnot. Now he can still access the food bank I know that. But the food bank doesn't always provide enough food for an entire month. So he would still have to go and buy. Then he has to buy a bus pass for transportation and you know the list goes on. ...it's still not really realistic for our clients to be able to graduate at minimum wage.

Staff FM3: So when we had clients in social housing years ago, they would only pay \$250 a month, which was awesome. They were able to graduate. It was just great. And now ... We had a meeting last week with the municipality because this has been a major issue for a while. They said this time last year 25% of clients had social housing. This time this year there's only 5%.

Financial supports from the Government are often insufficient, even if a client finds affordable housing. This insufficiency paired with discrimination through landlords of affordable units diminishes the chances of HF clients to retain housing.

Insufficient financial subsidies outside of HF are thus a major barrier to the success of HF in realizing the right to housing. Especially when HF programs are set up to graduate clients, which means an end to the rental subsidies through HF. It leaves graduated clients with insufficient income, which translates into a high risk of becoming evicted and homeless again. A later section will touch on that issue more deeply.

Discrimination often stands directly or indirectly in the way to accessing housing.

Discriminatory landlords limit the housing options and inefficient systems and discriminatory social workers delay the necessary external processes and thus disadvantage HF clients as tenancy prospects. Staff do their best to work against this discrimination, to lower this barrier to housing, by advocating for their clients, but often cannot remedy the effect of discrimination completely. Maybe a housing stock directly owned by HF programs could help to ensure clients who are stigmatized the most can find a home.

4.2. Participation

Next, I assessed the level of client *participation* within HF programs. To do so, I looked into the practices and interactions between clients and service staff and examined the clients’ choice and say in their service provision.

I found that service staff are very focused on client participation. They are very invested in keeping the decisions and choices on the part of the clients, to keep the responsibility for their own life in their own hand: whether it be which apartment they want, in which area they want to live in, if they want to get treatment or not, and what they want to work on, may it be a dentist appointment or the reconnection with family. That being said, I also found an overall orientation on housing sustainability, which at times can be in conflict with and even undermine clients’ wishes.

Figure 3 visualizes the relationships between themes (blue spheres), which indicate the compliance with the principle of Participation.

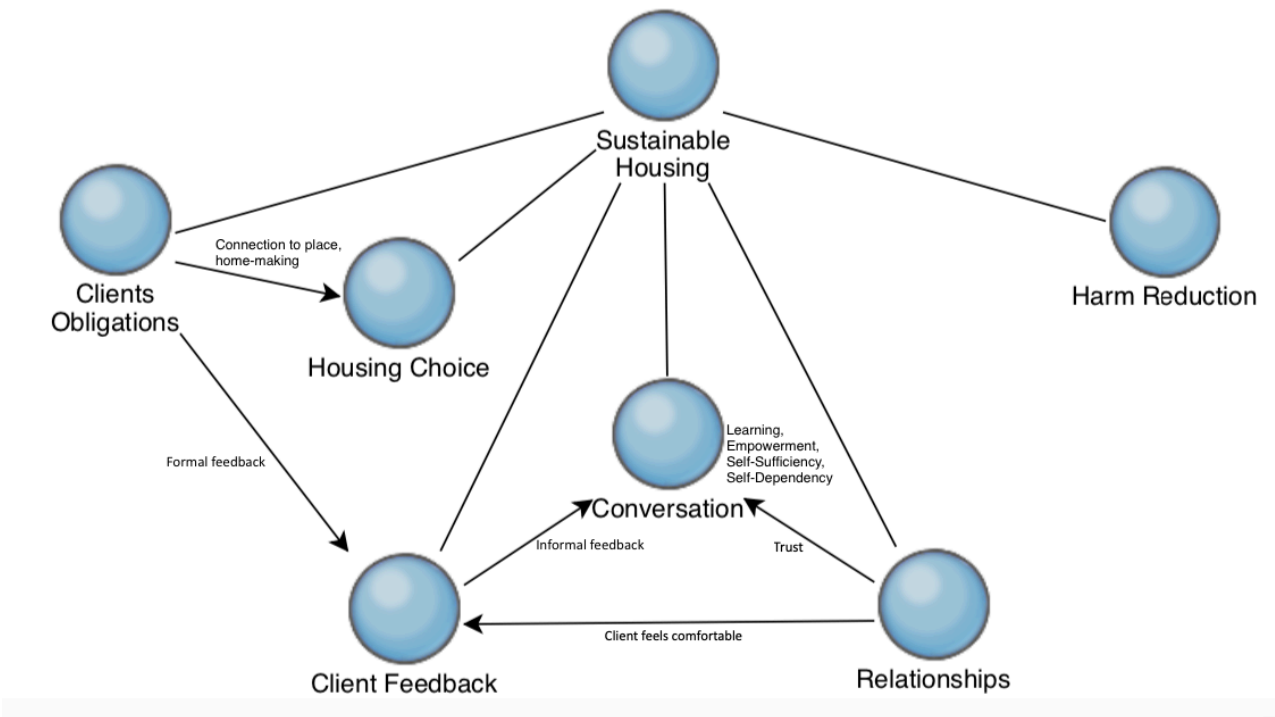


Figure 3: Final Concept Map for the Category “Participation”

4.2.1. Relationships

Staff described their relationship with clients, giving insight into their interactions and the participation of clients in decision-making. Many sought to build informal relationships based on trust, non-judgement and patience. Relationship building was crucial for their work to ensure clients are comfortable to share their stories and personal matters:

STAFF C5: So yeah, for sure it's always like we do initial intakes and welcome packet that the youth get when we meet up to see like do they want to be in the program. Obviously that's a choice first, if they do great. So a lot of it is the worker reaching out to them to find ways to connect, we'll talk them for lunch, we'll take them for coffees, a lot of it is building up in that area. What are the needs they have right now while they're homeless, how can we meet those needs first, is it food, is it a jacket...? Another piece is like...we're also big on social inclusion, so activity-based things. So if you like swimming, like maybe let's go spend a day swimming, or maybe let's go wherever if you like skating, can we take you skating, right? So it's kind of including like that social inclusion fun piece so that you know it provides opportunity to build your relationship, a lot of it's one on one, heavy on the one on one.

Staff C6: We just gently go in, get them set up, get their foods, and we don't wanna be in their face. First six months, they're gonna need to adjust to their new homes, 'cause there's gonna be mistakes that happen, that's when we work with them on being a good tenant, or trying to doing the case management, guest management stuff with them. And then, once you see them starting to settle down is when you can start moving in and making recommendations 'cause we are harm reduction program. So, we're not to tell them they have to stop drinking. We hook them up with their cultural resources. I think first and foremost it's what they need, if they want it. Everything's a choice. We don't say, "you have to do this or you're out. You have to see us, or you're out, but what we have to offer you or recommend, or guide you, lead you, whatever." It's their choice if they wanna do it or not, right?

Staff C7: Because we explain to them, "we have a program here, it's three years, just wanna make sure that when you graduate, you're gonna be okay. This is the reality of the situation you're in." But like I said, we don't do it right away. We like to get comfortable. Again, dealing with a lot of fear, a lot of anxiety. A lot of our clients, they like their homes smudged because they feel safer. I remember when I first came here, there was a guy, that smudged his home and he put away all his knives on the side of his bed, put them away. So, I taught him how to use that sweet grass to smudge his home, and he felt safe after that. Building that safety for them is important to us, it's kinda why we have to, like she said, we gotta go and put the fires out for the first six months, get to know each other, go through our trial and tribulations with each other with our program and with them, which is developing

Staff saw their job in accompanying, supporting, and informing the client whenever they needed it. They described themselves as the person in the passenger's seat with a full orientation on client goals.

Staff C3: The best analogy I ever heard was the client is driving the car, we're in the passenger seat helping them get to where they want to go.

Staff FM3: Just letting them know that we're there to support them, and that's the main thing, is just letting them know that they have someone if they need to call or stop in to see if they're having a really hard day. I think that's the main thing, is just letting them know we're here really. You don't ever have the same relationship with two clients. It's always different. And you never push it, because some individuals might be okay with a distant relationship, like "Hey, you're my worker only, I only wanna see you during visits. I don't want a call. That's what I'm here for." And other ones might call 10 times a day, and they will kind of sit outside in the waiting room all day just for coffee, stop to see their worker. We never say like, "Hey, you're here too much, go away."

They also put a strong emphasis on patience and the individuality of each client and their needs. Many stressed looking at the personal strengths of each client rather than at their problems and then to encourage them use these assets to gain self-confidence and self-direction. Meanwhile, patience seemed to be important to ensure clients can go their own way at their own pace to gain independence, learn from their own mistakes, and become empowered:

STAFF C2: It's self-directed, they are in charge, and determine ... we just keep reminding them what their assets are. I'll give you an easy example: Something in their unit needs to be tended to by the landlord, so maintenance needs to be called. They come to the office, "my sink's plugged, call maintenance." So we take them to the phone, "you call maintenance." And we'll be there with them should they need that support, but it's empowering people and helping people see they have power and authority in their life. Now, it's harder for staff, 'cause trust me, the easiest thing in the world is to just do it. You don't get the nattering, you don't get the anger, you don't get the whining, you don't get (laughs). But over time, they start taking care of their own business. So we put up with all that "The last place I was at did that for me, how come you guys don't?" ... Even though they may not like it, because there's people doing everything for them, but when you slowly help...and it's all based on capacity, so what you do with this person might be different with this person, right? We may escort and go to an appointment with somebody, but over here we won't because this person is very capable. They know how to say what's going on for them, they know how to get their needs when

they go to the doctor. This person over there gets there and they're feeling very flustered and they're feeling very incompetent and insecure, we will go with that person until they begin to feel more comfortable. So it's all individualized care in terms of what each individual's capacity is to take care of business. ... Some people it can take six months, some a year, some five years before you actually see them making decisions for themselves for their wellbeing. That's why Housing First is so vital and important. [...] It's built on assets, not what are the issues. What are your assets? So it's always looking at what are you bringing to the table?

The paradigm is that clients are 100% capable to make their own decisions, and if they make bad ones they will learn from it, however many attempts it takes. The whole practice focuses on the learning process of the client, for them to feel empowered, self-sufficient and independent and therefore be able to sustain housing for themselves, once the program ends. Staff wants the best for their clients and seek to build them up for success and an independent, sustainable life.

However, all programs that I spoke with are designed to end at a certain point – that is, to graduate clients. That puts a lot of pressure on the staff to ensure that their clients are self-sufficient enough when their time together ends, so that they will stay housed even when the program does not support them anymore. The timeline is not set by the client but by the program, which is problematic as every individual has different needs and needs to be worked with at their own pace (as stated by participants) to ensure independence and self-sufficiency. A graduation that comes too soon will only leave clients unprepared and they may re-enter the cycle of homelessness.

4.2.2. Conversation

Conversation between client and their staff is one of the few mandatory and regular obligations within HF programs. It allows staff to build relationships with their clients, to find out their needs and goals, to assess them in an informal setting and to provide options and information. Staff seeks to provide that setting of understanding, non-judgment and trustworthiness for clients to be comfortable to share personal details so that staff can help them to the best of their ability during their time together.

Staff FM7: It really boils down to the relationship you have with your client as well. If you take the time to build a relationship with the individual then that individual feels more comfortable. The more

comfortable that individual is the more likely he or she will ask to get the referral to somewhere. So like I've worked with clients for like five, six, seven months and I find the farther in, the deeper the relationship gets, the more comfortable they are coming to you and asking you, "I'm thinking about going to Alberta Health Services or detox. Would you be able to help me out with that?" And then we can do up a referral.

Staff E4: Yeah, it's the one thing I like about Housing First, is that it actually sees the human and not just the you know what a lot of people always think, oh it's their fault, they just didn't work the system right. And well, maybe the system's not the correct one. The system's broken. (...) These are folks that aren't connected to the homeless serving sector yet, so they don't have any idea how to navigate it. So, so much of what we do is just saying are you aware that as an Albertan you're eligible for some funds through Alberta Works? And people don't know that, so we send people there, and then are you aware that you know all these things, so we're really about connecting people with resources that we're all entitled to, but are not that easy to figure out.

Staff C5: It's a part of the program, they have to... they sign off on a responsibility form, like all Housing First programs do with their clients, right? And then it's our responsibility when they don't know their housing rights to educate them that's why they're in our program. So, they can go down the road and be self-sustainable, right? And know how to fight for their rights, that housing is a right, for you. This is why you're here in the program. This is why we're working with you.

Conversation turned out to be the core part of service provision. Conversation and relationship building weave through and are the basis of the participatory aspect of HF. All participatory HF practices, which will be described in the following paragraphs, are carried out through conversation and depend on good and trustful relationships between client and staff.

4.2.3. Harm reduction

Harm reduction is another core principle of HF. Further, treatment choice is a crucial indicator of client participation in service delivery and all Interviewees stated clients had free choice to approach treatment services or not. Staff were asked how they approached the topic of "treatment" with their clients, in part to see if clients may be covertly pressured into treatment. The answers ranged from letting the client bring up the topic, to offering possible services and seeing if the client is interested, to proposing the benefits of treatments and encouraging clients once they decided to go to treatment.

Staff FM3: We kind of ask them what they wanna work on. I think like 97% of our individuals either use drugs or alcohol, so we don't ever kind of approach it like, "Hey, did you hear about this treatment centre, did you ever hear about that" because they always do. They know about it, that it's out there. But it's kind of just what they wanna do. So sometimes it could be learning to cook. There's cooking classes here. We have one guy that wanted to learn how to make a smoothie. So like little steps like that, we work on first, and then it can gradually become bigger goals and, "Hey I'm starting a healthier life, I've been going to the gym, and stopped drinking." Like it's never kind of pushed on them. We don't ever have like weekly chats with them where you're like, "Hey, so detox is doing this this week," or, "Do you wanna go to treatment?" They know it's there and we have the resources and we have a lot of community support, so if they say, "I have an issue," we're like, "okay, well I know someone for that if you want the help." So they identify their barriers. We never ask them. ... Like the workers don't even need to ask what they work on, they come and identify it just through conversation.

Staff E1: Sometimes with some participants, there's not a willingness to admit there's anything to work on anyways. It's - "No, I like to drink, but I'm going to keep drinking and no one's going to tell me to stop drinking. It's not a problem." They don't see it as an issue, yeah. And there's nothing we can really do. We can try motivational interviewing and we can try change talk with them and we can try to show them what their life could be like without that or making different choices, but at the end of the day, we really have no power over their decisions other than to guide them. Providing options. Yeah, and a lot of folks, they don't realize what supports are out there. They just have no idea what's out there, so being able to be that catalogue of supports for them and say, "Hey, this is the different resources we can connect you to if you want," they might go: "I didn't even know that program existed. I didn't know I could go medicine picking. I didn't know I could go do a sweat. I didn't know I could go speak to a counsellor for free. I didn't know there was a harm reduction specialist." I had never heard that before. Just even being able to provide those options for them, say, "These are things we could connect you to if you want." Really helps to guide them where they want to go.

STAFF C5: We go through goals every 3 months, and the youth choosing what they want to work on. If treatment isn't an option, then that's not what we're working on. If that's something they do wanna work on then we're working really hard to get them into that. Obviously it's in our conversations right, like we're always challenging or pushing our youth to like what's next right, if we identify addictions we'll talk to them about it but if they're in a place where they don't wanna go to treatment like that's their choice and we just kind of roll and we say okay and bring in harm reduction. So yeah, like the youth are running it.

Staff FM8: For me a lot of times I just encourage my clients to reach out to those services, about going to treatment. You know if they call me say, "Can you give me a ride to detox today?" I'll have a discussion with them. You know I'm glad you made that decision to go and then I'll ask them if they're

going to treatment. Sometimes I'll get a "yes" and sometimes I'll get a "I don't know". But I always encourage them to make those choices if they talk about it, but I don't force them.

Staff FM5: It's not mandatory.

Staff FM8: When they talk about it we just have a discussion at the time and it's encouraged.

Staff FM6: Yeah, you can only encourage.

All participants articulated a shared principle of letting the client ultimately decide what they wanted to work on, while their own role in recommending or bringing up treatment varied. Some let their clients know what they thought would benefit them, while others kept that decision completely with the client.

In general Staff do not judge the client's priorities, even if they might disagree. The end goal is sustainable housing and the philosophy is that no matter what it is, accomplishing the client's goals will help this end goal by furthering their self-sufficiency and trust in themselves.

Staff FM1: Well, we house a lot of people who are in active addictions. Most people on the streets are in active addictions 'cause they're self-medicating or they began using to conform to the streets or they use to stay warm or whatever. ... Just about everybody that comes to us uses one substance or another. It is their choice if they want to address that. Our encouragement on our piece is a harm reduction model. What we like to focus on with them is how do we not let this particular thing in your life that's important to you impact your tenancy. [...] If you don't wanna set goals, you don't have to set goals. But it is about ... Most of our participants want something out of this program, which is ... They might wanna get their teeth fixed, they might wanna get glasses. After that their self-confidence gets a little bit boost, they want other things. It's catchy. It's an incredible to things people's lives change in this program. It's been phenomenal

Staff E3: We are assisting people with doing the work, but they are definitely the pilots. ... We don't impose our personal beliefs on to ... what their day to day should look like or how their life should be. So we definitely respect their right to live their life the way that they want to. We would just work to address the barriers that might put their tenancy at jeopardy or try to reduce the harm on their health in terms of what their using, how often their using, the ways that they're using.

INTERVIEWER: Do you connect clients with treatment services?

STAFF E4: No. That'd be a client choice thing. The reality though is that many of the clients that we work with that have addictions, their addictions are so grand that it clearly impacts their housing

sustainability. So I've seen some glorious evictions in my time. So we would never mandate someone has to go to treatment, however, but we might be like "you know what ... if you don't get your addiction under control, you're gonna be consistently be struggling with your housing sustainability." And you work on motivational interviewing etc etc to try and help people see the difference, the discrepancy there. All of this is a conversation. Our work is basically a series of conversations. It's the best job in the world.

As these quotations indicate, HF staff respect the beliefs and priorities of their clients, but the goal of a sustainable tenancy influences the direction of support. If a tenancy is threatened, Staff take a more active role in directing conversation towards the problematic area to make clients realize where they might need help. In these cases, Staff might slip more into a guiding role where clients are encouraged to think about certain topics through conversation. Whether they want to work on these topics is still their own decision, and is not made for them by staff. Staff thus further client participation by leaving all authority with the client unless it endangers the goal of sustainable housing.

This approach is connected to the mandate of HF to regularly assess the strengths and score the acuties of clients, and to track the goals set by clients. These assessments happen in conversation and give the staff an understanding of what could be a barrier for clients towards stability and ultimately sustainable housing. They use these results to further the client's strengths and to direct their efforts and conversations more towards areas where clients show higher acuity.

Staff E1: Again, we use the SPDAT is the assessment that we're mandated to use through the funder to track the progress of our participants and that outlines give or take 13 categories of support that we could work in, so things like mental health, physical health, abusive trauma. If they're being in vulnerable situations or being taken advantage of or if they want to do meaningful daily activity or connection to cultural supports. We go through that SPDAT and we identify which areas are you already looked after?

Staff E3: So every three months we do the VI-SPDAT, which is an assessment that looks at, I think, 12 or 14 different areas of one's kind of life. While we're doing that assessment we're not offering any opinions; we're just collecting information. But, we use that assessment to identify people's strengths that we can use to apply to other areas to improve them and also the areas where they might be scoring really high acuity, where we would want to work with them to implement supports to maybe

lower that, right? So if we're sitting down with the individual and they're talking about things like abuse and trauma, or one's health concerns, then it would be, "Okay, well these are the things that we can offer. Thank you for sharing that with me, there are support groups. There are counsellors I can bring to your home. There are mental health workers and outside activities that you can participate in to assist with those. Do any of those sound like something you would like to try? You've expressed this as a concern, or expressed that this is something you want to work on. These are the possibilities."

STAFF C4: So we have the individual service plans we do every 90 days that keeps us on track. So there's 4 goals that each case manager sits with the clients and every 90 days we do a reporting package with them, that gives us stats going to the funders as well as where they're looking at gives us also, are they in housing stability? Where are we? Are they advancing? Are their goals changing? It gives us something to like hold and look at, but also is it not working? So do we need to change the goals altogether? ...

STAFF C3: Yeah, and we'll review those ISPs, I think it's 3 months down the road?

STAFF C4: It's every 90 days.

STAFF C3: Yeah, so when we do the next one we'll review the previous goals, see if there was progress or accomplishment and yeah, we'll write that down and we're proud of them for it, that's for sure.

It is hard to determine, based on these comments, whether clients might choose a goal or 'area to improve on' – and perhaps a corresponding support - in order to please staff, instead out of their own will. Staff mean well and want to set their clients up for housing success, but are compelled to measure progress and to assess acuities, which directs their attention and energies in particular ways. There is certainly potential for staff to direct clients, potentially reducing their agency in a manner that undermines participation. Given the goal of this research to identify areas where the right to housing could be furthered within HF, this is an area where HF Staff should need to be cautious. Beyond this, mandatory use of VI-SPDAT after intake could also be questioned.

4.2.4. Housing Choice

Another key part of HF is that clients choose their home and decide where they want to live. Participation is thus an integral part of finding housing for the client and was recognizable in the reports of all Interviewees. In case of scattered-site housing they reported two different ways of searching for homes: either Staff acts as realtor and set up viewings for clients according to their wishes (Staff E4 & E3) *or* clients look for themselves, for example online,

and share the results of their search with the staff, who support them in setting up viewings (Staff E2 & C5 & C6-C8).

STAFF E4: It probably goes both ways, I think that you know it is really a conversation like this one where it's like what do you need in a home, what area is it in? What community is it in? What does it look like? You know it's really a matter of you know really grinding down with people like a sense of what are the things you need to do and where are those, where's your doctor, where's your bank, if you don't have a bank, where do you want your bank to be, if you have a job, where do you work, how close do you want to be to a bus stop and those kinds of places. That's where the idea of realtor came into play ... [because] this is the kind of service that I want our participants in HF to feel when they're getting housed by our workers. I certainly made it clear that I don't want participants to feel like "hey here's a place, just sign it because it's available and it's here". ... Because you know most housing workers view themselves as an intake worker for a specific housing program. Whereas if you're a realtor, you're looking at all the housing that's available for somebody and finding the right fit for that person. It's a slight change in how you see the world, but I think the ripple effect is tremendous.

Staff E3: Well so usually when a housing worker sits down with someone and does the intake, we'll ask for things like desired neighbourhoods, price ranges, and then how we'll kind of go to the drawing board and say to the client, "Okay, Wednesday at 1, we're going to three viewings." And then the housing worker would then say, "This is the neighbourhood, this is price range." then they set up three viewings in that afternoon. And then they go with the clients to meet the landlords, that kind of thing. And then the client would tell us about the viewings, see if they like the neighbourhood, apply, see if they're approved, that kind of thing.

Staff E5: So the ideal situation, of course, the first thing we always ask when we begin our search with participants is which area of the city do you want to live in? What's your number one choice? And then we ask for the second choice, and then I don't know if everybody does this but it's the way I do it. And then I ask for the third choice, and then I say, "If all else fails, if you absolutely had to, what would be ... if the only place was an area that you didn't want to live in, and that was your only option, would you be open to that?" And some of them aren't, and then we would educate them, inform them by saying, "Okay, well, it might take a little bit longer, then, because everything depends on the market, availability, vacancy rates, whether a landlord wants to work with us or not."

This first approach is completely oriented towards clients wishes, but might be better suited for clients who want or need more support. Meanwhile, the second approach involves more client participation and self-empowerment through learning:

Staff E2: Yeah, we do definitely have client choice. And more so now I would say than before even. Before we were probably doing more hand-holding. We were more, "Okay I'm going to set the viewing up for you and you're going to attend the viewing. Your job is to attend the viewing." However, what happened then is that people, "Oh I don't like that unit, I don't like that unit." Well we've had three viewings that I've set up for you and you don't like any of the places. Then number four comes around and that housing outreach worker might be saying or sending the signals that look, you gotta take this place. That was previous to how we're working now. That would actually be not so much client choice, which might actually lead to issues where the person gets housed and, "I never wanted this place in the first place." Now that we're taking a bit more of an empowerment perspective, people definitely have all the choice. And they can often find places that are far more well-suited to them than we know, because they know themselves much better. And we might have a limited scope. We might have our blinders on about what this person is able to find or access on the housing market. Well you need a bachelor that's under \$700? You're never gonna find that. However, we find that you give people the skills to do their own searching and they can and they do find what they require for themselves. That sense of client choice is super important. ... A lot of how we've tried to model the program is on adult education, empowerment. We want to be teaching people skills and showing them how to access the housing market, showing them how to use kijiji, how to send an email to a prospective landlord, how to call a prospective landlord, modeling what it looks like to attend a viewing.

STAFF C5: So it's the youth that are looking, so we support the youth in looking at their own housing, so we use Rent Faster or Kijiji so it's the youth looking themselves, if they need support their worker's with them, we're not doing it for them, so they are picking their housing. Yep, support them, go with them to the viewings, sometimes they do it on their own which is amazing, a lot of times we do support them in going with them, it's very rare...

Staff C6: Oh, they usually have rent reports with them, and our business cards, and then make that initial contact and then we step in and support them and advocate and explain our program to them and sure they know first and foremost that the rent is gonna be paid every month from us in full, it doesn't come from the client themselves, so sometimes that works to get them housed.

Staff C7: Like a letter or something sometimes. We'll do a letter support.

Staff C8: Give them a letter of support.

The second approach thus further encourages the self-empowerment and learning experience of clients, as letting them search for their own new housing could mean that they will be able to do so in the future without the program, if needed.

Both approaches focus on client's wishes and on the importance of their engagement in finding housing options. Participation in the housing search is even crucial to housing retention and in finding a place where clients feel truly at home as Staff E2 emphasizes. In theory, the principle of participation is thus internalized into the structures, the staff's perceptions and practices of programs. However, as Staff E5 last sentences indicate, not always can the wishes of clients be fulfilled by their budget and the market and they have to contend with whatever is available or have to wait longer in their state of transitional shelter or homelessness. This issue in context with housing choice will be discussed further in section 2.5.

In HF programs with congregate housing sites, client choice in housing is by definition restricted. However, in response to my question about what happens when clients do not want to live there, staff reported that they would set them up or refer them to scattered-site programs.

STAFF C1: Yeah, it depends on availability, 'cause ours is a place-based program, we have a specific building, so the units, they either like the unit in the building or they don't. So we have a community housing program that is a little bit different cause it's like scattered-site with landlords in the community, so that one is a little trickier, but yeah it's our buildings, if they like it, if they don't like it, that's all we have to offer for that program.

INTERVIEWER How do you protect client choice in housing? When they come to you, if they don't want to live at [your buildings] do they just go to a different program?

STAFF C2: We refer them to places where they can go to look for housing.

Ultimately, clients can always choose if they want to be part of a program and if the program's housing does not comply with their wishes they can always choose to be connected with a different program.

4.2.5. Sustainability

In HF, housing sustainability is the overarching goal. This can restrict the client's wishes through consideration of financial constraints, but also puts more emphasis on client choice as many staff reported that housing sustainability improved when clients chose the place themselves according to their wishes and preferences. Many clients might not care in the

beginning of where their new home is or what it looks like, as they are just happy to find housing. But Staff stressed the importance of encouraging clients to reflect on their housing choice and to choose according to their circumstance, as many staff shared bad experiences with clients taking any housing and feeling unhappy with it in a short amount of time.

Staff E3: So when we sit and we do an intake with someone, we identify their current support networks and where those are located. We want to identify their capacity to transport themselves around. So if that's biking, or LRT, or bussing; whatever they're familiar with. 'Cause we want to identify as many of the individual's strengths as possible, and just build off those instead of looking at, "Well these are all their barriers, these are all the deficits, how are we gonna fix these?" We look at the strengths and try to apply those to the other areas. So we look at their support networks. ... 'Cause sometimes they'll just be like, "I don't care, I just need a home." And so, you want to kind of suss that out a bit, by saying, "Okay, where are your supports? Where are you familiar with because we don't support you somewhere and you say, 'Oh you just put me here,' right?"

Staff E1: Client choice, in the housing process is key and we found the more engaged the participant is with picking the place up front, the more likely they are to treat it like their own. We have had folks that are extremely hard to house. Like I said they're smokers. They have pets, they have bad credit. They have a criminal record, and there's really one or two landlords in the city that will work with them. We say, "Hey, we have these two units and we can get you in today," but there's not a lot of client choice there. It's just I just have this unit that you can have. They move in and we found with those that there's a lot of the challenge of going, "Well, you put me here. Well, you housed me here. It's not my place. It's not my home. You chose it for me." And the care, that sense of place starts to break down, so we really try to avoid that up front.

Staff E5: Some will just take whatever they can get because they've been outside for so long, and they don't care if they get a room with a cement floor; it's inside. And we try to ... we try to create an image of ... on the one hand we're meeting them where they're at, but at the same time, we're saying that you don't have to settle for this. You can have something better, because, too, then, we have found that when some folks have done that, a week or two later they'll be like, "Oh my god, why did I choose to live here?". And then they start to kind of sabotage, and it can lead to an eviction....We can't force anything. We can listen. We can inform, and at the end of the day it's their choice.

While sustainability on the one hand encourages housing choice, it also presents its biggest constraint. Staff members of scattered-site programs elaborated on the importance of finding affordable housing, where the clients would have a chance to pay rent by themselves when the program ends.

Staff E1: Their financial literacy might not be at the level that we would hope for them to be able to understand what sustainability for them means or what that would look like. Oftentimes you'll have a single mom with one baby and she'll say, "I need a three bedroom townhouse," right? The rents for three bedroom townhouses are \$1500 to \$1700 a month. If we went purely with client choice, we said, "Sure, we'll house you there," a month later she's being evicted for non-payment of rent, or she's racking up utility cost because she can't afford that, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Within that client choice, we do have to try to narrow that scope down. What we try to do is provide them some guidelines, saying, "Okay, first and foremost, what area of the city do you want to look and why?" Plus we narrow that down. It's that question of sustainability. What do you feel you'd be able to afford? And we work on the general rule of thumb is 30% of household income should be going towards their housing. For us, 30%, if we have an individual on Alberta Support, that's \$323. There's not an apartment you can find for \$323. Bachelor units, basement suites, doesn't matter. There is not an apartment that's going to fulfill that 30% requirement. We look at it as 60% of your total household income is okay. Again, us predominately working with families, that includes your child tax and child benefits, all of that extra money that's coming in.

Staff E4: If the participant is ... living in a place that they can't afford to live in, so once rental assistance is cut off, no matter what happens we're gonna need to rehouse that individual, and I think that's a really sad kind of reality of it. I think that client choice is super important in finding the you know a location that can help people express themselves the way they want to express themselves and be who they want to be and do all the things they want to do is great but it also has to be within the parameters that the person is going to have to live within, it has to be realistic, reasonable right?

Staff E5: Sometimes the price affects choice. So let's say ... one bedrooms are ... between \$850 and \$900 right now. ...some of our folks will come in and say, "I'd like to find a one bedroom and my budget is \$650." So we have to be really honest. We have to have an honest discussion and say, "Okay, well, if that's your budget, you might not have a lot of choice in which area of the city you get to live in. The apartment may not be as well-kept or as nice as you would like to, for, say one between the \$800 and \$900 range." We just inform them of all the things associated, that come along with the pricing, that we know of anyways. And we always make them aware that it's their choice at the end of the day, and when we go to view an apartment, even though they may say they love it or whatever, I always end it with, "This is your choice. You don't have to take this apartment if you don't want to." And if we're struggling to find places, then I'll just remind them that, "It might take a little bit longer, but it's your choice, at the end of the day." We always want our participants to feel they have that choice, so it's super important so that they can ... for self-determination.

In Fort McMurray, financial restrictions can often lead to room rentals. Staff explain that the housing market is simply often too unaffordable, which is why they opened their options to include shared living.

Staff FM1: What we like to encourage, and again it becomes their choice, but you only get choice within the scope of your finances set up. What we like to encourage is, Fort McMurray has a lot of room rentals and the room rentals are set up in a way that people have privacy, some of them have their own bath and things like that. A lot of people pay for their own cost of living up here by renting out or having their house broken down into different units. We also look at basement suites or walk-outs, they're like ground-level suites. Within that, always the cable is included, the electricity is included. They generally have cooking or a full kitchen space and they have their room. Sometimes, there's a roommate, somebody else renting another room and sometimes there's not. ...up here it is a very common way of life, even workers who are working within the industry, even local businesses in town rent rooms. Generally, landlords have that environment set up where that's a comfortable situation for renters. Does that make sense? Oftentimes, it's separate from the main house, that type of situation. Lots of them that I've seen is it's probably two levels in the house and the family is upstairs. But, there's a separate entrance for downstairs, it might be two room rentals and a shared living.

Staff FM3: Yeah, we explain to them that we can only financially support them up to \$1000. So we try to keep it at our end \$1000, and then Alberta Works will help support them as well. So it all depends if they want a room rental or a one bedroom unit. One bedrooms we can get probably around \$1100 now.

All aspects of client choice are seen through the lens of housing sustainability. The looming day of graduation puts pressure on staff to ensure clients can stay housed. It limits housing options and shifts the orientation on clients' goals towards areas that were assessed by staff as problematic for sustainable housing, like budgeting, which may not necessarily be what the client wants to work on:

Staff E1: The challenge in that is again, the major barrier to successfully exiting our program tends to be poverty, tends to be the ability to pay the rent, which is a huge cornerstone of housing is just that ability to make sure that bills are paid. A lot of our participants don't want to talk about that. They don't want to address budgets. "I'm good with my money. I'm totally fine. You don't need to know how much I make. You don't need to know how much I earn. I don't want to talk about that at all." Then we get to the end of the program, we say, "Okay, great. Is there anything else you want to work

on because we're cutting off rental assistance?" And they go, "You can't cut me off because I can't afford it," and we've said, "Well, we've had this year to try to focus on this, but being client centric, you didn't want to talk about this or adjust this so that we have it, and now your time is up." It creates that challenge there too. There has to be that balance between 80% what does the client want to do? What do they want to talk about and engage with? 20% what do we have to do to make sure they're going to be stable and sustainable?

STAFF C3: If we want a client to graduate and we're stuck in a lease and they're just...we have a master lease under the client, we can't really graduate them because if we step back, we're still supporting them even though they're not in the program. So it's kind of an end goal as well, just to make sure that they're maintaining responsibility for the unit because it's their lease, they know what they have to do to maintain it. And then once they step out of the program we can just step back completely and they're on their own.

STAFF C4: And it's that self-determination, right? We want to make sure that they're set up independently with supports, versus supportive living and community. So it's not supportive living, right, it's independent living with supports. So that's that fine line, and it starts right at the beginning.

STAFF C5: And we always tell them because we're limited, we're only up to 24 [months], we're not a forever resource for them, and so our goal too is we outsource a lot in the sense that we're always trying to connect them with resources outside of us, so that independently they're not relying on us right, they know where to go. There's a problem here, they need a certain service, they know where to go independently on their own. And they're constantly doing that like we're not working weekends or evenings, they know where to go, they know what to do, so it's not creating that reliance on our program. It's constantly trying to get them to know their resources, know their community.

Some agencies reported that they are able to keep clients in the program even if their graduation date has passed, but they also all emphasized the importance of focusing on areas that further the sustainability of housing. This focus is well intended as it helps realize their right to housing by keeping clients sustainably housed, but graduation and related need to engage with resources (potentially a form of imposed service delivery) could be harmful for clients who are not ready for this and do not choose to work on it themselves.

4.2.6. Client Obligations

Even though most aspects of the HF program, including being in the program itself, relies on client choice, there are a few obligations clients have to fulfill. It is of interest to look at these obligations to see if they restrict the principle of participation in decision-making.

Interestingly, many staff stated participation itself as a basic obligation. In order to stay in the program, clients have to meet up with their staff regularly, to have conversations, set goals and assess their development. The frequency of contact that is required by the program differs by client and is determined on the basis of the client's capacity and needs.

Staff FM1: On the program, there is a certain level of expectation of client participation. That doesn't mean that the client has to do things that we want them to do or anything, but we do have to have contact with them to be able to help them. Their level of engagement is our expectation. We may wanna meet with them once or week or twice a week, it depends on their barriers, how much support they need, how much support they want and things like that. ... It is focused on client choice, so we don't set goals for the clients, we set goals with the clients.

Staff E3: So we have a letter of agreement that we work through. So they agree to meet their support workers at least once a month in their home. That is a very minimal requirement we usually require it at the beginning ... or we provide the expectation that there will be weekly contact in your home. But the letter states at least once a month in your home. So if they continue to move ... if they miss that, then they'll usually get letter from myself or our team lead with a copy of their agreement that they entered ... that they signed during intake just saying, "This is the letter of agreement that you signed upon intake, these are our expectations. Your worker is willing to work with you to meet these if you have concerns, let me know."

STAFF C1: So an expectation of our clients is that they don't need to be sober, so if that's one of their goals that's great, we'll help them achieve that, and then maybe transition them out of our program just because it's hard to be sober when everyone else is using around you, so we do goal setting every three months with clients and those are all client related, so we just work with them on whatever goals they have at that time, support them in that. Every month we do deliver engagement, so staff will sit down with the client and then review goals that they made previously and see what else we can help them with and see what else they can do to achieve those goals. So our buildings are staffed 24/7, so they see staff every single day, so they can talk about that at any time they want to, but staff will seek them out once a month to have that like... To sit down.

As observed before (section 2.4), participation has many benefits for the client and is a crucial part of HF and important for the success of the program in empowering clients to find independence and self-determination and in ultimately housing them sustainably. Clients' participation determines among other things how quickly they are housed and thus how soon their right to housing can be fulfilled. The wait time for housing once someone is off

the waitlist and with an agency depends on their engagement and on the availability of affordable housing in their preferred neighbourhood.

Even though the obligation of participation is in the first place beneficial for clients themselves, it also serves the purpose of regular benchmarking and measuring, another key aspect of HF. At regular intervals, staff and clients work on reports, where the client's development and progress towards their goals is assessed. The collected data are then reported back to the funder (i.e. the system planner or municipal government) as a condition for funding.

STAFF C4: So we have the individual service plans we do every 90 days that keeps us on track. So there's four goals that each case manager sits with the clients and every 90 days we do a reporting package with them, that gives us stats going to the funders as well as where they're looking at gives us also, are they in housing stability? Where are we? Are they advancing? Are their goals changing? It gives us something to like hold and look at, but also is it not working?

STAFF E4: Yeah, all the programs come with stipulations you know, in order to receive rental assistance, you need to be visited by the follow up support worker x number of times per month, and your follow up support worker needs to have contact with your landlord x number of times per month, and you need to have your rent paid third party, all of these different things. When they're implemented with people that don't have a lot of control in their lives and ... that can create a lot of problems for us. [...] ... It is required for us to report every three months on where our participants are. There's an intake interview, a three month follow up, and a six month follow up interview and it continues on every three months till they're done our program

Staff FM1: There's the expectation on the client that you have to engage. That could be through phone ... through email. We have to do home visits - home visits are mandated by the province and so we've come up with a system that keeps them on track on a monthly basis.... If they miss house visits within a period of 30 days, ... they have to come in on site and see their worker. So, that their worker can explain to them that, "hey, you're at risk here of losing your place within the housing, we're about to give your landlord a 30-day notice that we can't continue to pay rent." It's just about keeping them in check in that span of time. Now, the program, it's three months no contact. But, I'm not gonna let a client go three months because then that's provincial mandate, we can exit them from the program. It's not our goal to exit anybody from the program, so by keeping that 30-day span and I have a nice letter done up for them, one house visit missed, two house visits missed, you get the letter, three, you have to come in. If that's a repetitive thing, then they have to come and see me. We make every possible effort to instill in them the importance of that contact. We just need contact to pay their rent.

Regular engagement and conversation also makes sure that clients are still interested to be in HF and its services. This becomes especially important after (repeated) evictions:

Staff E1: Every time someone's evicted, we set up a rehousing meeting with them where I myself as director of the program sit with them and we do this to not be punitive in any way. But to just talk through what happened. Do they show an understanding of the conditions that led to them being evicted? If the conditions are out of their control, like we have some folks that are in abusive relationships and it's the partner keeps finding them and trashing the unit, how in good conscience could we say, "Okay, we're not going to try again," right? If it's the participants themselves that are trashing their units and being evicted and when we do these rehousing meetings, there is no acknowledgement or no understanding of or accountability for what happened in the behaviour, we'll try again. If it happens again, okay, we'll try again. If it happens again, okay, we'll try again, but at that point, we're going, "This is it. There's not a lot else we can do. We're trying to offer you these supports and connect you to these resources. You don't seem to want to," so at that point, we're saying, "Do you even want to be in our program?" Right? And again, we leave it to that client choice of going, "we've tried everything we can the last three times. Obviously what we're doing doesn't work for you, maybe you need to connect with something else." Then at that point, we'd say, "Okay, that's all we can do."

Staff E3: Rehouse ... Yeah, so, like I said, our program is usually a year to 18 months long. So if someone gets evicted in that time, there's a case conference between the participant, the participant's support worker, and either the team leader or myself to work with the individual to say, "Okay, this is what happened. This is what the landlord reports, this is what you report. You were evicted, say, for guest management. Or you were evicted for" ... people get evicted for not paying rent so you'd figure that out, but usually it's guest management when people get evicted. Or you know, just disruptive behaviour, emergency services on site. So once again we put it on them, "So this is what happened, what kind of intervention can you see us putting in place so this wouldn't happen again." So if it was, guest management, so you're saying you're feeling lonely, would you be open to working with your FSW getting leisure access pass. Working on meaningful daily activity. Volunteering maybe, that kind of thing. So if they are open and receptive to those interventions, then yeah, we will rehouse. If it was the same thing over and over, they are probably more appropriate for a higher level of support, like a supportive housing. Yeah, as long as they're willing to work with us and identify that there was something that went wrong and there's something we can put in place so it doesn't happen again, sure. Let's give it a shot.

After evictions it has to be assured that the client wants to be in the program and that it is a right fit. Otherwise, it might neither serve the needs nor interests of the client and also wastes a spot, the funding and the work power of staff for other clients. Participation is thus an obligation. As long as the client is engaged and willing to participate, staff try to work out a solution to uphold the next tenancy agreement together with the client, providing client choice within the obligation to participate. Programs do not seem to let participating clients down, which speaks to the programs' remedying qualities after evictions, which will be more talked about in section 4.4.2.1. If a client does not want to participate, they can either choose to leave the program or may need a higher acuity program.

Further obligations connected to HF programs were directed towards housing stability. First, clients need an income. If clients do not have an income when they enter HF, staff help them apply for financial support as soon as they pick them up from the waitlist. Second, clients have to pay 30 percent of their income, which often consists of AISH or Alberta Works or any other form of financial aid, for rent. Oftentimes the share can grow over time, as Staff slowly transfers the payment of the rent bit by bit on to the client, so they can learn to sustain themselves without HF's financial support.

STAFF C5: They have to pay 30% of whatever income they have, so that's it. But over time, it's not 30% the whole time from the time, if they come in and they're 18 and they leave and they're 24 we're not only making them pay 30%, the whole time we're always working with them of how can you pay more that's realistic so that you're eventually paying your own full rent? But to start we will do 30%. If they're on Alberta Works then we will require \$323 because that's what they're allotted for housing. And again whatever income, so that's always a condition so that they know that they have to contribute to their rent and we'll subsidize, yeah, all included utilities where they live so that's just easier on them, but they don't have to worry about utilities....

These obligations can be seen as rather educational than restricting. They slowly lead the client into a normal tenancy, trying to ease them into the full amount of market rent, which is often higher than 30 percent of their income, and do not restrict the client choice in any way.

As rather recommendation or default than as obligation many programs set up third-party payments. They have the benefit that the client's rent contribution is automatically

transferred to the landlord or the HF program (which bundles this with other subsidies to ensure the landlord is paid in full and on time). It helps clients who are having trouble with budgeting and rent payments and makes adjustment into the program easier. However, ultimately clients can always choose to end third-party payments, even if that may have severe consequences for their tenancy.

Staff C3: we do set up third-party consent, so most of our rents are paid directly to us and then we pay the full amount to the landlord so there's usually no financial stress because we are taking care of that well ahead of time. There are some instances where clients decide to pay their landlords themselves because that's what they want to do, and there have been times in the past where their rent has not been paid.

Staff E1: We try to make that happen. Again, we don't have the authority or the ability to mandate or regulate that. We can set up third party payments for them and they can phone the next day and cancel. And it doesn't mean we kick them out of the program, but it definitely means we're having that conversation about, "Hey, this is a way easier way of making sure your rent is paid," yeah.

Staff E3: So rent goes third party. So it goes [from] the income source directly to the landlord in most cases. Of course, we can't say that your rent has to go third party. We offer the benefits. So it is at ... intake, a requirement of our program. However, someone can cancel it.

Staff E3: We also expect that rent goes third party. The individual has to have income in order to maintain their apartment. 'Cause even if the rental subsidy is paying a portion towards it, the participant is required to commit at least 30% of their income to their rent. So if they lose their income source, they have to work with us to maybe get onto income support or that kind of thing. So yeah, they have to have income. ... We want rent to be paid third party.

Only one HF program reported that third party rent payments were the exception rather than the rule:

STAFF C5: Yeah, so it's the youth paying directly to the landlord themselves, unless there's an agreement which is rare, unless they have like AISH which is like people with developmental disabilities or whatever, and sometimes dependent on their cognitive there might be third party directly to landlord, but majority our main thing is you're paying your landlord directly. Yourself, you're meeting whatever that looks like, they're doing it.

Third party payments can make it easier for clients to comply with their rent payments and thus prevent them from being evicted due to financial reasons. But as the last quote shows rent payment can benefit the clients' independence and empowerment if the clients' capacity allows it. It can be part of learning how to sustain a standard tenancy. It is in the hands of the staff to decide, together with their client, which option the client would prefer and would benefit them the most.

Lastly, also the tenancy lease imposes obligations on clients. But since these obligations are or should be the same as between any other tenant and the landlord, they are rather a learning experience and do not restrict the clients' participation or choice within HF.

4.2.7. Client Feedback

Finally, the last indicators for client participation in service delivery are if the program offers structures for client feedback and if the feedback is followed by change of practice.

All participants reported official feedback structures and periodical surveys conducted by both the agency and their funder (system planner), which are an opportunity for clients to talk about their experiences with the program and to voice their concerns or complaints:

STAFF C1: Mhm, we do client surveys every year, so clients, we fill those out. The Calgary Homeless Foundation also does one that they send out to clients and then they'll send us the feedback of those as well, whatever they want to say.

Staff E5: So our follow-up support workers, they have surveys from time to time where the participants get to offer feedback in service delivery as well as if they have found the program useful for them, and so there's that, and then they have the opportunity to share their stories in that way if it's something that's been helpful for them. They can share their stories, whether it's at our agency.

Staff FM1: At the national level, they're really pushing lived experience and they're really pushing client feedback, so focus groups and things like that. Within the scope of this contract, there was actually a small amount of funding that was delivered to each agency so that we could conduct focus groups. The funding would be to be able to provide an incentive to get individuals here. We may say, "okay, guys, come on down, it's gonna be a focus group and for supper we're gonna order chicken." So, we would have probably 10 or 15 individuals sit around a table and there's actually a survey that we fill out, but it's about client feedback. So, they get to sit with, my preference is somebody that's outside the agency that can deliver this, so that they can be honest. They're pretty honest anyway, but

be able to give them that safe space that they're not talking to the worker or talking to me, things like that, if they're having those issues. But it's been challenging, actually, to be able to get somebody to run that for us at no cost. Just to have that funding for that incentive component.

Many participants reported of the value of informal client feedback in daily conversations with staff. It stresses the importance of good relationship building and trust, to ensure clients feel comfortable to voice their opinion and complaints if they are discontent.

Interviewer: Do you have a system in place to request and receive feedback from clients?

Staff FM5: Yes we have, the rapport that our coordinators, as far as I'm concerned are the best in the community and they build up rapport very quickly with their clients and have awesome, awesome interactions with them.

Staff C2: We get it daily. In terms of what we're not doing right. It's very rare occasion that we find out we're doing something right, but because of the relationship we've developed, because we're always present, they're very comfortable letting us know what we could be doing better and differently. I've not had to...I remember when I first went there because it was something I wanted to have in place and formalize kind of way of finding it, but I learned very quickly I didn't need it because I got it all the time. And when I did want to formalize it, I'm met with aversion to it, whereas if I allow it spontaneously to occur, I heard and learned a lot more. That's the key even about our programming. We don't plan a certain night we're gonna do this. Rather, we see three people half sober, half clean engaging in conversation. So we invite them to play Monopoly. And we sit and play Monopoly for a couple hours. But if we said on Monday night at 4 o'clock or 6 o'clock we're planning on a game of Monopoly, you may or may not get somebody present. But if we are open to being spontaneous, it's amazing.

Staff FM1: Yeah, lots. It might not have been formalized, but sometimes you do get a client who's very articulate or they can advocate quite easily and they feel safe enough to say, hey, and it gets you thinking. It's very grounding, as well. It humbles the staff. It humbles the program because sometimes we can get carried away and caught up in politics and caught up in what we think should happen. Then, you have that voice and it's like you have to take a step back and say, yeah, you're right and we need to slow this down and we need to make some changes. Generally, when we make changes it's across the board.

The many forms of feedback provision are a good sign for client participation in service provision. But of most interest is if the provided feedback leads to a change in the program to ensure the clients' voice is informing program delivery. All staff attested either that their

practice changes according to clients complaints or that they support and enhance practices that are praised by clients.

Staff C4: we have meetings monthly with everybody, and we also have manager's meetings weekly. So any concerns are brought up very quickly, if we're seeing a theme and that's addressed and brought up like we have [property manager] is the manager of 5 of our buildings, so we can go to them if there's structural issues that we're seeing a problem. Is it you know, we're running into financial snags? Those things are always managed and talked about frequently.

Staff E3: Or on the other side, if things are going really well, then yeah we come in and we want to ... the team leader or myself would come in and want to congratulate the individual for where they're at or their progress or those kinds of things and see what worked. So that we can use their feedback on, "Well this is what really worked for me is when my worker did this and I was able to go see this person." so we can use that in the future based on it.

Staff E5: We really, really, have been intentional about staying away from clinical talk, but treating things more as a conversation. Of course, there's always gonna be, in our work, in any kind of social work, there's always gonna be admin pieces, assessments, things like that, but with those pieces we try to make it very personal for them, and we try to turn it into a conversation rather than a questionnaire interview-type situation. ... We try to communicate that our assessments, we're not here to judge. We are here to walk this journey with them, and our assessments are so that we can look and say, "Okay, they need support in this area." And we can communicate that to the other works in their life, and that's how we try to go about it. But ... and that's come through a lot of participant feedback.

Staff FM7: And even smaller things, like a client will let you know if you're doing something that makes them uncomfortable. And I tend to ask as well. I really like to build it up to the point where they're comfortable with me, and if they're not then they voice their opinion. So that gives you the opportunity to change. And I'm sure it's like that with everybody in the room.

Many described change happening according to what worked for clients. It indicates an emphasis on clients' success, where finding the best practice based on client feedback and housing success is at the centre of service provision. However, participants did not provide any concrete examples, leaving much room for uncertainty in regards to program change due to client feedback.

4.3. Adequate Progress

Next on my agenda was to examine whether and how HF programs ensure *adequate progress* towards the goal of ending homelessness, for example through benchmarking and intermediate targets. Furthermore, I looked into the cultural adequacy of programs, which should ensure equitable service provision for all clients.

Figure 4 visualizes the relationships between themes (blue spheres), which indicate the compliance with the principle of Adequate Progress. Interestingly, there was a close connection between a theme in the category “Adequate Progress” and a theme in the category “Non-Discrimination” (blue rectangle with rounded corners), which is indicated in Figure 4 and will be described in section 3.3.

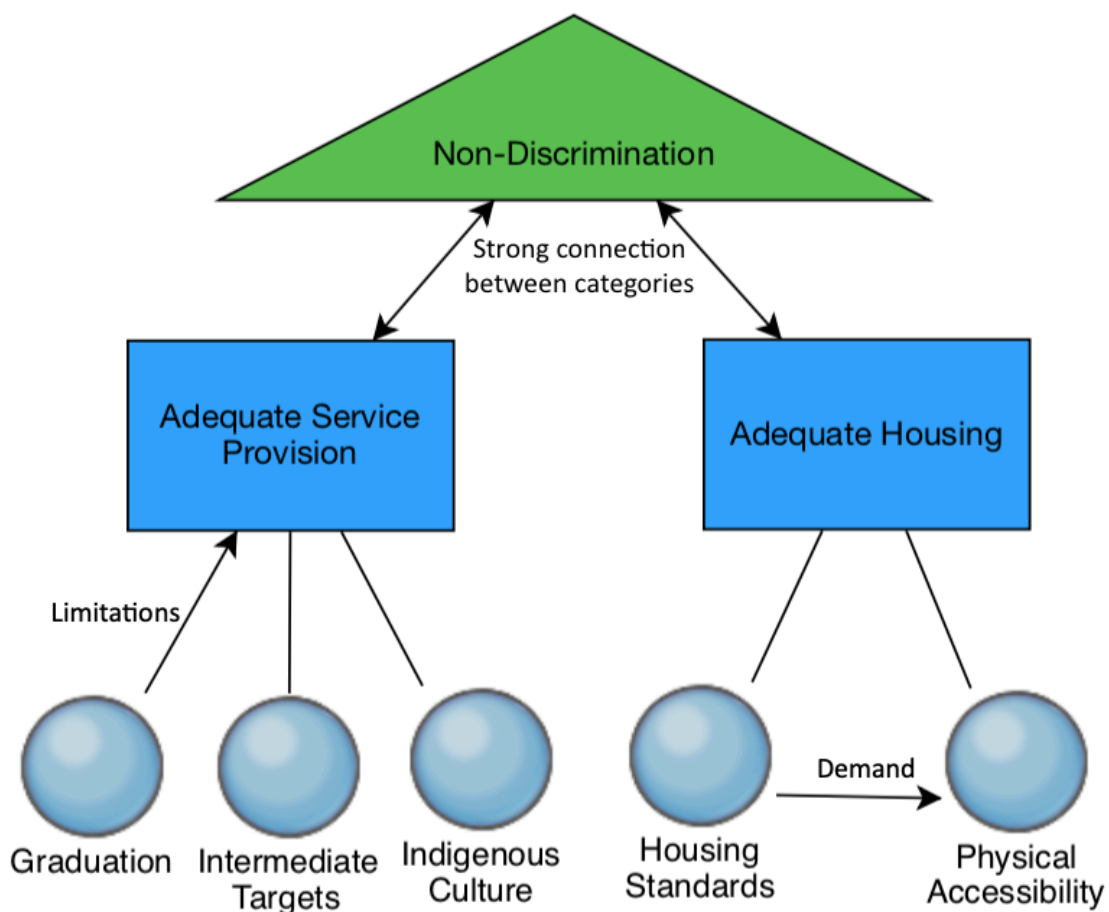


Figure 4: Final Concept Map for the Category “Adequate Progress”

4.3.1. Benchmarking & Measurements

All programs featured some sort of benchmarking of clients' progress. However, all programs are also set up for graduating clients after a certain amount of time, which not only puts pressure on the sustainability of housing as described before, but undercuts the ability to measure long-term housing stability.

4.3.1.1. Intermediate Targets

Agencies try to ensure adequate progress for example through standardised measurements of housing stability, and through measuring the achievement of the goals set by clients. Goals set by clients next to goals set by HF programs concerning clients' progress present intermediate targets on the way to sustainable housing and their realization is monitored: as described in section 4.2.6, many staff indicated a regular assessment every three months, where different areas are evaluated, a score is produced and the results reported back to the funder.

Staff C7: Paperwork every three months, you gotta do your walkthrough with them, go to their apartment, check over things. Record when you made your contacts, or telephone calls, or when they come and visit you.

STAFF C5: Yep. So yeah, every three months is goals, so currently we are in a transition of doing different styles, so we're using it's called an outcome star, they kind of rate where they are at but we're going to be switching to this other model which is called the Casey model so yeah, do goals, we do consent, we do these things called Transition Plan, so that's where the workers writes out and we have certain categories of what we observe with the last 3 months of the youth, whether that's housing, mental health, education, employment, you name it. So the worker will do a whole write up every three months, how much they have contributed to rent, and then the youth read it and sign it, if there's anything the youth disagrees with we change it so that's every 3 months, goal setting every 3 months, transition every 3 months.

Interviewer: Do you measure client's housing stability?

Staff E3: Measure? Housed or unhoused. So when we're doing our assessments every three months, there's two sections that address specifically housing. So there is managing tenancy; which would be, have they had any complaints from the landlord? Were they written or were they verbal? Did the participant work to address their concerns or was the FSW heavily involved? Is there a current eviction notice? Has there been previous eviction notices? ... like all of those kinds of things. And then they get a score, of course, from zero to four. And then history of housing and homelessness. So how long have

they been experiencing homelessness in the last five years, under a year, five years, that kind of thing. And once again, it's a score from zero to four. Yeah. We check in with the landlords at least once a month. So we do a payment confirmation prior to the fifth, so we talk to the landlord at that time about their feelings and try to manage that.

Staff E4: Because there is a lot of internal controls placed within our programs around things like number of case notes written, number of contacts with landlords, those kinds of things, and the reality is that if you're not meeting a lot of those expectations ... your rental assistance gets cut off. So how we've dealt with it is we've actually got about 115 people that were housed that we do follow up supports within our [program name] Only about seven of them are receiving rental assistance right now, [because] we've really pushed housing people in affordable places, cause it just kind of helps out. [But] when you don't have that, you need to meet these criteria to be eligible for a subsidy program. [...] It's not like someone's just sitting in their office thinking like "you know what? I don't think anyone should get rental assistance if their landlord doesn't get talked to," the reality is that kind of rule got made because potentially rental assistance was going to a landlord when no one was living in the unit anymore, you know? So now it became a whole thing to get that money back from that landlord, right? So all of those rules were created for a reason.

Measuring progress on intermediate targets and thereby monitoring success is a core component of HF service provision. In this way, HF programs in Alberta want to ensure adequate progress, at least during the time that clients are connected with the program. Participation in these measurement activities may be effectively mandatory: programs may be required to collect and report data as a condition of their funding, while clients may be obligated to participate if they want certain forms of help (e.g. rental assistance).

4.3.1.2. Graduation

As observed at various points throughout the results section, while clients' long-term housing sustainability is the ultimate goal of HF in Alberta, the supports provided to individuals by HF agencies may be time-limited. Many agencies reported seeking to graduate clients from 3 months to one year after they were housed, although these were not hard deadlines. There was a recognition that some clients need assistance post-graduation, in which case agencies would try to keep them as part of their case load or refer them to more intensive care programs.

Staff E5: Well, if it's starting to look like, "You know, this person is going to need some ongoing-ongoing support," it might turn into a referral for permanent supportive housing. But there is such a long waiting list for it, so if the person is already housed it might take a long time to get into it. Which just means, yeah, we would probably stay in their life a little bit longer, but maybe not so heavily.

Staff E2: We could keep them longer in program. Our three months is not hard and fast. We might say let's give it another month, let's see if things stabilize. We can also refer to longer-term supports. We would preferably try to do that as early on in the intervention as possible, but at three months we would still be able to refer them to a longer-term support.

Staff FM5: They don't have that [fixed graduation date] anymore because they appreciate that we can't graduate clients because we can't adhere to the one-year timeline. It's supposed to be support for a year but everybody appreciates that that's just not going to happen here. I don't know if it's a policy but I was told at the meetings I attend that it's unrealistic to expect that we would graduate a client. So, [colleague], one of your people is just about three years, right?

Staff FM8: Two years and eight months now.

Staff C6: We have a severe FASD client, so I mean really, could you ever really drop them if you- I'm just thinking of one and it's like, how can you realistically graduate if he has no family support, choices are bad, friends take advantage of, and it just goes on and on.

Staff C7: They're vulnerable, like we said, they're vulnerable. They have those issues that they can't - they're won't ever really, I guess - [resolve].

Staff C6: But yeah we are expected to graduate them all, then what? They recycle back in a year, or two? It's- 'cause they [the funder] gotta get at that wait list yeah, so that everybody has a chance.

Many staff made clear that a set graduation date does not work for their clients and is also not supportive of their housing stability. The last quote illustrates a tension between needing to free up places for those on the waitlist and for giving existing clients the time they need.

Another problem with graduation is the potential loss of landlord cooperation when program support ends:

Staff E1: We had a family just recently that they were housed for five months and they were graduating from our program and the landlord was upset because he thought we were going to be working with them for a year, so that's why he signed a year lease with them, but their time in our program had come to an end. They'd been evicted. We got them rehoused. We worked with them for

five months. We said, "Your year's up, so we're taking a step back. It's now between you guys," and he was not happy, so he was like, "No, I'm evicting them," because their unit wasn't in the best condition, but they worked really hard to get it cleaned up. He's like, "Nah, I can't take the risk. They're gone." We had to go and talk to the landlord and talk him off the ledge and talk to the participants about the expectations from the landlord and get everybody in the same room and try to break it down item by item, what are the concerns? How do we resolve the concern? How do we resolve it until there's kind of an agreement between everyone that okay, this is the timeline and what we're going to do and how it's going to work.

A set graduation date therefore has only negative consequences for current clients, and staff in all above mentioned cases tried to extend the deadline if possible to give their clients more time.

Some staff though described that graduation is reasonable when the client is ready, independent and self-sufficient. This can also entail the client knowing where to go and what to do if they get evicted and fall into homelessness again:

Staff FM1: The program has this rule of thumb of 12 months, but that's sort of when the program first started. I think that's so much out the door now I railed against that from day one, I can tell you that. I don't think I've ever graduated anybody in 12 months. If I did, they probably didn't belong on the program. Not this program. There's no "out the door." We graduate people when we think they got it. When we think that there's no risk to them going back. When all components are in place and that means financial and social, emotional, community supports, etcetera. Now, it can be challenging. I've had graduates who have been evicted after we graduated. ...That can be very challenging, but they don't stay on the streets very long. They're in a space now where they're not comfortable in homelessness and this is the key piece.

STAFF C3: So once a client reaches stability and they're able to live independently for six months with no issues, with guest management, their own behaviour, financial - basically once we know they can support themselves and we know that they can support themselves, that's when we'll come together and we'll chat about their graduation. If all parties agree, that's when we'll move on, or let them move on, once we have other supports in place. So making sure that they know how to get all their groceries, how to get a bus pass, how to reach out to their doctor or crisis lines if there are any emergencies that come up, and then on top of that if there are any concerns the client can always come back to their caseworker or [agency] for support. I think we provide 10 hours of support per year

to a client once they leave the program, so their old caseworker can go teach them how to access the food bank if they haven't already done that.

Staff FM5: Okay, so [graduation] is rarely possible but it looks like stable housing. Stable children, no child welfare involvement. This is for families, right? Individuals can pay their rent, buy their food, go to the food bank. So they can access resources in the community independently, pay their utilities, and function within the community. That's the big thing. It doesn't matter if they've addressed their addiction issues or not. It's how well they're doing and how long they've been on the program and if they can manage independently.

There are therefore two types of graduation. One type is based on a timeline imposed by the agency or its funder – and which is intended to apply to (almost) all clients, and aims to get them „out the door“. The second type of graduation is based on an individualized assessment of the capacities of each client, and their ability to sustain themselves in housing outside of HF. While the first approach is a problem and not consistent with rights, the second form is generally fine, because it ensures that clients are 'ready' and independent and not likely to lapse back into homeless.

However, since clients often need a long time to establish independence - longer than programs may be able to give them - some agencies tried to find a middle way and responded by connecting clients with other support services, outside of HF, that could take care of all their needs after graduation:

STAFF C5: And we always tell them because we're limited, we're only up to 24 [age], we're not a forever resource for them, and so it is our goal too that we outsource a lot in the sense that we're always trying to connect them with resources outside of us, so that independently they're not relying on us, they know where to go. There's a problem here, they need a certain service, they know where to go independently on their own.

STAFF E4: The [graduation] goal is around a year. For the most part, we're pretty good at meeting that target or coming close to it. We do have participants that have been around longer than a year, but we've never promoted ourselves as a forever project or program or that kind of thing. It's always been you know what, this is an intervention, and part of our role has been trying to find you supports after we're done, a challenge we have is in Edmonton a lot of supports either aren't set up to work with our population or have rules that prevent our population from accessing it as well.

Staff FM3: Yeah. So like before graduation, we do like a graduation plan. So like step by step, how it's gonna look after their graduation, make sure they have a list of all their resources and things like that. So we just don't ... One day, we're not like, "Okay, you're graduated, we're done." It's like a three month preparation for them to graduate.

Staff E1: We only have a year to work with them, we're really trying to make it so they're as stable as possible and connected as possible and they understand what do they need to do to stay [housed]. But sometimes we run out of time. Which sucks. Yeah, so it's designed to be a 12 month program. And after that 12 months, they're supposed to be independent ... We really try to focus just on the housing component. Is that rent paid? Are utilities paid? Do they know how to scrub their toilets? Awesome. Let's connect you to long-term supports for everything else. By the time they get to graduation, they shouldn't even notice that we're gone. They should have enough workers or enough supports or enough connections or enough stability that they're looking at us and going, "Yeah, why are you bugging me? I'm good."

As many Staff stress, clients' financial independence - including the ability to pay rent by themselves – is a key indicator or ability to exit a HF program. However, this is where agencies reported the biggest struggles. They often have to keep clients on their caseload because rent (sometimes even in affordable housing units) is too high relative to clients' incomes, which often consist of social assistance (welfare):

Staff FM1: I have about six individuals that potentially don't need the intense case management of this program. We're just waiting on the financial component and once that comes through, they'll be self-sufficient. That's a killer, right there. Some of those, they're mostly fixed income, I won't lie, it's very rare do we have somebody come on this program and go back to work. People are homeless for a reason. There's issues there that are detrimental to their health, physical health, mental health, social health, everything. Generally, they end up on a fixed income. Either they're at an age where they can collect pension or they'll end up on AISH or longterm medical.

Staff FM5: We don't graduate them [and] they stay on our caseload because we're paying their rent supplement and seeing them. And it's a pain for our people too because they don't wanna come in and see us or they don't want us coming up to their home anymore after two and a half years, but we have no choice but to keep in touch. Like the person we were telling you about that we visit once a month and we're paying the rent supplement. She's as independent as independent could be and could function on her own without us, but she can't pay her rent. That's what graduation looks like for

us. [...] It'll go on forever unless the apartment rents drop or they get more money through income support or AISH or whatever that they can cover their basic needs.

Staff FM3: We have probably five clients on our list that can graduate. They just don't have affordable housing. So we're just paying their rent, that's it. It's so frustrating ... when you think that money could go to someone that's homeless.

As some staff indicate, keeping clients who would be otherwise independent in the program is problematic and inefficient. Staff have to spend time on their support, which is neither needed nor wanted, and they take up program funds, which could instead of be used for new clients off the waitlist. Higher income support from the government would be needed to relieve HF programs and ensure they can realize the right to housing for more people in need. The insufficient financial aids thus hinder HF's ability to realize the right to housing for as many chronically homeless people as possible.

Another noteworthy downside is that there are rarely official measurements of housing stability after graduation or at most a year after clients exited the program. Thus, there is no real proof or assurance that Alberta's HF programs actually work towards the goal of ending homelessness as little is known if clients stay housed.

STAFF E4: I think that, if I remember correctly there is a 6-month post grad follow up, and the rule is someone isn't successful in 6 months, the housing first team takes them back.

Staff FM3: So after a year, we check in. They usually reach out to us more than anything. They'll stop in and be like, "Hey I'm doing great." See them in the community, things like that. But we know if they're in need they'll contact us again. So that's just a part of the graduation program, saying, "Hey, we're still here. You're just not on the program, but you're in our graduation program. We're still here, call us if you need anything. We'll check in once in a while. Don't lose contact."

Staff FM5: We're supposed to [measure client's housing stability] but we don't because the client doesn't want us there. Or because they're MIA. So there's lots of reasons why we don't do that. But ... they seem to have a way to maintain connection [even though] we don't do that. We have a graduate who drops in on a regular basis to visit. They build a relationship, yeah. I've got a client who's been off my caseload now for a few months ... but she'll still often call me.

Interviewer: And after they graduated from your program, is there any follow-ups afterwards, after the three months has ended?

Staff E2: There's not. Usually the landlord has our number. If there were issues, I would expect a call from them to say that things aren't going well. And for our program, we can still assist up to 90 days after we graduate. Even the person could call us too. They could say, "Hey, we've got some issues happening here. I need your help." "No problem, okay what's going on? Let's figure it out?" Or the landlord can call us. But we don't follow-up.

This presents another lack in adequate progress of HF programs in Alberta. If the policy's task is to ensure *sustainable* housing, it has to measure its success *long-term*, by checking up with former clients after their graduation. Additionally, there needs to be a formal record of the number of graduates who re-enter HF programs and how they lost housing, to improve the practice of realizing the right to housing through HF.

4.3.2. Adequate Housing

The agencies set certain standards for units to ensure safe and adequate housing, by providing clients with basic amenities and protecting them from health and safety hazards. Access to services was dependent on the available housing stock and could thus vary, as is illustrated by the following quotes:

STAFF C5: It varies depending on the market. So obviously if they're wanting to live downtown on their own that's typically not an option just because expense-wise, it's really expensive to get down there. Close to it we do find places close, but yeah I would say that most of the time I would say that our youth are more so they don't want to live in certain areas as opposed to I want to live in this community, so if they have connections or family where they don't wanna be close, they'll look on the other side of the city, but there's a lot of areas they can look in, but it really depends on the market at the time, right? So you know earlier on when I first came in the market was bad and it was hard to find anywhere, so it had to be, you just kinda had to take what you could find, but now I think there's a little bit more option and leeway for them to kinda get in areas they like moreso. So yeah that varies and it's really inconsistent.

STAFF C3: And if there's any struggles with that, that's where the caseworkers step in as well and tell them exactly what bus to take to get exactly to work, or getting to their doctors office, we'll coach them all the way through that and make sure they can get to where they need to be.

Staff E1: We try the best we can to house folks close to everything they're going to need. Again, with families, if their kids are already registered in school, we try to house them as close as we can to that school so the kids can continue or have continuity in that education, right? To continue at that school. Edmonton is poorly designed. It's not impossible to find, but it's very difficult to find places for everyone that are going to have everything within a reasonable travel time, right? Even with access to transit. That's a fallacy not with our participants or with landlords. That's just the design of Edmonton.

Staff E5: Yeah, we try to as best as we can, and if not, at the very least if, say, somebody wants to live way far out in, oh, I don't know, Mill Woods, we try to make sure that they're well-connected bus-wise, and we have some folks with mobility issues. If that's the case, then we will connect them with DATS, and they can get transportation that way, or maybe ... yeah. We just try to make sure that if they don't have the services, then at least they're connected, transportation-wise.

Many staff reported of trying to remedy the situation by ensuring their clients are connected to public transit, which helps them to reach public amenities or places like work or the doctor's office.

4.3.2.1. Housing Standards

In scattered-site housing staff described units as self-contained. They further have to be safe and free of pests, and include basic amenities like heating, gas, sanitation, and cooking facilities.

STAFF C3: Right off the bat, they have to be safe. We have to make sure there is proper fire safety protocol being followed. We have to make sure there is proper fire safety protocol being followed, whether that's in our congregate or our in community as well, so we do do inspections, our housing communication team will do inspections on their first viewing of the apartment. As for the PSH building, it needs the same. Yeah, making sure everything's running, that they have proper utilities, that the unit's maintained in the proper conditions set by the Health and Safety Standards of Alberta. So yeah, we do follow legislation for all that.

STAFF C5: Oh yeah. For sure. If there's like...obviously if we think it's not up to like health standards or those concerns we will definitely step in to be like no, just to protect them and if it's not right it's not right and I feel like that's human rights.

Staff E3: Yeah so every apartment has to be a self contained unit. So fridge, stove, own bathroom. ...we invite board health services in every, I think it's every six months, and they chat with us about :what is a legal suite?" So for things that are converted basement units: How wide or what kind of railing requirements are there? What kind of window requirements are there? So that we know, "Okay, this might not be a legal suite; we shouldn't be housing here or we won't house here because it's not legal." Or if the landlord doesn't seem to be addressing maintenance things. But yeah, it has to be a self contained ... run of the mill apartments that anyone else would rent.

Staff E2: I mean we would never house somebody in a place that didn't have a kitchenette for instance. If the place didn't have lights that were working, obviously we wouldn't house them there, it wouldn't make any sense. You don't see a lot of that not being in place with most of the tenancies in

Edmonton. It's not really something that we've run into as a problem. If the appliances are faulty or not working, of course they would need to be replaced by the landlord. [...] We would not deny somebody the opportunity to access the housing market because we didn't feel that it was appropriate for them. Unless it was really clearly didn't meet the minimum housing standards or something like that.

Staff C3, Staff C5 (and below Staff E2) even referred to the Alberta Minimum Housing and Health Standards, which demand housing in Alberta to fulfill certain standards and thus (are supposed to) ensure adequacy. Staff C5 even connected these standards to Human Rights, which is in this context of special interest, as it shows the inherent focus on clients' dignity and rights among many service staff.

However, as described in 4.1.3.3., many landlords do not keep up with their maintenance duties, which may not only result in non-operational amenities, but can also mean mould and other health hazards like pests are not taken care of and remain untreated. Staff put an effort into identifying substandard units and problematic landlords and try to keep clients away from both.

Staff E2: There still are tons of issues with pests, mice, cockroaches, bed bugs, substandard living conditions, landlords that aren't interested in maintaining their properties, landlords that aren't maintaining the security of their building.... Basically if it doesn't meet the minimum housing standards, for instance the basement suite doesn't have the proper egress for a window, no we're not able to house them there. Or we immediately identify that the place is infested with pests and the landlord has absolutely no plans on treating the place, it's not a good idea. ... We know certain landlords in the city as well, so there are problem landlords and property management companies that we know don't provide the same level of services and/or we've had problems with in the past. There's a number of things that we need to be careful about.

Staff E5: Oh, okay. So for sure we look for things like are there any signs of cockroaches, bed bugs? What is ... We try to gauge landlord behaviors, so let's say ... I'm gonna give an example, and I won't say names or anything, but we went to one place where the place needed work, for sure, hands-down. It was a mess. But they had teenagers as employees doing the maintenance, and they lived in the building, and there were substances involved, and it wasn't safe for the kids, let alone any prospective tenants, so I backed away right away. And if a participant is with me, I strongly inform them, "Look, this person is ... this is not a good place, and I would never want to put you here where it would cause more harm than good." And other things like other signs of behaviours that could be risky for the

tenant, or just ... really, very poor upkeep of a building. Poor landlord communication sometimes can be a sign, so we do look for red flags, and then we educate our participants as best as we can.

Staff FM3: We actually had an individual last week that wanted to move into an apartment, and it's a well-known apartment in town that has bed bugs and cockroaches. So it's 100% client choice, but we had to tell him like this is a reoccurring issue. "It's up to you if you still wanna move in," because we can't say no. We're there to give information. So he didn't take it after, which was good. Yeah, we make sure that ... We sometimes look for a stove, if that's what they like to do, is cooking. Other individuals don't care for it, so a room rental without a stove is okay. Make sure it has running water and basic needs. No holes or anything in the walls.

In Fort McMurray, where the only social housing provider discriminates against HF clients and denies them a tenancy, some agencies opt for room rentals, rather than one-bedroom apartments. The normal housing market is often too expensive for the financial supports received by clients from the government and thus definitely unsustainable after the program's supports end. This example of using room rentals is a departure from HF norms, which emphasizes independent living, but it is very much consistent with evidence that HF continuously adapted to local circumstances and especially local housing conditions.

For congregate housing sites, staff described that units are either self-contained or with shared facilities. Often the facilities in a client's unit also depends on their individual capacity.

STAFF C4: Capacity is huge. So if the client has barriers, what does that look like? So are we taking out all the fuses out of the stoves 'cause there's fires. So we can give a client a very safe environment and sometimes it's not as safe as standards would suggest. So if they're not gonna do well independently in the community, they're gonna need to go to PSH to maintain safety.

STAFF C1: Yeah, so it depends on the building, so I could go into building specifics if you want? So we have a vets programs so we just house veterans, those are all self-contained so they all have their own kitchen and bathroom, we have a lodging house so those units are just bedrooms, they have shared bathrooms and shared kitchen as well. Those clients are a little higher acuity so they need a little more support from staff, that's why they don't have units like that and that's how the building was built when we got it, and then our other building, they have self-containing units as well, so that varies from like bachelor to one bedroom apartments. And then our women's-only building has like little

kitchenettes, so they have a little fridge and a microwave, but no stove, so we have a common kitchen too that they can access.

STAFF C2: Okay, so in [congregate housing site 1], everyone comes in and they have a little kitchenette, so they have a fridge and a stove, a bed, table and chairs. Every unit has that. Very tiny. They're very small units.. And in [congregate housing site 2], it's a bigger unit, they have a stovetop, a walk-in shower area, they all have their own bathrooms and a community kitchen.

An issue with market housing, as well as congregate housing is accessibility, which will be discussed further in the next section.

4.3.2.2. Physical Accessibility

The staff reported a lack of accessible affordable housing in all three municipalities.

Consequently, it is often very hard to find solutions for clients with mobility impairments:

STAFF C4: Accessible housing is hard. That is one barrier that is still a barrier. I think that's a challenging one, it's expensive, we have an accessible building where the elevator breaks. Well, it's not accessible anymore. Like these are real problems that don't just happen within our program like it's widespread. I can't imagine what that's like if it's not program run, just a market building when the elevator breaks. What do you do if you don't have a caseworker, right? ...you can bring in ramps, you can get stuff, in the interim while having to wait.

Staff E3: Finding suites with elevators is really difficult. There's a handful of them that we ... I know of. They work with us on a continual basis, but yeah. Elevators are difficult. And then even harder than that is actually accessible units - where we would have wheelchair accessible and ... accessible for the counters and slopes, stuff like that. Yes, it's definitely difficult to find. [...] So yeah we have a lot of folks in walkers. Living rough, experiencing homelessness is hard on the body. We have folks who are run over by cars or near misses when they're sleeping in dumpsters. Or have been assaulted and beaten within an inch of their life so they have chronic pain and limited mobility or probably should be in a wheelchair or a walker... those kinds of things. And then once we house someone and we start to work with someone, we start to find a lot more issues, right? So we want to be as proactive in planning as possible so that they don't get settled somewhere, and the doctor says, "Well they can't be doing any stairs" kind of thing.

Staff further explained that clients with accessibility needs may be housed in main floor (i.e. ground level) units to avoid the challenges posed by stairs:

Staff FM5: Yeah. Because the apartments we can afford don't have elevators. So we have to make sure they're on the ground floor or one floor down or whatever. So we've had that issue. We can't afford the apartments that have elevators so we have accessibility issues.

Staff FM3: We've had issues in the past with individuals who can't walk upstairs, so we had to find them a ground floor, which that can be hard. We had a guy in a wheelchair, and it's so hard to find any unit with a ramp, a wheelchair ramp. It took a little extra long to find that. So I wouldn't say it's that easy to access. It's definitely more of a barrier.

However, many HF programs have housing standards that advise strongly against use of ground floor suites, which are difficult to manage and to secure:

Staff E3: In most situations, unless there is a physical barrier, we try to stay way from basement suites or main floor suites just because we've paid for a lot of broken windows. Guests come, and if it's accessible, they'll knock, they'll bang on doors, they'll pry the windows. But some individuals are very adamant about wanting a basement. They might say, "Oh I want a basement suite. It's cooler in the summer. It's warmer in the winter. I don't like the stairs, I'm carrying things." We're like, "Okay, fine. But we recommend against it, but ..." So usually we try to get second floor or higher.

Staff E1: We really try to avoid and basement suites or main floor units, which unfortunately is what we get offered a lot of the time. It helps with guest management. It helps with gang related violence, less windows get broken if they're on the third floor than if they're on the first floor. Again, some anecdotal agency level research found that 55% of participants that were housed in basement suites were evicted. It's like flipping a coin whether or not that's going to be a successful housing for them. Which comparatively overall in this sector, we have an 80% success rate, right? Just saying, "Okay, if we can find them a great third floor unit, eight out of ten of them are going to work, but if we house them in a basement suite, one out of two of them isn't going to work, right?" Those are definitely considerations. Things like mobility issues can negate that.

The problem many agencies experienced with main floor/ground level suites is that they leave clients too vulnerable for break-ins from people they know from the street. This can lead very easily to eviction for the client. However, in all three cities, staff reported a lack of accessible, barrier-free housing that is affordable and not on ground level. Rent in buildings

with elevators are often too high for the budgets of clients. So people with mobility issues are often housed in ground floor suites, which are accessible and affordable, but put their housing stability at risk.

4.3.3. Cultural Adequacy

Cultural adequacy in service provision was reviewed as part of adequate progress to see if programs delivered services that reflect on the historical and contextual challenges of *all* clients. Of special interest are the services provided for Indigenous homeless persons, who present a significant part of the homeless population in Alberta, Canada. This section is closely connected to the category of Non-Discrimination, particularly section 4.1.1.4. As described in section 1.1.2. Indigenous homelessness can have a different meaning and different implications than the Canadian definition of homelessness. While the latter might speak to the experiences of the non-Indigenous/settler homeless population, it might not grasp the experiences of Indigenous persons in homelessness and thus might result in service provision that is insufficient and ill-suited for the needs of Indigenous HF clients. Culturally adequate service provision is thus necessary to ensure adequate progress in finding a way out of homelessness into a suitable and sustainable home as quick as possible for all HF clients.

As described in section 1.1.4. all of the programs tried to provide adequate cultural services for their clients, especially for Indigenous persons. However, most of the training that non-Indigenous staff receive on Indigenous culture consists of only 1.5 days in a classroom setting, and some of the staff who participated in this research had yet to even complete said training. An Indigenous participant viewed this as useful, but inadequate. In his view, adequate service provision for Indigenous clients required a shift in agency practices, where Indigenous ways of caring and service provision are acknowledged as equally important and practiced on an equal basis with western ways:

Staff E6: There is no roadmap to reconciliation, there is no blue print to reconciliation, it's so new to us as a society, we're still at that learning about the true history of our country stage, but I don't know where it's gonna go and what it's gonna look like.... But again we have to take a step back and say we are working against hundreds of years worth of stuff and we have to think of this generationally. We've only been doing this for two years and the numbers have been spectacular, we've had over 800 people come [to Indigenous cultural experiences like sweats and medicine pickings], that's not unique

visits because there is not 800 people [HF service providers] in the sector but like that's crazy. You know going in we had no expectations, but over 800 in two years completely blew my mind ... Now down the road we can start, we need to start to say okay are these improving housing and health outcomes for our participants. And if we can show that and track that, that's our like, that's ultimately- the 100 percent end goal, our Northstar, our goal is improving housing and health outcomes for Indigenous people already, and if we can directly correlate that to staff's participation in that stuff, that's our- that's huge, that's something that could be you know a model that can be you know tailored across Canada so like this is we're doing something really cool here and it starts with every single one of us here and by going and doing this stuff. I'm talking to our data people, so how do we actually track that stuff, but again that's something we'll look at next year too but that's where we want to get to.

Interviewer: But do you hear something back from the service staff where they tell you how it helped them with their clients?

Staff E6: Anecdotally yeah. Lots of you know stories about there is one team and they haven't tracked it, and it's hard you can't really track it in ETO, but when people first move into their home, they're offered to smudge the unit to get any lingering negative energy that's within that space out and anecdotally the participants that- the units that they smudged they haven't been evicted. So there is little stories like that but again I am not going out and tracking that stuff, because there is those other mechanisms in place for that and again I don't- the longterm success of this program is this like- the consistency of it. So a lot of my time is ensuring that these things continue.

No real numbers have been measured yet, which could prove the benefit of Indigenous guiding of staff for their Indigenous clients. But the number of staff members who are voluntarily coming to these ceremonies to learn and experience Indigenous spirituality are telling of the need and the will of staff to learn more. And reports of more cultural conversations happening and stories of clients who have been served and helped better because their staff knew about Indigenous ways of being, are an indicator of the need and success for these experiences for staff.

4.4. Remedy

In this last section, I examine HF programs' accountability and effectiveness in providing *remedy* to clients whose right to housing is being violated. Remedy can be provided through preventive actions that are aimed at forestalling evictions and further violations of the right to adequate housing, or through redress in case of conflicts or rights violations. Figure 5 visualizes the themes (blue spheres), of the category "Remedy", and their connections, which will be described in this chapter.

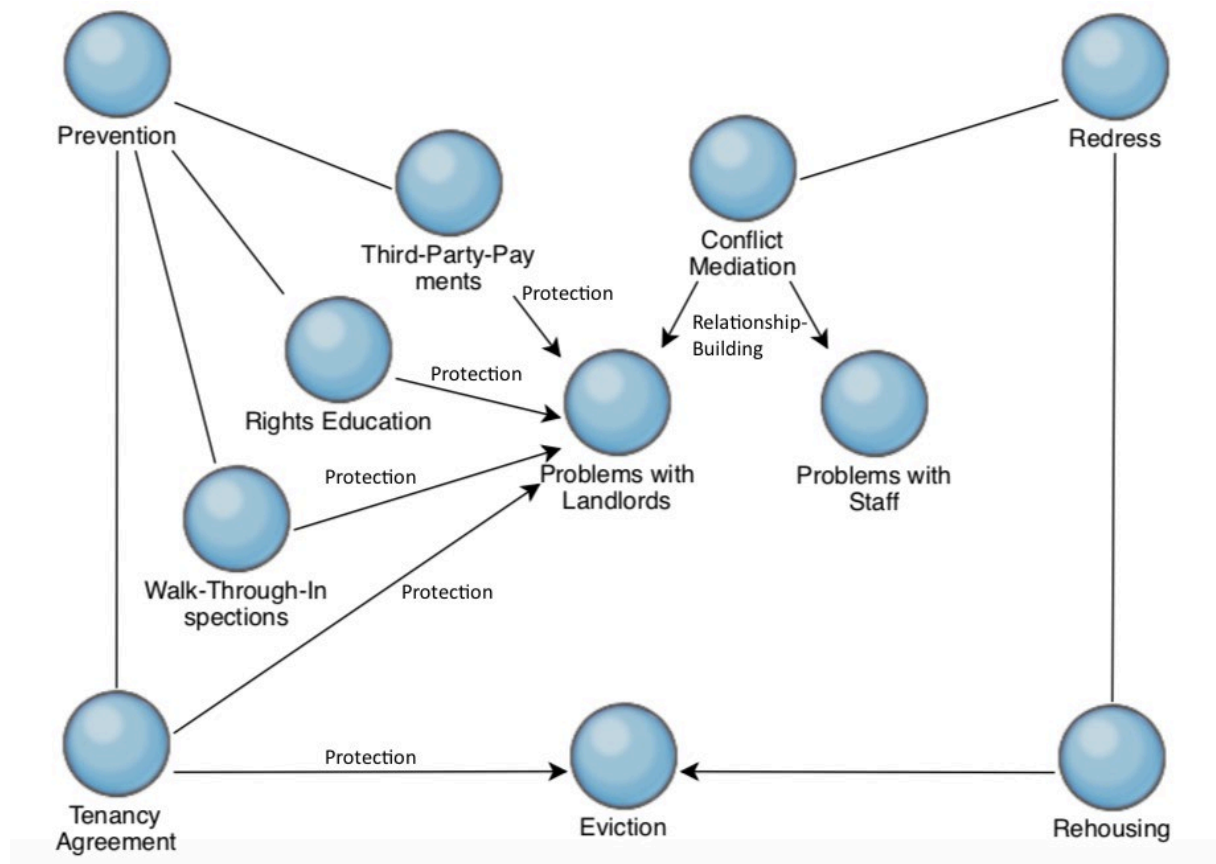


Figure 5: Final Concept Map for the Category "Remedy"

4.4.1. Prevention

Preventive measures were particularly focused on preventing evictions and forestalling possible conflicts or problems with landlords, to avoid further breaches of the right to housing for clients.

4.4.1.1. Rights Education

Agencies do a good job in providing education to clients about legal protections for tenants, which helps to ensure they know to seek remedy in cases where landlords violate their

rights. They strive to ensure that clients know what they are entitled to and to empower them to be able to advocate for themselves.

STAFF C5: Part of the life skills is what are your rights in housing? What are your rights, right? Cause our kids are vulnerable and for sure are instances and situations with landlords where they try to take advantage of them. And so we are constantly educating to be like these are your rights. This is legally your right of what you have. We also have a program Rent Smart that the city is putting it on [and] we have a couple staff that are trained in it. So we are now starting Rent Smart training which talks about 'these are your rights', so when our youths are looking for housing they know legally what are their rights, what does it look like. And it's Rent Smart in the sense of like how to take care of your house, how to do the day to day as far as housing specific, so Rent Smart has been our new thing that we've put into place recently. It's great.

Staff C6: It's a part of the program, they have to... they sign off on a responsibility form, like all Housing First programs do with their clients, right? And then it's our responsibility when they don't know their housing rights to educate them that's why they're in our program. So, they can go down the road and be self-sustainable, right? And know how to fight for their rights, that housing is a right, for you. This is why you're here in the program. This is why we're working with you.

Staff E5: We also educate. Some landlords aren't always 100% certain of their own rights as well as participant rights, so that involves a lot of times: "Well, you know, you didn't give a written warning for them. You only told them verbally, so you need to give them a written warning about that, and then that can stand up as something legal." And landlords appreciate that. And then it sends a message to the participant that they have to own it, and if they are responsible, it's something that says, "Okay, we have to address this. What are we gonna do to strategize to not have that happen again?" Or what their own rights are. It's basically just a matter of being available to both, educating them about their rights, and trying to be as peaceful as possible between the two parties.

As the last example shows, this also entails educating Landlords on clients' rights, as they might often be unaware of their obligations, or even their own rights as landlords.

4.4.1.2 Tenancy Agreements

The tenancy agreement is the basis of the relationship between a tenant and their landlord, and sets out the rights of each in relation to the tenancy. In all agencies it is always the client not the agency who signs a tenancy agreement. That means they have the same rights, but also the same obligations as other tenants:

Staff E1: Yeah, it's just a regular lease, because again, we work under the premise that within a year, these guys are going to be just like you and me. Like they're no different. They're not incapable of living independently. They just have some barriers and then need some supports, so we want to make sure that they're treated that way, that they're not treated as different from any other tenant. They're still governed and protected by the same rights and responsibilities of the RTA [Residential Tenancies Act] and any other legislation that covers their housing.

Staff E2: We do not sign the lease, we do not sign the move-in inspection. It is a private agreement with the landlord and the tenant. And away we go.

Staff FM3: We never sign leases. It's always the client and the landlord.

STAFF C3: The client signs the lease, it's always the client. We're just there for support and typically that's what we'll tell the landlord too – like this deals with you and the client, but we can be there to support you in whatever that may be. And that can range from financial support for damages from clients, increased caseworker support if there's behavioural issues, what else...

By being a party to the tenancy agreement, clients are not only protected but also learn to adapt to a normal tenancy and to hold up to standard tenancy expectations. This is understood as an important part of their learning progress: it contributes to their independence, by leaving the responsibility of the tenancy with them from the outset. It also prepares clients for renting once program support ends.

STAFF C3: So it's kind of an end goal as well, just to make sure that they're maintaining responsibility for the unit because it's their lease, they know what they have to do to maintain it. And then once they step out of the program we can just step back completely and they're on their own.

STAFF C4: And it's that self-determination, right? We want to make sure that they're set up independently with supports, versus supportive living and community. So it's not supportive living, right, it's independent living with supports. So that's that fine line, and it starts right at the beginning.

4.4.1.3. Third-Party-Payments

Another standard procedure of HF in Alberta is the use of third-party payments. This means that rent payments to landlords are not paid directly by clients, but by HF programs, often in coordination with income support agencies. Clients' rent contributions are deducted from their incomes at source. For most agencies, third-party payments were the 'default' for new clients, and essentially mandatory (unless individual clients were adamant on opting out),

because non-payment of rent was the most common reason for eviction. Third-party payment ensures rent is paid in full and on time, and is thus an effective eviction-prevention mechanism, which remedies one of the biggest obstacles to sustaining housing.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have third party?

STAFF C2: Yes, all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Do they ever lose housing due to financial reasons?

STAFF C2: No, because we always make sure that we do it before...

STAFF C1: All the rent comes to us and then we send a cheque to [landlord], cause they're the property managers for all the buildings, so we pay them the rent for the building. [...] Yeah it's third party, except for the clients that are CPP [Canada Pension Plan] and OAS [Old Age Security], they can't have third party rent, so staff will assist them in going to the bank and getting the money that way to pay their rent.

Staff E4: I think non-payment of rent is the number one reason people do get evicted, as a whole, not just as individuals that are supporting through Housing First, Housing First really strives to help people, we do things like ask our staff to contact the cheque line 5 days before the end of the month to confirm that their \$323 is being sent out third party, because lots of mistakes at income support. Their computer system has a lot of glitches around 3rd party rents and those kinds of things. And some landlords are really quick to [evict]. If the rent isn't paid midnight on the first, or first thing on the second there's an eviction notice being sent out.

E5: Rental costs? So we set up all of our participants with third-party rent, so say it's through AISH [Alberta Income for the Severely Handicapped] or Alberta Works. We set up so that the rent goes directly to the landlord.

Staff FM3: We really try to support the clients to like, "Hey, don't forget to pay your landlord." We also usually just pay the landlord directly and then the client pays us, so if they're late, then they don't get penalized for it. So I'd rather them owe us money instead of their landlord. But we do see it, yeah.

Staff E3: So rent goes third party. So it goes from the income source directly to the landlord in most cases. Of course, we can't say that your rent has to go third party. ... So it is a requirement of our program. However, someone can cancel it. They can call and say, "I don't want it to go to my landlord anymore." And then that provides some difficulty for us....

However, one might argue that this is against client-choice principles. But many agencies also reported that, even though it is a default procedure, clients can still cancel the third-party-payments themselves if they do not want them. It is thus still their choice to keep the setting or not.

4.4.1.4. Walk-Through Inspections

Another standard practice of HF agencies in Alberta is to do inspections with clients of their apartments before they move in. This precaution is made to ensure the state of the unit is officially recorded so landlords cannot blame already existing damage on the client. This is in many respects a 'normalizing' process – as it is a routine step for renters more generally – although in this case an agency representative is also present. This staff person can bring additional expertise, including in assessing whether safety standards are adhered to.

Staff E2: Yep. We do assist sometimes in setting up viewings and things like that. [...] we would take pictures of the whole unit to ensure the move in inspection is properly established. We would review the lease as well to make sure it met the residential tenancy standards. We do not sign the lease, we do not sign the move-in inspection. It is a private agreement with the landlord and the tenant. And away we go.

Staff FM3: We always support them [clients], so we'll go to the viewings with them, we'll go to the lease signing, and we started ensuring that landlords are doing walk in inspections, because they weren't. We've had a lot that weren't doing it. So if they don't do a walk in inspection, they're legally not allowed to take any damage deposit if there's damages. It's just a formal piece of paper. You go in each room and check to see if there's any damages or anything. ... And at the end of the tenancy, you've gotta do a walk out. So the client moves out, you do a walk out, and if there's any damages, then they can take it from the damage deposit. So we're there for all that. We also have a landlord tenancy advisor from the municipality. She knows the RTA in and out, she's really good with landlords, she's just a great resource if we have questions. So she can also attend a walk in if the landlord wants, and she gives him information.

STAFF C3: Right off the bat, they have to be safe. We have to make sure there is proper fire safety protocol being followed, whether that's in our congregate or our in community as well, so we do inspections, our housing communication team will do inspections on their first viewing of the apartment. As for the PSH [permanent supportive housing] building, it needs the same. Yeah, making sure everything's running, that they have proper utilities, that the unit's maintained in the proper

conditions set by the Health and Safety Standards of Alberta. So yeah, we do follow legislation for all that.

Staff C9: [Without an inspection] the landlord would charge us for things that are his [responsibility], like maybe a furnace, or windows, or upgrading stuff...

Staff C8: ...if I walk up to the door and it's busted, I would have to take a picture just to show where my location is and that the damage was there when I went there. So then, [they can't] say it's the one client from our agency or be blaming me.

STAFF C5: Another thing we do is in house suite inspections, every 3 months we go in with suite inspections to their unit and do house visits and just to make sure is it clean, are there damages, safety issues, that kind of stuff, so that's another condition we do every few months.

Inspections by the programs provide remedy to clients by preventing situations where they move into inadequate housing or are being evicted or charged for damage they did not cause. In turn, as the last quote shows inspections can also be undertaken on an ongoing basis. This could provide remedy in cases where clients do not keep the unit in an appropriate condition, as staff can warn them where this may endanger their tenancy, and thus prevent eviction.

4.4.2. Redress

Equally important as the prevention of rights violations is the redress that HF programs offer in cases where evictions do occur, or when clients have conflicts with landlords or HF staff themselves.

4.4.2.1. Evictions

Redress in the case of evictions relies on a commitment to rehousing. All HF agencies stated that they would rehouse people after an eviction, and often this goes hand in hand with a discussion of what went wrong and how to prevent a further eviction. This is consistent with HF staff's emphasis on learning from mistakes and empowerment of clients through self-determination and patience (in most areas except third party rental payments).

Staff E3: Rehouse ... Yeah, so, like I said, our program is usually a year to 18 months long. So if someone gets evicted in that time, there's a case conference between the participant, the participant's support worker, and either the team leader or myself to work with the individual to say, "Okay, this is what happened. This is what the landlord reports, this is what you report. You were

evicted, say, for guest management. Or you were evicted not paying rent" so you'd figure that out. But usually it's guest management when people get evicted. Or you know, just disruptive behaviour, emergency services on site. So once again we put it on them, "So this is what happened, what kind of intervention can you see us putting in place so this wouldn't happen again?" So if it was guest management, so you're saying you're feeling lonely, would you be open to working with your FSW getting leisure access pass. Working on meaningful daily activity. Volunteering maybe, that kind of thing. So if they are open and receptive to those interventions, then yeah, we will rehouse. If it was the same thing over and over, they are probably more appropriate for a higher level of support, like a supportive housing. Yeah, as long as they're willing to work with us and identify that there was something that went wrong and there's something we can put in place so it doesn't happen again, sure. Let's give it a shot.

Agencies were willing to devote substantial resources to re-housing clients, but occasionally ran into limits, in terms of client willingness to sustain a tenancy, financial costs, and the burden on staff:

Staff E1: Three times is a general rule of thumb, but it's not a hard and fast rule. Every time someone's evicted, we set up a rehousing meeting with them where I myself as director of the program sit with them and we do this to not be punitive in any way. But to just talk through what happened. Do they show an understanding of the conditions that led to them being evicted? If the conditions are out of their control, like we have some folks that are in abusive relationships and it's the partner keeps finding them and trashing the unit, how in good conscience could we say, "Okay, we're not going to try again," right? If it's the participants themselves that are trashing their units and being evicted and when we do these rehousing meetings, there is no acknowledgement or no understanding of or accountability for what happened in the behaviour, we'll try again. If it happens again, okay, we'll try again. If it happens again, okay, we'll try again, but at that point, we're going, "This is it. There's not a lot else we can do. We're trying to offer you these supports and connect you to these resources. You don't seem to want to," so at that point, we're saying, "Do you even want to be in our program?" Right? And again, we leave it to that client choice of going, "we've tried everything we can the last three times. Obviously what we're doing doesn't work for you, maybe you need to connect with something else." Then at that point, we'd say, "Okay, that's all we can do." As much as the money issue is an issue, it's not. [the funder] understands that exceptional costs are out of our program's control. As long as we're doing our due diligence and we're engaging with the participants and we're doing home inspections and trying to be there for them, they're going to help us out. It's only if we weren't doing all those things and then there's a \$10,000 cost and they're going, "Eh?" That's probably not okay, right? There is no hard and fast rule on our inability to continue to rehouse people. But it gets to a point where people can burn our staff out. It's a lot of work to house them and then house

them again. And now they have that landlord reference of, "Well, he just trashed my apartment and cost \$40,000 worth of damage." What landlord is going to rent to that person, right? It just really can burn our staff out really quick and getting to the point again, after like three rehousing, where you're going, "I don't think this program. I don't think the Housing First is a fit. You might need higher acuity supports. You might need permanent supportive housing. We're just not seeming to be able to address and provide the support that you need."

Staff FM5: We pay the damage deposit one time. So if the tenant loses their place for fault of their own we don't redo damage deposit. The next time we place them they have to come up with their own damage deposit. That's the type of thing we do. Sometimes we will squeak in another damage deposit if we figure that there's a justifiable reason but usually not. It's very hard to get another damage deposit out of us because we just don't have the money.

All these quotes show that there is a strong commitment to rehousing within HF in Alberta. Though, after evictions, it firstly has to be assured that the client wants to be in the program and that HF is still a right fit, as some Staff described. Otherwise, it might neither serve the needs nor interests of the client and also wastes a spot, funding and the work power of staff for other clients. The speed of (re)housing is dependent on clients' engagement and housing preferences. Interestingly, staff reported that even though funding was not endless, it does not present a reason to stop rehousing clients if they still want to be involved with the program. The emphasis on client engagement is thus serving the purpose of ensuring a client learns from bad experiences and of preventing further eviction, but it also ensures that staff efforts and financial resources are used efficiently towards the goal of sustainable housing.

If a client does not want to participate, they can either choose to leave the program or may need a higher acuity program. Repeated evictions, for example, may suggest that the tenant has a level of acuity requiring a more intensive program.

4.4.2.2. Conflicts

Within HF programs, conflicts frequently occur between clients and staff members, and between clients and landlords. It is important that HF agencies are able to provide remedy for clients in these situations, to help sustain their housing. With regards to the former type of conflict, the majority of interviewees stated that miscommunication or misinterpretation

of a situation can lead to resentment or a “clash of personalities”. It is not necessarily the case that either the caseworker or the client did something wrong, but when two people do not work well together, a change of staff member is appropriate:

Staff E3: Most of the time it's a frustration with the situation and not necessarily the support worker. So they're angry that they got denied from AISH. "It's not your support workers ... they are not the ones who denied you from AISH. So they are not the appropriate person to be angry at. I understand that you're frustrated, however this is what we can do. Your support worker can assist you with going and getting a legal aid and appealing it. And getting additional documentation and those kinds of things." But sometimes it's just an absolute clash of personalities. Sometimes there are situations where the FSWs could be maybe triggered by the participant or the participant maybe triggered by the FSW, where we would have to look at switching up participants. So we do weekly case reviews and weekly escalations and we do monthly supervisions with our support staff. So if any of those concerns are being brought forth, we monitor and plan around it. And yeah. We can change FSWs or maybe change teams entirely. [...] So maybe they're supported better by a different team where they're more comfortable.

Staff E5: Oh. They can request a change in worker, 'cause sometimes, you know, people just don't click, and that's human nature. That's okay, so they can have a different worker. They can also speak to the team lead; not just the follow-up support worker. They can ask to speak to the team lead. If they want to they can ask to speak to the manager. That's fine, too, and we educate that they have that right to do that if they're not happy, and of course we do our best to, you know, "Do you think you can still work with this person, or would you like to transfer to another worker?" And if it absolutely, "Nope, not gonna work," then that's okay. We're flexible.

Staff E4: Typically most of the time I've found that that's more of a personality clash than an actual thing to be concerned about, and you know myself -- or typically at this stage in the game -- a team leader or manager will kind of go in and try to mediate that conflict and those kinds of things. There are times when we've assigned a different worker, just because the situation is unworkable. We work with people who are hard to house, sometimes they can be not very forgiving and those kinds of things. We do see high turnover of staff, so mistakes to get made. We try our best to navigate that as we can.

Most staff members noted that they would first and foremost try to resolve the issue or conflict before changing caseworkers. Mediation is not only important to save the relationship and rebuild trust between the caseworker and their client, it also saves clients

from having to repeatedly explain their traumatic experiences to new people, and contributes to the learning process of conflict solving.

Staff FM1: First of all, it's the staff's responsibility to maintain that positive rapport. It is on them. No matter what feedback they are getting from the client, they are to remain respectful and treat people with dignity, etcetera. That's a professional standard. They don't get to punish or give consequence to or anything like that. Not everybody mesh. That includes a participant to a staff or a staff to a participant. But staff are held to a certain standard and that's expected. If a participant really doesn't like a staff, I don't give them a new staff. It's about, we need to find a solution here. And that happens. And oftentimes it's because that staff, I've directed that staff to go in twice a week or I've directed that staff to deliver this letter because they've been missing house visits. All of a sudden, they don't like Joe and they're in here and, "why did Joe have to come?" And I sit down and I say, "because that's what we have to do to pay your rent." ... I'm often the bad guy so that the staff and the participant can remain, keep their rapport going. That's pretty common within that management chain. ... Some of our participants are, they can be demanding and things like that, but it is important to teach them that you can't burn through people because they didn't give you or they didn't do what you expected them to do. We like to teach, we don't teach dependability, but we like to teach self-sufficiency. We give you a bus ticket and you're expected to meet us at the food bank and then we bring you home with your food, 'cause they can't take the food bank on the bus.

Staff E1: Again, we try to maintain consistency for our participants, so we don't want to just at the drop of a hat switch a worker out. Because we do want to respect the relationship that is built there, to be trauma informed. To get a whole new worker you got to tell your whole story all over again. We want to maintain that consistency and if they're not able to work with us, who are purely there to help them, what does that say about all their other relationships and all their other service providers? We really want to use it as a lesson, as a teaching opportunity to say, "Okay, this is a conflict. We're not going to give up on you, so let's work through this together because we're not going to quit," right? In your other relationships in life or other service providers, you have a disagreement, they might just walk away. They might just close your file. They might just stop serving you, but here we have an opportunity, you guys aren't getting along, let's figure out why and try to work through it. If that doesn't work, then we can switch workers. Yeah, but that's your last resort after we try to work through the actual what the issues are.

Many interviewees also reported additionally of a grievance procedure that clients can follow if they are unhappy with the program or their staff. It ensures their voice is being heard and change can happen if needed.

Staff C1: And we have a grievance procedure too, so if clients feel frustrated or feel like they're not being treated in the correct way there's a grievance procedure that they can follow, so there's always their caseworker and it just goes up from there depending on if they feel that their grievance is being addressed or not.

Staff C4: So we have a grievance procedure, so if there's concerns, so they would talk to the case manager, if they can sort that out they would talk to a team lead, if that doesn't work then they can talk to a manager, and then otherwise they can write to Alpha House or to our funders. So and then if it's feedback or they're interested in something, we have you know, it's just open dialogue right? Let us know and we'll try to help you.

Staff C3: And the grievance procedure is supposed to be reminded to the clients every 90 days during reporting so that they're...it's never forgotten, they have that resource available readily. And then I mean, we do accreditation as well, where we actually bring in clients or I guess the creditors bring in our clients and do interviews, they get reviews and feedback as well.

Staff E2: If it's a problem with a staff member we have a grievance policy. That individual is completely free to submit a grievance to ... if it was with their follow-up support worker or housing outreach worker, usually I would be the one to hear about it. And I would say, "Yep, if you got a problem, if we can't solve this over the phone right now," which often we can and do, "And I haven't satisfied your concern, then you'll have to continue the grievance policy," which is basically a chain of command thing where it just moves up the ladder until the issue is resolved. Yeah.

I also asked what happens if there are problems between clients and landlords to see how tenancy conflicts were addressed. All agencies reported efforts to mediate the situation and maintain the tenancy. This involved working not only on the relationship between landlord and client, but also between landlord and program.

Interviewer: What do you do when there are problems between landlords and clients?

Staff FM5: We come down on the side of the landlord or the client. Whoever is justified. Sometime the landlord deserves to kick our clients out. Like really, because they've done tons of damage and they're having parties and they're doing all that. We try to mediate. That's the first thing all the time. And then sometimes our client is right and the landlord is not right so it's a situation specific.

Staff FM6: Yeah, definitely.

Staff FM9: Usually sitting down with the client and the landlord in a meeting is the best way to mediate.

Staff FM8: ...it's been a couple clients that we done that with hoping to change some of the issues. Sometimes there's success, sometimes there's not, unfortunately. And it all depends on the individual and what they're involved in at that time.

Staff E2: We can act as mediators. We are an intermediary between the two. And we might even facilitate an opportunity for them to sit down and talk about what's going on. Communication is a huge factor. When people aren't getting along for whatever reason, communication breaks down and the tenancy is not gonna go well. We try and help foster and create that relationship between the two, and we're doing that in a bit of a mediator role.

Staff E1: Depends on the problem, depends on the client, depends on the landlord. Ideally we want to create that relationship between the two of them, so whether we're doing case conferences and getting everybody together in the same room to talk through it, a lot of times we're doing mediations or we're the in-between until that relationship is built again. It really depends on the nature of the problem, so sometimes our participants get targeted for issues that are happening in a building that's not actually them. Again, [we are] being that advocate for them. On the other side, sometimes it is our participants causing damage, so we've got to be the advocate on the other side to support the landlord.... We've worked to balance with the participant being our first priority and the landlord being our second.[...] we have had other landlords that we get to the end of the year [ie., a one-year lease] and they say, "Okay, now you're out," without any kind of reasoning behind it. And we've had to go to court for some of those and support the participants who go to court and what have you. But if you have a landlord that's like that, do you really want to win? Because he's just going to wait for you to make a mistake and then he's going to evict you anyway.

Mediation can also mean that landlords have to be educated on the rights of their tenants and need to be reminded that unjust evictions for example can be legally contested. But it can also mean that clients need to be educated on their own rights, their own wrongdoings and any violations of the tenancy agreement on their part that led to the conflict. Staff described that these mediation efforts and the communication between landlord and client can often serve clients' learning process and further their ability to manage future conflict situations.

Staff E5: Usually it involves listening to both sides, so we listen to... whoever calls us first, we listen to them, and then we address both parties and we try to mediate as best as we can. We know that of course one of the first things landlords want is to get paid, so we are ... Once a month we check in with Alberta Works to make sure, okay, has the third party rent been sent out? Yes it has. Oh, no it hasn't;

let's fix that. Sometimes glitches happen, and the landlord has called saying, "Uh, where's the rent?" So then the follow-up support worker will fix it. They'll speak to Alberta Works or AISH or whoever it was with, and they'll go back to the landlord and fix it that way. Sometimes if there are complaints about the participant, either from the landlord or another tenant, the follow-up support worker tries to get the whole picture,... it's not always so black and white.... And of course they try to advocate for the participant, but they also try to support the landlord as best as possible. We also educate. Some landlords aren't a hundred percent always certain of their own rights as well as participant rights, so that involves a lot of times, "Well, you know, you didn't give a written warning for them. You only told them verbally, so you need to give them a written warning about that, and then that can stand up as something legal." And landlords appreciate that. And then it sends a message to the participant that they have to own it, and if they are responsible, it's something that says, "Okay, we have to address this. What are we gonna do to strategize to not have that happen again?" Or what their own rights are. It's basically just a matter of being available to both, educating them about their rights, and trying to be as peaceful as possible between the two parties.

Staff E4: We try to mediate them, there certainly comes a time when the problems are so great that we'll sit down with the tenant and say listen, all signs are pointing to this isn't a good fit for you and maybe it's just best to cut our losses and move on, but we try to mediate them as best as we can, we try very hard to promote the tenants dealing with stuff with their landlord, but we try our best to give them space to give them space to find out what that would look like and those kinds of things, and yeah, just really mediation in the same way I would deal with two staff that aren't getting along right. We're not here to determine who's wrong or who's right, it's really more about what's a workable solution here and is there a teachable moment?

As the last example and the earlier quote from Participant E1 show ("if you have a landlord that's like that, do you really want to win? Because he's just going to wait for you to make a mistake and then he's going to evict you anyway"), a conflict is not always resolvable and sustaining a tenancy is not always desirable. If a landlord discriminates against HF clients and evicts them as soon as the program ends, a relationship with the program will not be beneficial for the clients. Cutting ties with these landlords is thus a form of remedy to ensure clients will not have to face discrimination and abuse from said landlords anymore and works towards the goal of sustainable housing by preventing future eviction.

However, mediating conflicts and creating relationships with landlords was crucial for many agencies and was the preferred option over cutting ties. It can benefit future clients as

landlords get to know the program and know the support they can receive and are thus more inclined to rent to HF clients again or willing to link HF agencies with other apartments:

STAFF C3: We do try and mediate any issues that do arise, we've found in the past that direct client-landlord relations isn't always the best method, just because sometimes landlords don't know how to interact with their clients and vice versa. So we do try and mediate that as much as possible just to appease both sides. We can go meet the landlord at their office or at the unit or wherever just to reassure them that we're there to support them, and then yeah, we increase caseworker support, or maybe work with the landlord to try and move them to a different residence if the client's agreeable to it as well, just to maintain relationships with landlords. Once we do have a landlord we like to maintain those relations as best as possible because that's how we found...typically find more units is typically through landlord reference.

Staff FM3: We usually try to keep really good relationship with landlords. Like, "Hey, if there's any issues contact us and we'll talk to the client. We're here to support you and the client." We always wanna keep our relationships with our landlords strong, just because there's only so many in town. And some already don't accept the Housing First program, so we really try to just work with the landlord as much as possible.

Relationships with landlords can mean they are more understanding of clients and their behaviour, which might be especially helpful in the transition phase that was mentioned under 1.2.1. Even though HF clients have the same rights and responsibilities as any other tenant, it can take some more time to adjust to the expectations of a tenancy. Mediation of conflicts with landlords, and ensuring landlords have a basic understanding of HF clients' situation, can be important as it can give clients more time to learn from mistakes without being evicted and falling immediately back on the street. Building relationships with landlords is thus both a reactive practice (responding to problems as they are reported) and a preventive one (aiming to reduce future problems).

5. Discussion & Conclusion

I will now proceed to discuss the results of this thesis in light of my research objectives. This discussion has two parts. First, I analyze the results according to Fukuda-Parr's (2006) principles of Non-Discrimination, Participation, Adequate Progress, and Remedy. Second, I examine HF programs' duty to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to housing according to International human rights law. I conclude by answering the core question of this research: Do HF programs in Alberta realize the right to adequate housing? From there, I will identify the implications of my research for the provincial and federal governments' responsibility to realize the right to housing for chronically homeless persons in Alberta and formulate recommendations on how to support HF programs in realizing the right to housing.

5.1. Compliance with principles according to Fukuda-Parr

5.1.1. Objective 1: Compliance with Non-Discrimination

Research Objective (1): To investigate the degree of non-discrimination in HF programs' practices and processes, including in criteria for assessing client eligibility and priority.

To assess if HF programs comply with the principle of Non-Discrimination, the results of section 4.1. need to be reviewed. Of interest is if HF programs have non-discriminatory practices in place to assess eligibility and prioritization of clients on the waitlist.

Furthermore, all clients need to receive equal service provision and have equal chances to succeed in realizing their right to housing by finding a sustainable home.

Violent Clients

As shown in section 1.1.2., most HF providers noted that they routinely had to turn away people living in homelessness because their acuity scores were deemed too low. The intake system, which is based on vulnerability, often leads to persons who scored low on the VI-SPDAT to have to remain in their state of vulnerability until their situation/suffering worsens, and they become vulnerable "enough" to be picked up. A few participants (e.g. Staff C1, Staff C2) reported take the duration of clients' wait into account, to prevent a person from having to suffer more than necessary. Another (Staff E5) reported alternating between complex and non-complex clients as a way of balancing staff caseload, which might protect against burn-out (a topic discussed in section 5.1.3).

However, it also has to be recognized that it is well intended and sensible to prioritize the most vulnerable clients, as HF programs and especially HF staff have limited capacity. They cannot be expected to be able to serve all people on the waiting list at once, which would be the only completely non-discriminatory solution. The underlying issue is a mismatch between supply and demand, which illustrates the need for more HF service providers in Alberta. More HF staff are also needed to help everyone in need as quickly as possible, in order to prevent discrimination in the intake system against clients who are not vulnerable “enough”.

Furthermore, it was demonstrated in section 4.1.1.2 that the intake questionnaire is not very accurate at determining clients’ acuity . Clients, who would actually be more fitting for programs offering services with a very high acuity, are often matched with HF services offering scattered-site housing. This leads to multiple issues. First, the affected “non-fitting” clients do not get the supports they need: while they might require a 24h supported housing situation, a unit in normal market housing is not as adaptable to their needs and also does not provide constant support, leading to cycles of eviction. Until the client finds a spot in a more suitable program that serves their needs and thus benefits their housing sustainability, their realization of the right to housing is delayed. It means the improper intake tool hinders an efficient and quick way out of homelessness into a sustainable home for some clients with high acuity. A further side effect is that staff, whose caseload is supposed to be oriented towards lower acuity clients, can burn out quickly by trying to serve the higher needs of these “non-fit”-clients who might require multiple rehousing processes. It moreover takes away spots in scattered-site HF programs for clients with lower acuity. This is especially problematic in light of other clients being considered not vulnerable “enough” for a spot in a HF program, due to limited capacity, until their situation/suffering worsens unnecessarily.

It was apparent throughout all interviews that staff always tried to work with their clients to the best of their abilities, even if clients’ acuity did not fit the level of care, which meant additional work. Staff E5 emphasized the importance of collaboration between services in the same city in such cases: “there are still gaps in the system for some complex folks where

there isn't quite a good fit, so they stay stuck for a while in the system, and then that's also where collaboration is very important.” Through collaboration, staff can thus attempt to remedy at least the delay in realization of the right to housing caused by the faulty intake system.

HF programs further discriminate against violent clients (as demonstrated in section 4.1.1.3.) and clients identifying as Indigenous (section 4.1.1.4.). Their needs are not being recognized as equal to other clients’ needs, which manifests in insufficient training of staff in navigating violent situations and in providing adequate services for Indigenous persons. Their way to a sustainable home is thus prolonged and their realization of their right to housing delayed

Only a few agencies seemed to be skilled enough to navigate violent situations, while others dropped violent clients either onto these agencies or back on the street (e.g. Staff C1). Issues with violent clients can either be connected to: 1) staff having insufficient training and preparation; 2) clients needing higher acuity supports and special housing sites; or 3) cases where violence presents a safety risk for staff and justifies the end of service provision.

Since many participants mentioned violent incidents, they do not seem to be a rarity. It is thus rather surprising that many staff members seemed to be unable to handle such situations, due to insufficient training or experience. Insufficient preparation for such situations can harm staff and often culminates in agencies dropping the client, which in turn results in (at minimum) a delay of their housing process. It is appropriate to prioritize staff safety, but not giving violent clients a chance to stop their behaviour is problematic. As Staff FM1 emphasized, working with this vulnerable population means understanding who they are and that “one violent outburst or verbal attack is not who that person is”. A “violent outburst” should thus not be a reason to end supports right away, but rather speaks to the need for resolving deeper issues, as proven by the agencies of Staff FM1 or Staff C2 that successfully work with these clients. Staff rather needs to be better prepared to navigate violent situations safely, without having to tolerate such behaviour, but also without writing clients off. They have to learn how to build relationships with these clients and to lead conversations that can shed light on the reasons for their outbursts. They then can offer supports to clients to tackle those reasons and remedy the underlying frustration or anger. Staff C2 provided an excellent example for such a practice, where conversation revealed the

reason for violent outbreaks of a client to be a problem with understanding what doctors would tell him. After the client opened up about his struggle, Staff C2 could provide him with the support he needed and the violent episodes stopped.

As Staff C2 further demonstrated, there are clients with a high acuity whose violent outbreaks result in damage in their unit. In these cases, a congregate supported site might fit their needs better, as materials can be adjusted to be harder to damage and landlords are more assured of the financial support through the program. Evictions are thus less likely. I deduce from this example that staff should consider if the acuity of their clients might be a better fit for a congregate housing site, if they do not present a severe danger, before dropping them completely. Furthermore, hardier materials should be considered in the construction or re-modeling of congregate housing sites. These interventions are no replacement for proper training and preparation of staff for violent outbreaks, but rather present a way for congregate sites to meet their clients where they are at and prevent evictions.

Violent clients are a challenge for HF programs to remember their foundations on harm reduction, which means understanding where the client is at (as described in section 2.1.2.2.) and recovery orientation, based on the client's learning experience (section 2.1.2.5). As long as staff are properly trained and clients do not present a serious danger, these parameters need to be remembered and applied to violent incidents. Clients need to learn that violent behaviour is not beneficial and should be given a chance to choose to either exit the program or to stop with their violent behaviour in order to ensure staff safety and prevent further evictions (as Staff E1 illustrated). This is also the case for clients involved in criminal activity. The foundation for safe co-operation between staff and clients is thus that violent and/or criminal activity is stopped and that a will to participate in the program is present. If a client chooses to participate and to stop violent behaviour/criminal activity that does not mean all safety concerns are dismissed, but in such cases staff and clients can look into options like having police or parole officers present at meetings if needed (see example by Staff E5). Otherwise "individuals ... have to be turned away, just because it's a kind of unmanageable situation ... to go in if you don't know who's in the apartment, you don't know what's happening, if there are weapons and dealing and stuff like that" (Staff E1). It is

important to stress that in cases where clients do not want to work on their violent behaviour or stop their dangerous activity, an end of the cooperation between staff and client is necessary to keep the staff safe. It is less a gap in HF service provision but rather a protection of the human rights of workers.

Lastly, section 4.1.1.3 also broached the importance of self-care for staff. Staff C2 outlined how good service provision and staff well-being go hand in hand. Only if staff take care of their own mental and physical health, will they have the strength and energy to support their clients. Otherwise, they might burnout or “agency-hop”; the latter worsens their ability to provide good case management, as deep and trustful relationship building cannot happen, which is crucial for meaningful conversation and client support (a point which is also relevant to Compliance with adequate progress, discussed in section 5.3 below)

Indigenous Culture

As described in Chapter 1, the definition of Indigenous homelessness encompasses many more dimensions than the Canadian definition of homelessness. It provides a more holistic approach to well-being and the understanding of home for Indigenous peoples (e.g. the connectedness to All My Relations) and clarifies that Indigenous homelessness comes with different needs and experiences of suffering (e.g. intergenerational trauma, trauma from abuse in residential schools, racism). However, these needs are not recognized as equal to non-Indigenous clients’ needs within HF service provision, due to insufficient training of staff.

In section 4.1.1.4. the interviewed Indigenous guide exposed the severe need for more and deeper learning experiences for non-Indigenous staff to be able to serve the needs of their Indigenous clients as equally as the needs of their non-Indigenous clients. The positive effect of these learning experiences could be seen in many cases where clients’ housing sustainability benefited from ceremony their staff proposed (“never would have happened if this person hadn’t been going to these things” Staff E1) and an improved relationship between Indigenous clients and non-Indigenous staff. Also, the demand/need for a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture on the part of HF workers is attested by the large amount of staff (within the guide’s municipality) accepting his invitations to experience Indigenous culture. While there are some Indigenous agencies with Indigenous staff in

Edmonton and Calgary (but not Fort McMurray, as far as I could ascertain), they are not able to take care of all Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness in their municipality. This means that many Indigenous clients are supported by non-Indigenous HF workers, which highlights the importance of an adequate cultural understanding. Staff are the catalyst for clients' success.

This is a crucial finding of this research, not only in regard to Indigenous clients, but for all HF clients: staff stand between clients and housing. Staff members do their best to translate systems, to advocate for their clients, to empower and strengthen them so that they can realize their right to housing sustainably. But to do so effectively, staff need proper education, support, and self-care. Insufficient training in Indigenous ways of being limits the ability of HF staff to support Indigenous clients, which reduces those clients' chances of realizing their right to housing and finding a sustainable home (the foundation of Non-Discrimination). This can also be identified as (unconscious) reproduction of oppression processes from the past, where Indigenous persons are structurally hindered to live a life in dignity – in this case by finding a way home – and thus presents structural violence (as defined in section 2.3). Historical oppression through colonization, dispossession, and discrimination are reasons for Indigenous peoples' overrepresentation in the Canadian and Albertan homelessness population. This makes neglect of Indigenous clients' unique needs and understandings in service provision even more alarming. This situation not only breaches the principle of Non-Discrimination but also touches on the principle of Adequate Progress and will thus be further discussed in section 5.1.3.

External Discrimination

External discrimination through landlords and other public systems is a severe barrier on the way to a sustainable home and infringes on the right to housing of all HF clients, with Indigenous clients being worst affected. The problem with discriminatory landlords is, as Staff E1 or Staff FM3 reported, is that they are minimizing the available, affordable, adequate housing stock for HF clients by blatantly denying them a tenancy agreement. In Fort McMurray, staff reported that affordable housing was by now even completely unavailable, because of direct discrimination through the only affordable housing provider in the municipality (see section 4.1.3.1.).

Participants identified multiple causes for this discrimination: simple prejudices against HF clients and racism against Indigenous clients; bad experiences with former HF tenants where they felt a lack of support by HF agencies with damages and costs; poor self-presentation of clients; and criminal records or a lack of credentials. The demand for criminal records is especially problematic as participants pointed out that landlords do not care if the record only stems from banal incidents like unpaid transit tickets. Criminalization processes (discussed in Box 1) not only present an unbearable injustice and direct discrimination, where homelessness is being criminalized, but also severely impede finding a home. Criminalization is discrimination in itself and feeds into the prejudices of landlords, often resulting in denial of a tenancy agreement. Chronically homeless persons therefore suffer from serious inequity entering the housing market by being targeted and punished through discriminatory mechanisms. Criminalization presents moreover structural violence, where chronically homeless persons - who are likely in their situation because of a combination of low socio-economic status with mental health, racism, addiction, and/or physical disability (see section 2.3.2., section 1.1.1., & section 2.1.5.) - are hindered to exit homelessness causing (further) deterioration of their health by being kept in their vulnerable state of homelessness (itself a result of structural violence).

Another discriminatory structure concerning credentials was discovered in respect to public services, which issue crucial documents like income verifications that are requested by landlords during application processes. As explained in section 4.1.3.4. these services are set up very inefficiently. First, their processing times to issue needed documents can be very long, which means clients stay un-housed during that wait. Second, services are set up to only provide income verifications if a person provides their address, something a homeless person does not possess until they can show precisely said document to the landlord (see quote by Staff E3). This paradox of bureaucracy, which ignores the vulnerable status of homeless persons, is discriminatory and a severe structural barrier to the realization of the right to housing and a way out of homelessness – indicating another account of structural violence.

Moreover, not only the set-up of public systems discriminate against clients, but often also the people working within it (see section 1.3.5.). As Staff E6 elucidated in respect to

Indigenous clients, direct discrimination can be a barrier for example to receiving financial supports when public service workers let their work and assessment of applicants be influenced by their prejudices. The resulting lack of financial supports in turn has serious consequences for a client, including in paying rent. This illustrates the toxic “myths about flawed Indigenous individuals” (Thistle, 2017, p7) at work, where instead of recognizing the devastating effects of colonization, responsibility for the person’s suffering is placed on the victims themselves. This further reproduces colonization’s devastating effects, revealing “complicity—unwitting or not—in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples” (Thistle, 2017, p18).

Returning to landlord discrimination, evictions can also be based on discriminatory prejudices. Common causes for evictions are letting street family and friends sleep over (see Guest-Management in section 4.1.2.2.), client behaviours that result out of trauma or mental health (see section 4.1.2.1.), or landlords’ ignorance of cultural practices (section 4.1.3.1.). As reaction to discriminatory eviction, staff try to remedy these situations by advocating for their clients and by educating landlords. This is helpful and can sometime prevent evictions, but where clients violated the tenancy agreement (e.g. through guest management issues), it stands in contrast with the original focus of HF where clients have the same obligations and rights as all other tenants with a standard lease, and are expected to learn from their own successes or mistakes in upholding lease conditions. In this sense, if a client violates the tenancy agreement, one could argue that they should not be given a special status, but should be treated like any other tenant, which means a warning and potentially eviction. They then can learn from the consequences of their choices, as anticipated by HF. However, this assumes that warnings and evictions are legitimate and not based on prejudice or misunderstanding (e.g. of Indigenous rituals like smudging, which is sometimes mistaken for drug use).

It is also important to note that landlords involved in HF can also breach tenancy agreements. Inadequate housing is offered by so-called “slumlords” who might be willing to work with HF for their financial gain, but provide unsafe, unsanitary, and pest infested units (as reported in section 4.1.3.3.). Indigenous clients in particular often have to make do with inadequate living conditions if they want to get off the street because of racism and discrimination of other landlords. This severely breaches their right to *safe, adequate*

housing, as a simple roof over one's head is not enough to make housing a home in the sense of General Comment No. 4 (as will be further discussed in section 5.1.3.). If these clients however would turn to more expensive units, their right to *affordable* housing is breached.

Issues of housing affordability are critical to understanding housing sustainability. When clients exit HF programs, they may struggle to afford even below market units without ongoing rental supplements. This is a severe threat to their right to housing and touches upon structural violence where the socio-economically poor are denied the financial supports they need to truly exit inadequate housing situations and homelessness. It supports Willse's (2010) and Evans' (2015) critique that HF is a neoliberal model that manages the cost of homelessness, but fails to address economic inequalities and housing affordability challenges, which produce homelessness in general (see section 2.1.7.1.). As Tsemberis himself further recognizes, HF programs may only "help individuals graduate from the trauma of homelessness into the normal everyday misery of extreme poverty, stigma, and unemployment" (2010, p52).

While funding for HF might decrease chronic homelessness, governments also need to provide sufficient financial assistance for socio-economically marginalized populations (e.g. for rent payments) and increase the availability of adequate affordable housing. Only then can vulnerable individuals and households be prevented from falling (back) into homelessness. If governments do not fulfill these requirements, HF is just an interim station in a homelessness person's life, especially when clients are expected to graduate (see Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018) and does not provide the realization of the right to housing (see Table 4, section 2.2.2.2). In this light, failures of governments to provide adequate subsidies and supports pose a severe impediment to a sustainable home, and thus to the realization of the right to housing (see Table 4, section 2.2.2.2.).

Conclusion

The discussed results showed discriminatory practices within the set up of HF programs, including insufficient training of staff, as well as from outside forces like landlords or social service systems. Clients suffering the most from discrimination through the problematic set up of HF programs in Alberta are homeless persons who are not yet vulnerable "enough" to

be on top of the waiting list, clients whose acuity is too high for HF services, Indigenous clients, and clients with violent outbursts. It means these clients often do not get the services they need to find a sustainable home as quick as possible, because of discriminatory processes. HF programs in Alberta do therefore not comply with the principle of Non-Discrimination

Discrimination through external factors like landlords and public systems is suffered by all clients and particularly by Indigenous persons. Staff attempt to remedy these discriminatory processes but are not able to do so completely. Notably, staff do seek to protect clients' housing where it threatened by a (claimed) breach of tenancy agreements, although this is not entirely consistent with the normalization of HF clients through standard leases, and the original emphasis of HF programs on learning experiences (for clients). Structural violence could also be detected in external factors such as criminalization processes, public service systems that are not set up to serve homeless persons (who depend on these services to be efficient), and the direct discrimination in provision of public services disadvantaging (especially Indigenous) clients requiring supports from the public system.

5.1.2. Objective 2: Compliance with Participation

Research Objective (2): To assess the level of client participation within HF programs' processes and procedures.

Compliance with the principle of Participation means that HF clients need to play a crucial part in decisions concerning their own life. As described in section 2.1.2.1., HF programs should ensure clients can choose their own apartment, the things they want to work on and if they want to receive treatment or not. They should be able to make their own decisions and learn from their own mistakes (see section 2.1.2.5. on Recovery Orientation). The premise is that every client is individual – to “work with a person *where they are at*, and to give them choices and options” (COH, 2019c) – and should be able to grow self-sufficient in self-directed care. It further means that procedures should be in place to ensure that clients' opinions and feedback are being heard and respected (Fukuda-Parr, 2006). When the principle of Participation is fulfilled, the relationship between staff and client is not a paternalistic but an equal one (see section 2.1.6.).

Client Choice in Service Provision

The results in Chapter 4.2. indicated clearly that participation is incorporated in HF programs, where they embrace and support clients' wishes and where service provision even demands client participation (see section 2.2.6.). However, this can sometimes be upstaged, if staff recognize an area – either by themselves or through using a matrix (as described by Hennigan, 2017) – that poses a threat to clients' housing sustainability.

Staff put a strong emphasis on client choice, conversation, positive re-enforcement of clients' strengths, patience and recognition that every client is different and 100% capable of making their own decisions (see section 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). Recognition and respect for clients' dignity, which "entail[s] a right to personal development, to be able to fully participate in society" (Moons, 2018, p20, 28) is thus inherent to their service provision. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of deep relationships for open conversations (section 2.2.2.) as it ensures that clients have the trust to ask their HF worker for any supports they might need – e.g. Staff FM3 stating "the deeper the relationship gets, the more comfortable they are coming to you and asking you, "I'm thinking about going to Alberta Health Services or detox. Would you be able to help me out with that?".

Many participants expressed the goal of their work in supporting clients on their way to self-empowerment and self-sufficiency, which speaks for their compliance with the HF paradigm of "Recovery Orientation" (see section 2.1.2.5.) through empowerment to self-directed care. They described their job as providing the supports for clients to be able to realize their own goals. Staff C3 described it with the words: "The best analogy I ever heard was the client is driving the car, we're in the passenger seat helping them get to where they want to go". It indicates a non-paternalistic, client-driven approach to service provision, which complies with the principle of participation, and shows that staff respect clients' decisions.

Clients' increasing self-empowerment, and self-dependency by learning from the consequences of their own choices was a key theme especially in section 2.2., but also throughout the other results sections. The learning experience was seen as paramount, as it ensures that clients eventually, with patience and time, grow self-sufficient and able to sustain housing independently (as was well illustrated by Staff C2 in section 2.2.1). However,

even though clients have the ultimate power to decide over treatment and their own home, choice was sometimes more or less strongly “guided” by staff to benefit housing sustainability. In case of treatment delivery, for example, all participants stated that clients could freely choose to receive treatment or not. However, some participants also stated that they would actively direct conversation towards treatment options if they consider a certain area as risk for housing sustainability – Staff E4 stated very clearly: “So we would never mandate someone has to go to treatment, however, but we might be like “you know what ... if you don’t get your addiction under control, you’re gonna be consistently be struggling with your housing sustainability”. This has significant meaning for compliance with the principle of participation.

Housing sustainability is the paramount goal of service treatment and puts pressure on clients and staff. Additionally, HF programs in Alberta are often set up to graduate their clients, at a time set by the program (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018), which puts pressure on staff to ensure their clients are able to sustain housing once the program ends (see section 2.2.1 and 2.2.5.). A set graduation time exacerbates the pressure by demanding housing sustainability in a time-efficient manner, which leaves minimal time for individual growth journeys and orientates case management towards staff-assessed risks for housing sustainability. This finding can be connected to Hennigan’s critique of HF programs.

Hennigan (2017) argued that even though HF programs do not officially coerce clients into treatment, the compulsory role is simply taken over by the standard tenancy agreement and the threat of eviction. In this context, the lease becomes a disciplinary tool, which compels clients to engage with the capitalist economy. The pressure of losing one’s home forces clients into following staff recommendations and requesting treatment.

Staff thus slip into a guiding rather than supporting role, where clients are being encouraged to think about services their support worker assessed (with the SPDAT) as useful for their housing retention (as described for example by Staff C4 in section 2.2.3). This acts against the recommendation of HF founder Tsemberis, who urges HF staff to insist on clients to make the decisions and “*to do things for themselves*” (2010, p47). Secondly, it is congruent with Hennigan’s experiences (described in section 2.1.7.1.) of staff assessing their clients independently with the SPDAT tool and then steering them towards the areas they assessed

as problematic, instead of leaving the goal setting completely with their clients. Because of the strong link of case management to a mandate for rehabilitation, the client-staff relationship then falls into the trap of being more paternalistic and less participatory than it is supposed to be. From this perspective, coercion into treatment is not practiced by HF programs (as the model promises), but is simply taken over by the standard tenancy agreement and the threat of eviction (see section 2.1.7.1.). This would thus stand against the foundational understanding in HF of housing as an entitlement, rather than a ‘privilege’ clients must earn through behavioural compliance. In addition, as noted previously with respect to “non-fitting” clients, the SPDAT assessment tool can be inaccurate (e.g. “Non-fitting” clients), and so staff might be misinformed about what clients “should” work on for their housing retention.

Housing sustainability is thus at the core of HF service provision, which is not bad in itself. Problems arise however, when it is not promoted through an individual process of growing and learning, but through pressure and interference in clients’ self-empowerment. A set graduation date worsens the situation, as clients are not able to learn at their own pace, but rather have to comply with a uniform graduation timeline. This can severely impede with their readiness when HF supports end, putting them at high risk of losing their housing after a premature graduation (see Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018). HF is then potentially a Band-Aid solution, offering limited-time assistance rather than real housing sustainability. Not giving clients the time they need to make their own decisions, to learn, and to truly grow independent, is a breach of the principle of participation as defined by Fukuda-Parr (2006), and of the HF parameters client choice and recovery orientation.

In light of these findings, I strongly advocate against a set graduation time and highly recommend that staff should reflect on their own involvement in clients’ goal setting and step back if they undermine clients’ agency and thus take away from the principle of participation. It also has to be recognized that clients can still always choose if they want to follow the advice of their HF worker or if they want to follow their own needs. HF staff in Alberta seemed to leave all decision-making authority effectively with the client. However, I could not determine from the answers of the participating HF staff, how often clients indeed follow their own wishes and how often they feel pressured or inclined to rather follow their

support worker's advice (e.g. to please their worker or out of fear for eviction). Also, the assessment tool needs to be rethought and more based on clients' goals, rather than on the SPDAT's vulnerability index if self-directed care and self-empowerment are supposed to be at the center of service provision.

Housing Choice

Furthermore, housing choice was restricted by the imperative of maintaining housing at almost any cost. The participation in choosing their own unit is to make clients feel at home and is a fundamental part of HF (as described in the principle of Client Choice in 2.1.2.1.). Thus, all programs offering scattered-site HF services followed the principle of participation in housing choice to some extent (see section 4.2.4.). While some agencies did the groundwork and let clients decide from an assortment of pre-selected units that conformed to the client's preferences as much as possible – Staff E4 described it like the work of a realtor – others let clients search for housing independently and only assisted when help was needed (e.g. Staff E2, C5, & C6). While the first approach might be suitable for clients with higher acuity, the second approach speaks more to letting clients empower themselves and grow independent by learning and doing. The latter approach also improves the acceptance and connection with their home and gives more room for client choice as clients do not feel coerced into taking a unit they do not like (as described by Staff E2). If clients learn how to look for housing offers by themselves, they will be better able to find a new home when the program has ended, if required. It could also help to relieve staff workload. Nevertheless, both approaches involve clients in the housing choice and all interviewed staff working with scattered-site housing recognized the importance of clients' engagement in the process for their housing sustainability. Staff recognized that clients had to actively choose an apartment to make it their home, which complies with the understanding that a right to "Safe, adequate and affordable housing does not only mean having a roof over one's head with good sanitation and access to services – it also means having a home, making it not only crucial for survival but also "necessary for human life" (Heffernan. et al, 2015, p11) (section 2.2.).

However, as stated before, housing sustainability, especially in regard to affordability, also puts pressure on housing choice. Clients often have to settle for a unit that is financially

sustainable in the future, which in itself is not an issue as long as clients have enough units to choose from that comply with housing standards. However, as stated in the previous section 5.1.1., affordable housing for HF clients is hard to come by in Alberta, which makes finding enough adequate housing options for clients to choose from problematic. This leads to clients taking “whatever they can get” (Staff E5) out of fear that nothing else will become available and/or to escape their current state of transitional shelter or homelessness. Their housing choice is thus restricted through the unavailability of affordable housing stock and their vulnerable situation. This affects clients’ contentment and comfort with their new unit tremendously and often undermines their housing sustainability.

Client Obligations

On a more positive note, all HF programs in Alberta seemed to have the principle of participation ingrained in their structure, as it even presents one of the few obligations for clients to be in the program and is needed for the obligatory assessment of client’s progress (as described in section 4.2.6.). It is proof for the recognition of the positive effects of participation and engagement on a client’s housing sustainability and on the efficiency of the housing progress (see quote by staff E2 in section 4.2.4.). It further ensures, especially after evictions, that a client really chooses to be in the program (e.g. quote Staff E1 in section 4.2.6.). As long as there was participation and willingness to work with the program, staff saw evictions as learning experiences and kept supporting their client. If clients deny participation it is a sign that they either choose not to be in a HF program or that they might need a higher acuity program, as Staff E3 describes: “So if they are open and receptive to those interventions, then yeah, we will rehouse. If it was the same thing over and over, they are probably more appropriate for a higher level of support, like a supportive housing” (section 4.2.6.).

Other obligations encompass having an income (including AESH or Alberta Works) and distributing 30 percent of that income towards rent (see section 4.2.6.). These obligations can be seen as educational rather than choice restricting, as they ease clients into the rent expectations of a standard tenancy. Though, more problematic are default third party payments (for a description see quote by C3 in section 4.2.6.), which are contradicting the approach of giving HF clients the full responsibility for their apartment and treating HF

tenants not differently than other tenants, the core point of being in a standard tenancy agreement (see “Separation of Housing and Services” section 2.1.2.3.). They are set up to prevent clients from evictions based on missed rent payments while they are in the program, which is why they will be further discussed in section 5.1.4.. For now it is of interest, that taking responsibility away from clients hurts their learning experience in paying rent independently while being in the program, which can result in problems when the program and thus the installation of third party payments ends. However, clients can choose to opt out of this default setting while being in the program (see section 4.2.6.), which should be recommended if clients’ capacity allows for it to further their growth towards independence.

Client Feedback

Lastly, all programs offered clients the opportunity for official feedback on the program and the service provision to the funder and to the agency itself (as described in section 4.2.7.). Many participants reported additional informal feedback from clients, which shows the trust that is created between clients and HF staff (e.g. see quotes by Staff C2, FM1, FM7). If real change follows these many forms of feedback could not be answered in our research. Participants attested that their practice changes according to clients’ criticism and praise (see section 4.2.7.), but did not provide any concrete examples to fortify their statement.

Conclusion

HF programs in Alberta complied with the principle of participation in parts. On the one hand, staff base their work on a meritorious understanding of clients’ dignity and clients’ capability to decide over their own life, resulting in service provision (mostly) on the same eye height. Furthermore, HF programs set up is oriented on client choice in service provision and housing and provides feedback structures for clients’ voices to be heard. However, clients’ possibility to grow self-sufficient in self-directed care is on the other hand restricted by a set graduation date or graduation expectation, which put pressure on staff to ensure clients housing sustainability increases as much as possible (on paper). It is well meant, as it is to ensure clients have at least a chance to retain their home once the program ends. But this can lead to a paternalistic influence of staff on clients’ decision-making, which violates

the principle of participation and does not contribute to clients' growth through learning from consequences (and thus does not contribute lasting to clients' housing stability).

5.1.3. Objective 3: Compliance with Adequate Progress

Research Objective (3): To consider whether and how HF programs ensure adequate progress towards the goal of ending homelessness, for example through benchmarking and intermediate targets, in light of contextual challenges.

The principle of Adequate Progress specifies that HF programs need to measure and benchmark their progress in ending clients' homelessness permanently. Adequate progress from contextual challenges and historical barriers for accessing and sustaining adequate housing in Alberta has to be assured for all clients. This means that standards for adequate housing have to be met and adequate services need to be provided. This is especially important for Indigenous clients, who represent a large part of Alberta's chronically homeless population and whose access to housing is being impeded by racism and historic mechanisms of oppression (as described in section 1.1.2.).

Intermediate Targets & Benchmarking

As described in section 4.3.1.1., all HF programs are set up to measure regularly the progress towards goals set by the clients and to assess clients' development independently (e.g. Staff C5, E3). As Staff E4 explains, assessments are mandated by program funders and clients have to participate to receive their rental assistance. Tying up with the previous section, it shows again the obligation for clients to participate if they want to receive funding, which is intended to ensure spots in HF programs are not wasted and that programs support clients on their way out of homelessness (see section 5.1.2.). In regards to adequate progress, regular assessments thus ensure that there is indeed progress in realizing clients' goals (and thus towards self-sufficiency and housing sustainability), that the client engagement necessary for housing sustainability is secured, and that resources are used to for the goal of ending homelessness.

However, regular assessments can become an issue if they are used paternalistically to influence clients' goals, as they cannot opt out of the assessments without losing their rental assistance (for more see section 5.1.2.). Staff C5 presented a possible resolution to this issue:

independent assessments of clients' progress are given to clients to read and sign, providing the option that "if there's anything the youth disagrees with we change it". It speaks of a very participatory and non-paternalistic approach in assessment and should thus be acknowledged as positive practice. It could have the benefit that clients might be more aware of where recommendations from staff come from and if their goals might be influenced by what was deemed necessary by a "matrix" (see section 2.1.7.1.; Hennigan, 2017). I do not know if other agencies follow the same approach, but highly recommend providing this option to clients.

Graduation

Whether HF programs in Alberta realize the goal of a sustainable home for their clients *long-term* is currently not assessed. As explained by Anderson-Baron & Collins (2018), Albertan HF programs often impose graduation dates. After asking participants if they do follow-ups with former clients to see where they are at, their answers revealed that programs only check up with clients at most (and if at all) one year after service provision ended (as described in section 4.3.1.2.). This means it is not really recorded if programs have adequate practises in place to help clients to exit homelessness permanently. Evaluations only present a picture of where the client is at and if progress is being made, while they are in the program (and at most 1 year afterwards). Graduation additionally has a severe effect on housing sustainability and thus hampers adequate progress towards the goal of ending homelessness for clients permanently in itself. Not measuring the housing retention of clients after graduation long-term, helps concealing these negative effects on the programs' goal. Graduation and no long-term follow-ups with former clients thus ultimately hinder the assessment and practice of adequate progress.

It has to be acknowledged that staff spoke out against a set graduation deadline (see section 4.3.1.2.). They often try to remedy the harmful effects of a set graduation *precisely by* focusing on time-efficient housing sustainability (which is well-intended, but problematic for participation), as that is the only chance their clients might be able to remain in their home when the program ends. Some programs are even able to keep clients in their program after the graduation date had passed to prevent evictions due to insufficient rent payments, discriminatory landlords or because clients needed other supports. Staff thus do their best

to realize the goal of the program of ending clients' homelessness (with mixed outcomes), despite the barriers the program's set-up poses.

Graduation is itself an attempt to remedy the issue of unmet demand for HF services and not enough service providers. It means graduation can be understood as practice where future clients are prioritized over current clients (see Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018) – the quantity of processed cases increases, but the quality (or adequacy) of progress towards true self-empowerment decreases. There is an important distinction to be made between two types of graduation: graduation imposed by the funder or program with a set deadline, and graduation based on true housing sustainability where clients are fully self-sufficient and do not need the services of the program anymore (as explained in section 4.3.1.2.). While the first one is harmful to housing sustainability, the second one is exemplary of the principles of HF (see chapter 2.1.).

However, insufficient financial supports from the government to help former HF clients pay their rent *even in affordable units*, can worsen the housing outcomes of both forms of graduation. As Staff FM1 explains, it can result in clients who “potentially don't need the intense case management of this program. We're just waiting on the financial component and once that comes through, they'll be self-sufficient. That's a killer, right there” (section 4.3.1.2.). This can be a reason that cheaper but inadequate units of “slumlords” (discussed in section 5.1.1.) might become more attractive as well. A set graduation date in combination with insufficient financial supports from government thus puts former clients at great risk of either losing their home and falling back into homelessness after being cut off from HF financial supports or having to accept inadequate housing.

As further explained in section 4.3.1.2., some agencies found a midway solution by trying to connect clients as well as possible to outside resources before their graduation. As Staff C5 stated: “we're not a forever resource for them, and so it is our goal too that we outsource a lot in the sense that we're always trying to connect them with resources outside of us, so that independently they're not relying on us, they know where to go.” The goal is that clients know where to go and get supports if they need something when the program has ended. It

is thus just another step in supporting clients towards self-sufficiency and a remedy to the threat to housing retention posed by premature graduation.

Housing Standards

To work towards their goal (sustainable adequate housing), HF programs need to ensure clients' units indeed comply with the paradigms for housing standards set by the right for adequate housing (see Table 4). Staff in scattered-site HF programs all stated that units had to fulfill safety standards (see section 4.3.2.1.). Some of them even referred directly to the Minimum Housing and Health Standards of Alberta, which are meant to ensure that all housing in Alberta fulfill the premise of availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, and habitability. As described in section 4.3.2., location was dependent on the available affordable housing stock and thus out of the control of HF programs, but rather in the hands of the housing market.

Even though the Minimum Housing and Health Standards of Alberta are to ensure adequate living conditions in rentals, "slumlords" are a prime example that not all landlords comply with these guidelines. This shows the severity of the shortage of landlords with affordable units willing to work with HF clients: it leads to (especially Indigenous) clients living in units from slumlords to get off the street (as described in section 5.1.1. and section 4.1.3.3.). These units do not comply with the standards of adequate housing set by CESCR General Comment No. 4 (see section 2.2.2.) and thus do not realize the right to adequate housing for HF clients. Staff therefore, try to recognize slumlords as early as possible to prevent a rights violation and explain their clients that living in these units is often detrimental to their well-being (see section 4.3.2.1.). I would argue that in cases where the client is about to make a choice that would violate their rights further (because clients perceive it as their only or quickest option), it is valid that staff intervene. They try to protect their clients from suffering in inadequate living conditions, which clients are only willing to accept out of fear of finding no other housing. Clients are still free to choose to live in these units, but staff ensure clients are aware of the conditions and can make a well-informed choice.

A housing standard often imposed by HF programs themselves is the avoidance of basement and main floor units (as described in section 4.3.2.2.). As Staff E5 explains: "participants are

vulnerable on the main floor. For folks who are inviting people back to their place, even if the people leave, that person can very easily break in and take advantage, victimize the tenant, get them evicted, and it can lead to all kinds of issues". Staff E1 even cited research that "found that 55% of participants that were housed in basement suites were evicted". Clients can still choose these units, but staff recommend against it. I would argue once again that this is less an intervention into client choice, but more a measure to ensure clients' safety and increase the likelihood of a sustainable tenancy. It again ensures that clients can make their decision well informed on possible consequences.

In Fort McMurray, where affordable units are nearly completely unavailable, some agencies opt for room rentals, rather than one-bedroom apartments. The normal housing market is often too expensive for HF programs and thus definitely unsustainable after the program supports end. However, having to share living space out of lack of socio-economic resources or because of discrimination, is a breach of the right to housing, as the person's "*autonomy*, understood as the ability to develop a life plan that is in some sense one's own and execute that plan" (Wells, 2019, p409) is impaired (see section 2.2.2.3.). Staff explained that this situation is not unusual in Fort McMurray due to the particularly high rents. Though it also should be recognized that here "room rentals are set up in a way that people have privacy, some of them have their own bath and things like that" (Staff FM1). Thus in cases where room rentals allow for privacy and autonomy and through that a life in dignity, they should not be disregarded. In Fort McMurray they represent a necessary adaptation to the local circumstances of high rents. As long as access to affordable housing is denied and rent supplements are insufficient, clients should be given the ability to choose room rentals, as they may be there best possibility for a safe, adequate and affordable home. Room rentals in Fort McMurray are a departure from HF norms, which emphasize independent living, but it is very much consistent with evidence that HF continuously needs to be adapted to local circumstances and especially local housing conditions.

Congregate housing sites are built according to clients' needs and capacity, often consisting of either self-contained units or shared facilities (as described in section 4.3.2.1.). Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, and habitability seemed to be fulfilled, while location depends on where programs found a congregate housing site. Clients can

always choose if they want to be in a program, which thus also means choosing the location and circumstances of a congregate housing site.

Physical Accessibility

As section 4.3.2.2. illustrates, severe issues arise with the accessibility of units for clients with mobility impairments. Many staff reported great difficulties finding affordable units with elevators and full accessibility. They thus often have to fall back on main floor suites, which are otherwise considered unsuitable for HF clients, until more affordable units are being built with accessibility in mind (and thus comply with the standards set by General Comment No. 4) mobility impaired HF clients will suffer from a bigger hurdle in realizing their right to adequate, safe and secure housing. This is not only a barrier to adequate progress in HF programs, but also presents discrimination of mobility impaired persons by the affordable housing market. Not respecting accessibility needs in the construction of housing and thus an act of structural violence.

Cultural Adequacy - Housing

CESCR General Comment No. 4 also includes cultural adequacy in the standards for adequate housing. Article 8 demands: "Offering a diversity of housing types, with built forms that enable expression of cultural identity." However, the Albertan housing market and standard tenancy agreement do not offer this diversity and expression of cultural identity as shines through the evictions due to guest management. As was described by Staff C6 and Staff E6 (section 4.1.2.2.), Indigenous clients often get in trouble letting family that live on the street sleep over. It is only humane and understandable that clients want to care for their family. Further, as Anderson-Baron & Collins (2014) explain, "extended family structures are central to Indigenous cultures" and cohabitation of many relatives is a valid cultural norm. It is based on Indigenous understandings of home, which differs from western understandings of home. A standard tenancy agreement that penalizes through evictions having too many guests over, presents a "mismatch" between urban housing and the cultural needs of Indigenous families" (Anderson & Collins, 2014, p987). Western understandings of home dominate the housing market. The ignorance of other understandings of home where kin live together, is an act of structural violence, hurting Indigenous peoples' housing sustainability and wellbeing. It demonstrates that housing in

Alberta does not fulfill the standard for cultural adequacy and calls for changes to standard leases allow for cultural expression in the living situation.

But guest management was not only a problem for Indigenous clients, non-Indigenous HF clients also suffered from evictions by letting street friends and family sleep over. The reasons for this include clients' sense of responsibility and care, and as Staff C4 emphasized, "Isolation is huge. People are lonely." This speaks directly to Somers et al.'s (2017) critique that scattered HF sites, instead of integrating clients in the community, often leave them "socially isolated and with limited improvement in social integration" (see section 2.1.2.4.). Guest management is thus a further example for adapting HF service provision to client needs. It can entail offering congregate housing to give lonely clients the option to live among peers (see section 2.1.2.4.). But it can also entail more efforts in supporting social contacts of clients and the need to assess street family of individuals to find possible solutions in housing them close together (as described by Staff E3 in section 4.1.2.2.).

Cultural Adequacy – Service Provision

Furthermore, as mentioned in section 4.3.3., cultural adequacy in service provision was reviewed as part of adequate progress to see if programs delivered services that reflect on the historical and contextual challenges in respect to Indigenous clients. Jesse Thistle's definition of 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness and Staff E6's comments clarify that Indigenous HF clients have cultural specific needs on their way to finding a sustainable and culturally adequate home. As Staff E6 further emphasized (see section 4.1.1.4.), HF staff are often not experienced enough in Indigenous cultures and ways of being to create deep and meaningful relationships with their Indigenous clients and to provide the support they need. As illustrated by the Indigenous guide (in section 4.1.1.4.), adequate service provision for Indigenous clients requires a shift in agency practices, where Indigenous ways of caring and service provision are acknowledged as equally important and practiced on an equal basis with western ways. The frequent and large attendance of HF service providers in Edmonton at the cultural experiences and services the guide offers (section 4.3.3.), speaks for the need and demand of HF staff to increase their Indigenous cultural understanding to be of better service for their clients. To not provide staff with the proper training and guidance to serve their Indigenous clients adequately and thus ensure adequate progress towards ending their

homelessness is structural violence. It means that Indigenous clients' needs are not respected in service provision, which results in longer homelessness and exposure to harm.

Staff Self-Care

Participants stressed the importance of self-care for staff and their ability to support clients. The work of HF staff is strenuous and emotionally demanding, and also the catalyst for client success. A crucial key result of this research is that in standing between clients and housing, staff try to remedy program flaws and address outside discrimination. They also do their best to translate systems, to advocate for their clients, to empower and strengthen them so that clients can realize their right to housing sustainably. But staff needs proper education and support and need to take care of themselves to be able to help their clients to the best of their possibilities. The inability of some agencies to work with violent clients originates in a lack of support and training for staff (see section 5.1.1.), which results in the discrimination against violent clients in HF service provision. Staff need to be properly prepared for overwhelming situations, but they also have to be supported and encouraged to take care of themselves to prevent burnout and agency hopping. Only then are they able to confidently navigate these situations, to build long-term relationships with clients and to provide adequate services towards the goal of a sustainable home.

Conclusion

HF programs in Alberta do not comply with the principle of Adequate Progress. Despite benchmarking and measuring clients' goals, there are no long-term measurements of housing sustainability for graduated clients. Furthermore staff are not supported and prepared sufficiently to provide the best possible supports for their clients, first through the lack of adequate cultural education and experience, and second through the lack of emphasis on staff wellbeing, particularly in the areas of self-care and balanced caseloads. Last, accessibility needs cannot be met by the housing market, which makes exceptions to the no-basements guideline necessary to provide housing options for mobility-impaired clients. However, these units come with high eviction risk for clients and thus likely give mobility-impaired clients less chance at sustaining their home, hampering adequate progress towards the realization of their right to housing. The whole issue of adequate progress is closely connected to the section on Non-Discrimination, as barriers to adequate progress are

often based on discrimination either against all HF clients (e.g. in Fort McMurray) or against a certain client population (e.g. mobility impaired clients, Indigenous clients).

5.1.4. Objective 4: Compliance with Remedy

Research Objective (4): To examine HF programs' accountability and effectiveness in providing remedy to clients whose right to housing is being violated, whether by internal or external factors.

To comply with the principle of remedy, HF programs need to have procedures in place to address violations of clients' right to adequate housing (see Fukuda-Parr, 2006). This includes addressing housing challenges for individual clients effectively, accountability for fairness and adequate support within the program, and holding external forces accountable for rights violations.

HF programs in Alberta have preventive and redress procedures in place to address housing challenges, evictions and conflicts for clients (see section 4.4.). To prevent further breaches of the right to housing, HF staff ensures clients know about their rights and are legally protected through the standard tenancy agreement. They further aim to avoid evictions through Walk-Through Inspections and Third-Party Payments (as described in section 4.4.1.). To redress clients' evictions during their time in the program, HF agencies in Alberta rehouse their clients (on condition of participation). To further provide accountability and redress in conflicts with service staff or landlords all programs provided remedying procedures (described in section 4.4.2.).

Rights Education

A focus on rights education was evident throughout the interviews (see section 4.4.1.1.). Many participants emphasized that clients need to know their rights and obligations. It ensures they know when to stand up for themselves, e.g. when landlords discriminate or try to take advantage of them, and to fight unjust treatment once the program ends and cannot protect them anymore. It is thus part of their growth towards self-empowerment. It further entails landlord education on clients' and their own rights, to ensure evictions are not based

on unjust reasons, and eviction procedures are carried out properly without violating regulations (see quote by Staff E5). Rights education thus protects and upholds clients' inherent and social dignity, as it aims to prevent a breach of their rights and entitlements as human beings.

Tenancy Agreements

Hennigan (2017) in section 5.1.2. warned that tenancy agreements can compel certain actions on the part of clients, thus reducing their choices and taking away from their learning experiences and growth towards housing sustainability. However, this is only the case if clients' need to become self-sufficient in a limited time and are thus pushed towards certain services to prevent evictions. Moreover, if evictions are not avoided by staff, but rather seen as a learning experience, the tenancy agreement and its clear boundaries can be very beneficial for clients to learn how to sustain a tenancy independently. It then actually promotes their growth towards self-sufficiency, as clients learn to comply with standard obligations of a tenancy like any other tenant from the outset and are eventually able to sustain housing by themselves without the program's help (as described in section 4.4.1.2.). The standard tenancy agreement further offers clients some protection from discrimination by landlords and prevents unjust evictions, as the agreement offers legal security of tenure (as required by the right to adequate housing, see Table 4) and landlords are thus legally bound to uphold their responsibilities. Through the tenancy agreement (and rights education), clients know when their rights as tenants are breached and are empowered to fight for their right to adequate housing and secure tenancy. As Staff C4 clarifies: "...it's that self-determination, right? We want to make sure that they're set up independently with supports, versus supportive living and community. So that's that fine line, and it starts right at the beginning".

Third Party Payments

Third party payments are also set up to prevent evictions. Many participants stated that "non-payment of rent is the number one reason people do get evicted" (Staff E4 in section 4.4.1.3.), and setting up automatic rent payments is thus well-intended and oriented on clients' housing retention. This approach ensures rent is paid in full and on time, and is thus an effective eviction-prevention mechanism, which remedies one of the biggest obstacles to

sustaining housing. However, as argued in section 5.1.2., third party payments can take away from the client learning experience and can be understood as paternalistic pre-emption. They therefore might actually work against housing sustainability once the program has ended and clients are suddenly responsible for paying rent independently. It further treats them differently from other tenants, which is detrimental to what the use of a standard tenancy agreement aims to convey. As mentioned before, social dignity “entail[s] a right to personal development, to be able to fully participate in society” (Moons, 2018, p20, 28), which could be argued is being limited by infantilizing clients through third party payments. Of course there can be exceptions, when clients choose to opt for these instalments or where a client’s capacity would not allow for learning from mistakes and third party payments indeed can prevent an endless cycle of evictions.

Walk-Through Inspections

Walk-through inspections prevent clients being taken advantage off (e.g. by being blamed for pre-existing damage in the unit) and prevent the violation of their right to *adequate* housing (e.g. from slumlords). As described in section 4.4.1.4., inspections of the clients’ (future) unit ensures the condition of the apartment is recorded. It is also a ‘normalizing’ procedure, as it is a routine step for renters more generally and teaches clients what to look out for when renting a new place. Inspections during the client’s tenancy further serves as eviction prevention as staff can warn clients when they do not keep the unit in an appropriate condition which may endanger their tenancy. This form of intervention presents a learning experience as it does not interfere with clients’ choice but rather informs them on possible consequences of their behaviour. All of these precautions are taken to prevent eviction, exploitation of clients, and violation of their right to safe and adequate housing. It shows that HF programs in Alberta are set up to forestall a rights breach to protect clients from falling back on the street and from further abuse. They therefore comply with the principle of remedy.

Evictions

All participants stated that they would rehouse their clients after an eviction. That provides remedy to situations where clients’ right to housing was violated through unjust evictions, and provides the chance to learn and move on from mistakes in cases of just evictions. To

ensure a learning experience on the part of the client, participants stressed the importance of clients' commitment and willingness to sustain a tenancy (see section 4.4.2.1.), which is connected to the obligation to participate. Making sure that clients are willing to learn from mistakes further ensures that resources are being well spent and staff energy is not being misdirected. Interestingly, limits on the number of rehosings per person were not dictated by funding, but rather by rather clients' acuity (see quote by Staff E3) and the burden on staff members, whose well-being needs to be protected. As Staff E1 explained: "As long as we're doing our due diligence and we're engaging with the participants and we're doing home inspections and trying to be there for them, they're [the funder] going to help us out. [...] There is no hard and fast rule on our inability to continue to rehouse people. But it gets to a point where people can burn our staff out. It's a lot of work to house them and then house them again" (section 4.4.2.1.).

Some agencies only pay for the damage deposit once per client, which saves money and contributes to clients' learning experience, as they have to pay the damage deposit in case of a rehousing. It ensures that clients truly want to participate and take the program seriously.

Conflicts

Programs also provide accountability and remedy when conflicts between clients and HF staff or clients and landlords arise (as described in section 4.4.2.2.). In conflicts between clients and staff, redress procedures focused on relationship building and learning how to resolve conflicts. Participants noted that here it was more often miscommunication and misinterpretation or simply a "clash of personalities" than actual wrongdoings that led to resentment. Only if the conflict was not resolvable and the client-staff relationship was not going to improve would agencies switch out the caseworker (see quote by Staff E4). Clients also had the opportunity to speak to team leads or managers if they had complaints or could follow a grievance procedure, which ensures that whatever caused the conflict or their concern was addressed on a higher level, and that they did not have to continue to work with a particular staff member if they did not want to. This speaks to the remedying factors of the program and the respect for clients' opinion, feedback and dignity. Staff FM1 also made clear that "it's the staff's responsibility to maintain that positive rapport. It is on them.

No matter what feedback they are getting from the client, they are to remain respectful and treat people with dignity, etcetera. That's a professional standard.”

However, participants also stressed that if conflicts were resolvable they would always prefer keeping the combination of staff and client. First, it maintains consistency and can deepen the relationship by building further trust (see section 4.4.2.2.). This underlines the importance of and emphasis on deep and trustful relationships between clients and their support workers. Second, it protects the client from having to start over with a new staff where they have to re-tell their whole story and recount trauma. It thus leaves more room for focusing on clients’ recovery. Third, it also benefits clients’ growth, as conflict solving is a good learning experience. Staff E1 explains “We really want to use it as a lesson, as a teaching opportunity to say, ‘Okay, this is a conflict. We're not going to give up on you, so let's work through this together because we're not going to quit,’ right? In your other relationships in life or other service providers, you have a disagreement, they might just walk away”.

In conflict situations between clients and landlords, staff also aimed at maintaining the tenancy if possible (see section 4.4.2.2.). This involves mediation between client and landlord, where whoever was responsible for the conflict or the violation of the tenancy agreement, is being held accountable. Mediation can also mean that both landlords and clients need to be educated on or reminded of clients’ tenancy rights, or that both landlords and clients have to be reminded of their tenancy obligations. As Staff E5 put it, staff “try to advocate for the participant, but they also try to support the landlord as best as possible”. These mediation efforts again contribute to the clients’ learning experience.

But also here staff mentioned that not every conflict was resolvable and not every landlord relationship was worth saving. For example, landlords who are not willing to work with the program anymore or are discriminatory towards clients are often a lost cause. As Staff E1 describes: “But if you have a landlord that's like that, do you really want to win? Because he's just going to wait for you to make a mistake and then he's going to evict you anyway” (section 4.4.2.2.). Ending collaborations with these landlords is then a remedy to ensure

current clients will not have to face discrimination and abuse, and works towards the goal of sustainable housing by preventing future eviction.

By contrast, participants emphasized saving and furthering relationships between good landlords and the program with future clients in mind. As landlords get to know the program and know the support they can receive, they are more inclined to rent to HF clients again or more willing to link HF agencies with other apartments. This can help remedy discrimination from other landlords and widen the adequate housing stock available to HF clients (remedy to issues discussed section 5.1.2. and 5.1.3.). Further, these landlords might be more understanding of clients and their behaviour, which can be especially helpful in the transition phase where clients have more trouble with acclimatising to the tenancy, with the isolation in an apartment, and with the presentation in front of a landlord (as described in section 4.1.2.). Even though HF clients have the same rights and responsibilities as any other tenant, it can take some more time to adjust to the expectations of a tenancy. Building relationships with landlords is thus both a reactive practice (responding to problems as they are reported) and a preventive one (aiming to reduce future problems).

Conclusion

HF programs in Alberta, through both design and the efforts of HF staff, have many mechanisms and practices in place to prevent negative tenancy experiences and evictions for clients and to provide redress if the right to adequate housing is breached. Some of these practices, like the third-party payments, do have an element of paternalism and might be seen to restrict client choice. However, there are few truly mandatory requirements, and those that are (e.g., signing a lease, contributing to rent and participating in meetings with staff) are fundamental to HF and not onerous. Programs further ensure accountability and fairness in conflicts between clients and landlords and clients and staff.

HF programs in Alberta therefore comply with the principle of remedy, by addressing housing challenges effectively, holding external forces accountable for rights violations, and by ensuring fairness and adequate support within the program.

5.2. Compliance with the Duties imposed by International Human Rights Law

After determining to what extent *processes* in HF programs in Alberta comply with key human rights principles, I will use what has been discussed to determine to what extent the *outcomes* of HF programs comply with the duties imposed by international human rights law (see section 2.2.1.1. and section 2.2.3.).

5.2.1. The duty to respect

The duty to respect means to “*refrain* from interfering with the enjoyment of the right” (OHCHR, 2008a, p11), acting in a non-discriminatory way towards people whose rights have been breached, in this case HF clients, and to recognize their inherent dignity (see section 2.2.3.). It further means evictions have to be avoided to the greatest extent possible and that adequate alternative accommodation needs to be provided if evictions take place (Kenna et al. 2016; OCHCR, 1997). I also extend the latter point to service provision: if a client is excluded from HF services, it needs to be ensured that no other solution (e.g. like referrals to higher acuity supports services) is feasible.

As described in section 2.1.6., the HF model acknowledges that permanent housing is a basic condition for every human being to live an independent, self-determined life in safety, privacy and comfort, which is fundamental to recovery and social dignity.

However, as set out in section 5.1.1., discrimination within HF programs in Alberta violates the duty to respect by further discriminating against people whose right to housing is already breached. A faulty intake system discriminates against clients assessed with a very low acuity or clients wrongly assessed for the program’s services (“non-fit” clients). Insufficient training of staff further discriminates against Indigenous clients and clients with violent outbursts. All of these discriminatory processes result (at best) in a delayed realization of the right to housing through the program, leaving clients longer in their vulnerable state and exposed to further rights violations, including the right to health (thus indicating structural violence). This is contrary to HF’s original premise: “In order to achieve stability in other areas of life, one must first have stable housing [...] housing is viewed as an immediate need that cannot be delayed” (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p289) (see section 2.1.6.).

HF staff on the other side showed a deep respect and recognition of the inherent dignity of clients (section 5.1.2.). They focus on a trustful and deep relationship with clients based on an eye-to-eye-level rather than infantilizing support structures. In so doing, they recognize that clients are fully equals and independent human beings knowing best where and how they want to live and what their needs are (which is congruent with the rights premise of the HF model, see section 2.1.6.). All staff strongly sought to empower clients to lead their own recovery and an independent, self-sufficient life in dignity. Metaphors like clients being in the driver's seat while staff are in the passenger's seat show real internalization of the concept of participation and of the respect for the client and their decisions. This was also presented in the provision of a feedback structure (section 5.1.3.) and the respect for clients' feedback (section 5.1.4.).

However, as described in section 5.1.2., there were limitations to this focus on client-driven decisions, caused by a pressure on staff to ensure clients' housing sustainability. This pressure gets exacerbated through set graduation dates and the pressure of a growing waiting list of new clients (see section 5.1.3.). It takes away from the respect of client choice and steers more towards paternalistic influences by HF staff (which might not even further clients' housing sustainability).

At this point I would like to make a distinction between two types of recommendations staff give their clients. The first type is restricting client choice through the threat of (reasonable/just) evictions, which often influences clients to comply with the recommendations of staff (e.g. in choice of treatment). The second type is more of an informative character, where staff alert clients to possible harmful consequences of their decisions (e.g. if choosing inadequate living conditions in slumlord units, section 5.1.1.) to ensure clients can make a well-informed choice. While the first type should be avoided as far as possible to ensure clients' dignity is respected by leaving the decision-making over their lives with them (and furthering growth through learning from consequences), the second type is absolutely valid to educate clients on their rights and to prevent them from harm through wrongdoings from outside forces (e.g. slumlords).

Furthermore, staff often strongly advocate for their clients to avoid evictions. On the one hand, this goes against the strong focus on clients' learning experience from consequences but on the other side it ensures that evictions only occur when they are indeed not preventable (see section 5.1.1.). When an eviction cannot be prevented, all agencies stated they rehouse their clients or refer them to a higher acuity program (e.g. high acuity clients) if needed. Only if clients did not want to participate in the program and were not willing to comply with the tenancy agreement despite their capacity to do so, would agencies drop clients. In this respect, they fully comply with the duty to respect.

Violent clients however do not seem to receive the same respect as other clients. At some agencies, clients who have violent outbursts are dropped not because they pose a real danger for staff and neighbours, but because of insufficient staff training and expertise – thus not all feasible solutions were explored. As long as clients' violent outbursts do not present a danger or can be managed (e.g. by having police or parole officers at meetings, see section 5.1.1.) and clients are willing to change their behaviour, their needs should be addressed through conversation and supports.

Conclusion

The duty to respect is not fulfilled as long as discriminatory processes are hindering the immediate realization of the right to housing - put another way, as long as discrimination persists, systems are not “refrain[ing] from interfering with the enjoyment of the right”. However, the ways in which staff instilled respect for clients' inherent dignity needs to be acknowledged and highlighted. The dedication for their clients' rights and needs, and their constant efforts (sometimes to the point of interfering) in supporting clients on their way to sustainable housing, is the core of respectful and adequate service provision. Staff commitment can at times even remedy the discriminatory mechanisms of internal (e.g. faulty intake system) and outside (e.g. discriminatory public service workers) systems, and has to be recognized as fulfilment of their duty to respect.

5.2.2. The duty to protect

The duty to protect means to “*Prevent* others from interfering with the enjoyment of the right” (OHCHR, 2008, p11). Translated into the context of this research, the duty to protect therefore obliges HF programs to protect their clients from forced evictions along with the

provision of legal remedies and consultation (see section 2.2.3.1.). Forced evictions are defined as “the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the permission of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection” (OHCHR, 1997, Para 3). This also clarifies that there are indeed justifiable evictions, from which clients are not protected, e.g. “in the case of persistent non-payment of rent or of damage to rented property without any reasonable cause” (OHCHR, 1997), as long as they are not based on discriminatory processes.

HF programs in Alberta have multiple procedures in place to protect clients from unjust evictions. First, education on the rights of landlords and tenants *for* landlords and clients ensures that all parties know when an eviction is just or unjust. This means that clients know their obligations as tenants, but also know when to fight their eviction. The tenancy agreement ensures legal protection and remedy. Clients have the same rights as any other tenant, which means landlords cannot discriminate HF tenants (e.g. through unjust evictions) without consequences.

Moreover, to protect clients against discriminatory evictions and from being taken advantage of, staff do walk through inspections with their clients. This practice not only protects clients from being blamed for pre-existing damages, but also serves as a learning experience in support of self-empowerment. Clients are being prepared to protect themselves and know their rights in future tenancies. Another initiative of HF staff is to enhance relationships with good landlords and cut ties with discriminatory or devious landlords. Even if they can successfully fight an unjust eviction (attempt), staff E1 expressed that often it is not worth keeping the collaboration with the landlord, as it will likely end in another eviction attempt. Cutting ties with bad landlords and slumlords is thus a mechanism from staff to protect clients from further evictions or abuse and indicates compliance with the duty to protect.

Staff even tried to protect clients from justifiable evictions, through advocating in front of landlords when clients breached the tenancy agreement. Also third party payments are implemented as “default” setting to protect clients from self-caused eviction due to missed

rent payments – one of the most common causes for clients to lose housing. Both practices are well intended, but also counterproductive to the premise of learning from consequences. Third party payments are a paternalistic policy, which takes responsibility and self-empowerment away from clients who do not learn to pay rent independently and on time. This likely has a negative effect on clients' tenancies once the program ends and puts them at higher risk of being (justifiably) evicted, as they are not used to paying rent themselves. Premature graduation can also severely impede clients' housing sustainability down the road. When clients are not ready to live by themselves without the supports of the program (either mentally or fiscally), then forced and justifiable evictions will follow. A set graduation date therefore violates the duty to protect.

Conclusion

HF program structures and HF staff efforts partly comply with the duty to protect by having practices and processes in place to prevent forced evictions and provide legal remedy in such cases (e.g. rights education, walk through inspections, tenancy agreement).

However, premature graduation is counterproductive to the duty to protect from forced evictions, as clients who are not able to maintain housing self-sufficiently, will be exposed to the threat of eviction and thus a fall back into homelessness.

Third party payments are used to prevent just evictions and thus do not fall under the standard definition of the duty to protect. It is understandable that they are used to prevent evictions, which leaves more funding and energy of staff for new/other clients. However, they also take over clients' responsibilities. To support clients' independence, I propose using this form of rent payment only during the transition phase, when clients need to acclimatise to caring for and living in a home.

5.2.3. The duty to fulfill

The duty to fulfill means to “*Adopt* appropriate measures towards the full realization of the right” (OHCHR, 2008, p11). HF programs should thus minimize the number of persons experiencing homelessness and take measures to prevent homelessness recurring. In short it is HF programs' duty to realize the right to adequate housing with and for clients efficiently,

non-discriminatory and sustainably. It is therefore the prelude to answering my core research question.

As explained in section 2.2.2.3., homelessness is “perhaps the most visible and severe symptom of the lack of respect for the right to adequate housing” (OHCHR, 2009, p21). HF programs are the response to this right’s breach for chronically homeless persons, prioritizing housing “as an immediate need that cannot be delayed” (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016, p289) and recognizing that housing is something to which homeless people are entitled. Another way of thinking about the duty to fulfill in this context is thus to ask: to what extent do HF programs efficiently and sustainably remedy the human rights breach of homelessness for individual clients? This is conceptualized in Figure 6.

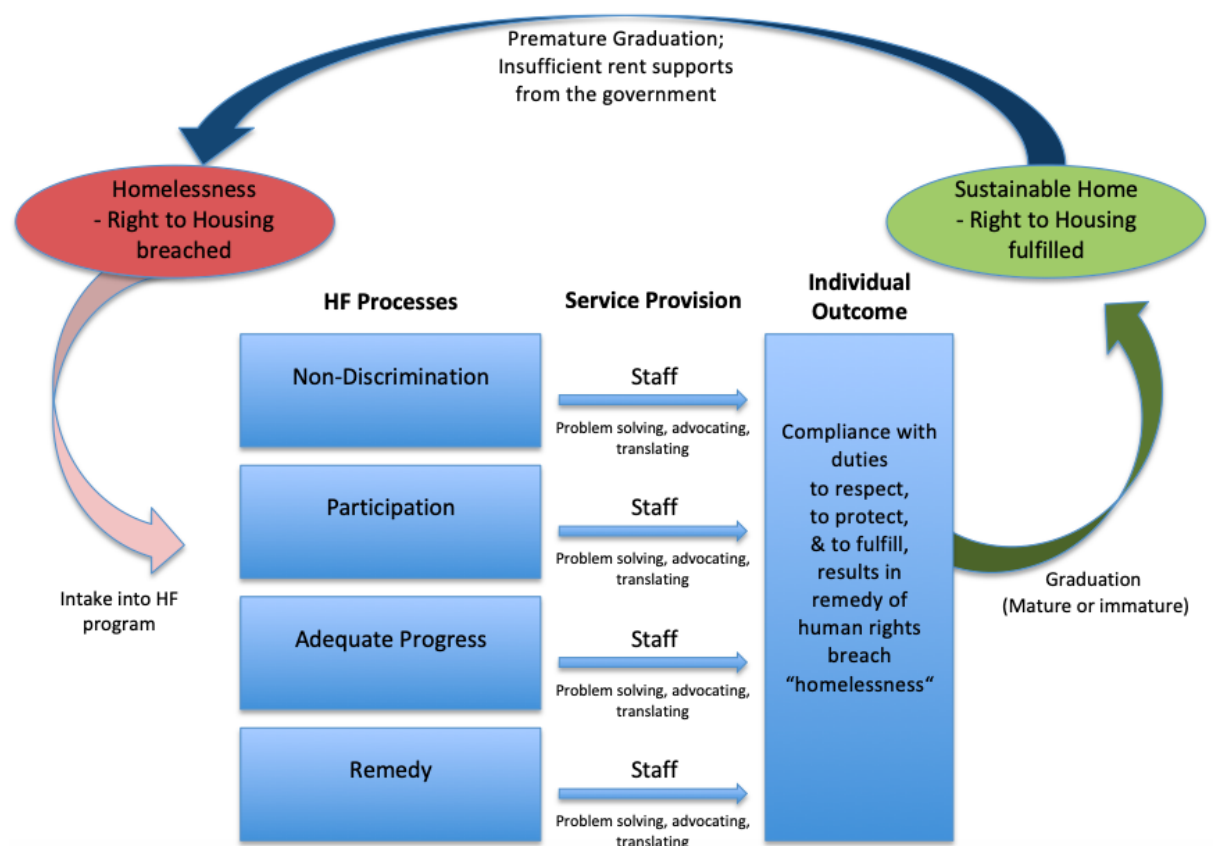


Figure 6: Realization of the Right to Adequate Housing by HF Programs in Alberta

As is illustrated by Figure 6, HF *processes* need to be defined by and comply with the human rights principles of Non-Discrimination, Participation, Adequate Progress, and Remedy. Only then can HF programs achieve the desired *outcome* of remedying the right's breach - "homelessness". The duty to fulfil falls in between processes and outcomes. The effects of HF processes on the outcome (of sustainable housing) indicate compliance with the obligation to fulfil (to realize the right to housing). As can also be seen in Figure 6, staff are often the determining factor for the duty to fulfil. They translate processes into outcomes through their efforts. Staff are successful when they solve barriers posed by factors internal to HF programs and advocate for their clients when facing external barriers like discrimination; they may be unsuccessful when insufficient experience, education and/or supports for their own well-being stands in the way of effective and adequate service provision.

As discussed in detail before (see sections 5.1.1-5.1.4.), the principle of Non-Discrimination is currently not fulfilled because of a faulty intake system and shortcomings in the training and preparation of staff. The principle of Participation is only partly fulfilled because of graduation pressures that impede with clients' choice and clients' self-directed growth towards housing sustainability. The principle of Adequate Progress is not fulfilled because (premature or mature) graduations are not followed by measurements of long-term housing retention, staff are not trained sufficiently in Indigenous ways of being, self-care of staff is not promoted sufficiently, and accessibility needs cannot be met by the housing market. Lastly, the principle of Remedy is fulfilled as accountability is provided through mediation in conflict situations and walk-through inspections, evictions are prevented through rights education, which also self-empowers clients for future conflict situations, and legal remedies are provided by a standard tenancy agreement, which protects clients from unjust evictions.

Throughout participants' descriptions of addressing barriers to housing, the importance of their work for the success of HF clients became clear. The following list provides examples of their key role in translating processes into outcomes by finding creative solutions to problems posed by either faulty HF structures or external forces (from Chapter 4):

- By alternating complex and non-complex clients and by collaborating with other agencies, some staff reported remedy of the faulty intake system;
- Through advocacy they aimed to work against clients' discrimination by landlords and public service staff;
- Experienced and trained staff reported to be able to work with violent clients by knowing how to navigate these situations successfully for themselves and for clients;
- By fostering relationships with non-discriminatory landlords of adequate affordable units, staff try to maintain a housing stock accessible for clients;
- By identifying slumlords and discriminatory landlords and cutting ties with them, staff protect current and future clients;
- Where services for further education in Indigenous ways of being are offered, staff are very willing to take part in educational experiences to provide better services for their clients;
- Many reported to be able to keep clients who would fall back into homelessness after graduation in their program (however at the expense of new clients on the waiting list);
- Others sought to remedy the end of supports through graduation by connecting clients with all possible supports outside of HF;
- By opting for ground-floor apartments despite violating the housing standards, staff ensure that clients with accessibility needs find affordable housing quickly;
- Through raising awareness among clients for their rights and by educating landlords on clients' rights, they aim to prevent further breaches of former homeless persons' right to adequate housing.

Staff are critical in supporting clients to realize their right to adequate housing sustainably and efficiently. This points to the importance of supporting staff in taking care of their own mental and physical wellbeing – to prevent burnout and agency hopping – and to offer thorough training and education, and to recognize and value experience.

However, there are harmful mechanisms and conditions that present such severe barriers to the fulfilment/realization of the right to housing that staff efforts are not enough to remedy the situation. Four barriers stand out: premature graduation through pressures from the

program; unequal treatment of clients due to inadequate program tools and settings; landlord discrimination and thus a lack of adequate, affordable, accessible units for clients to choose from; and insufficient rent supports from the government.

Graduation practices show that the HF model's strength to adapt to local needs can also be its weakness. HF programs with set graduation dates depart significantly from a key feature of HF service provision: fully self-directed engagement with no time-limits to ensure true growth toward self-sufficiency. As indicated by the dark blue arrow on top in Figure 6., premature graduation actually increases the risk for clients to fall back into homelessness in an endless cycle of evictions and rehousing, reducing HF to a "temporary stopping point in lives already characterized by involuntary circulation between street life, insecure housing and public institution" (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018, p601; see section 2.1.7.2.). While local adaptations of HF are necessary to make the program successful and tailor it to the needs of the local population, changes should increase housing sustainability, not decrease it.

5.2.4. Definitive Statement on the Research Question

Based on my observations, I determine that HF programs in Alberta do not (yet) realize the right to adequate housing. Neglecting any one of the three responsibilities (respect, protect, and fulfil) counts as breach of an ESC right (Kolocek, 2017). In the case of HF programs in Alberta, none of the three duties are truly fulfilled. The underlying reasons for this are a combination of external factors, like insufficient financial supports and a lack of adequate affordable housing, and internal factors, such as discriminatory processes and premature graduations. A program that is supposed to support clients in their self-empowerment out of homelessness into a sustainable long-term home cannot rest in complacency by calling itself HF. It has to ensure the goals set out by the original model (see section 2.1.1. and section 2.1.2.) are respected and fulfilled, and that HF staff, who carry out the program for the benefit of their clients, need to be respected and better supported. Only then will HF programs operate in a manner that is truly non-discriminatory, non-paternalistic, and client-driven -- and in so doing be able to remedy the most severe breach of the human right to housing: homelessness.

5.3. Reflection

My results should not be understood as a critique of the work of Housing First service staff, because they are trying their best to support their clients. They are 100% invested in helping their clients to a sustainable home, always with clients' rights and dignity in mind. My results should rather be understood as recommendations to support staff better in taking care of their own wellbeing, to reduce workloads by funding more positions, and to provide more education and preparation for staff so they feel more confident and know how to navigate difficult and uncomfortable situations. These changes would enable staff to support their clients better as they are the connection between clients and sustainable housing.

Future research in the field could look into the experiences of HF clients with the program, to ensure their experiences and opinions on HF service provision are being heard. This could reveal how much influence staff recommendations and the threat of (justifiable) evictions actually have on the self-directed care and decision making of clients. Furthermore a long-term, thorough assessment of housing retention rates of graduated clients is needed to assess housing sustainability in general, and to calculate the effect of premature graduation on post-program outcomes. Maybe such numbers can speak loud enough to end graduation expectations and to move governments to increase financial supports and the construction of affordable housing sites, to ensure clients exit HF only when *they* feel confident about sustaining their home independently from HF. More funding could be offset through cost savings from preventing clients to fall back into homelessness (which comes with high costs for the public system) and from preventing costly rehousing.

5.4. Recommendations

In closing I present some policy recommendations on the policy level, with a focus on the actions required by government to meet their international human rights obligations by enabling HF programs to comply with their duty to respect, protect and fulfill the right to housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

5.4.1. End Graduation Expectations

First, it is incumbent on the Albertan government to adopt a policy that bans any form of graduation requirement in HF. Sections 5.2. - 5.3., proved the detrimental effect of premature graduation on clients' housing sustainability. The Provincial Affordable Housing

Strategy recognizes the importance of a home for the health, education and social lives of individuals (thus a life in social dignity) as well as the fiscal relief of reduced homelessness due to reduced demands on social-supports, and health and justice systems. If not moved by moral and humanistic principles and the duty to respect HF clients' dignity, at least the fiscal interest of saving public spending should be enough to encourage the province to end the practice of mandatory graduation and demand follow-up of clients' long-term housing stability. It is crucial to ensure clients have the time and the support to grow self-sufficient and independent for a life in social dignity.

This does not mean that clients are not able to graduate from HF programs. It means a distinction has to be made, where graduation imposed by the funder or program with a set deadline is banned. The demand for HF services indicated by long waiting lists cannot be served by taking away from the service provision for current clients. To do so risks opening up a cycle of rehousing and eviction (see Figure 6), which creates never-ending demand as individuals' homelessness is not ended but only periodically interrupted. New programs and positions need to be funded and provided to respond to the demand. By contrast, the second form of graduation however, based on true housing sustainability, where clients are self-sufficient and do not need the services of the program anymore, is exemplary for what HF services should provide. Voluntary graduation by clients should be supported by adequate service provision, which complies with the principle of participation and is well informed on cultural needs.

It is also important to note that mandatory graduation practices put pressure on staff to sustain clients' housing at almost any cost (as there is no time for failure). If these practices are ended, staff have more room to reflect on whether their advice to clients and efforts to prevent eviction are appropriate, particularly where they prevent learning-from-experience. Some efforts to sustain housing are certainly appropriate: for example, actions that prevent clients being harmed by the wrongdoings of other people (e.g. discriminatory landlords, slumlords, risk of housebreakings in basement-suites). While the first type of intervention should be avoided as much as possible to ensure clients' dignity is respected by leaving the decision-making over their own lives with them, the second type is absolutely valid to ensure clients can make well-informed choices.

5.4.2. Housing Stock

More affordable, accessible housing needs to be constructed to ensure that the right of adequate, affordable and safe housing can be realized for everyone. That can not only prevent homelessness in the first place, but also remedies big structural barriers many HF clients face when accessing and retaining housing (provision of housing choice in an environment of discriminatory landlords, discriminatory public service workers & unaffordable adequate (accessible) housing). These housing sites should be sold to landlords under the premise of renting 20 percent of units (see section 2.1.2.4.) to HF clients. The last point was added after feedback from Staff C2, who emphasized that independent landlords are key to "compassionately support people on their journey toward self-care, health and wellness" and to support "the development of independent souls" instead of "babysitting" them with special treatment and special tenancies. This again speaks strongly to the HF paradigm of learning from consequences and "normalization" through a standard tenancy agreement. Staff C2 further stressed that congregate housing sites need to be constructed and furnished with higher quality materials to "withstand punishment", with separate bike locker room, and room to store bottles & cans separately and safely.

Furthermore, as was shown by the experiences of staff, clients tend to opt for rapid rehousing rather than true housing choice. I join Anderson-Baron & Collins (2019) and Zerger et al. (2016) in their call for amendments in HF programs by creating and promoting "appropriate interim housing" for HF in Alberta (Zerger et al., 2016, p50). It can enable clients to wait in a safe space for permanent housing *in a self-chosen home* (without being bumped down in the waiting list), instead of rushing into an available unit (see section 2.1.7.2.)

As was illustrated in section 1.2.3.4., the budget plans of the NHS, a strategy aimed to improve affordable housing and prevent homelessness in all of Canada, are ultimately producing a decrease in support for affordable housing, furthering a root cause of homelessness. In respect to my findings, it shows a detrimental and devastating trend, further harming the most vulnerable population, whose needs can already not be met by severe barriers in finding and accessing affordable housing.

Additionally, the delays in complying with the 10-year plan to end homelessness in Alberta by delaying the construction of affordable housing sites, make it not surprising that there is still homelessness in Alberta after the plan has ended (see section 1.2.4.1.1.). The plans of the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy to build 4,100 affordable housing units by 2021 are thus of high importance and need to be followed-through on, to ensure a fundamental improvement of the situation for socio-economic lower classes. It is a crucial step to work against the structural violence harming the poor and most marginalized and to recognize that homelessness is the most severe breach of the right to housing and urgently needs to be prevented.

The strategy further wants to respect the needs of Indigenous peoples by providing more housing that are “culturally sensitive to their needs” (Government of Alberta, 2017, p3). This speaks to the results in section 5.1.3. (adequate cultural housing) and thus should be acknowledged.

5.4.3. Financial Support

Higher financial supports for low-income households outside of HF are needed to ensure clients exiting the program do not lose housing because they cannot pay rent. It could also prevent many people from falling into homelessness in the first place. This recommendation would remedy the structural violence exercised by insufficient financial supports through a government that enables and does not stop the financialization of the housing market (see section 2.2.3.4.). As Leilani Farha, the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing emphasizes, a rights-based approach demands a shift in the perception of housing from a commodity and financial instrument to an unconditional human right (see also Florida & Schneider, 2018). This is a direct call to the NHS, to follow through on their rights-premise and ensure more affordable housing units or to provide adequate financial supports.

Under this premise, it is laudable that on January 1st, 2019 the Albertan government finally increased social benefit rates for the first time since 2012 (or 2009 for senior benefits) (Clancy, 2018). This was achieved through Bill 26, which also ensured that benefit rates go up each year according to inflation “to help manage rising costs of living” (Government of Alberta, 2019b). A further needed and finally executed amendment are higher limits for assets and incomes of AISH and income support recipients, as well as by a higher child allowance benefit (Government of Alberta, 2019b). These late but positive changes are commendable and need to be protected to ensure the Alberta Government does not further

carry out structural violence against the most vulnerable population that is highly dependent on their support and help as province in a welfare state.

5.4.4. Supports for Staff

Last, but not least, I want to stress again that staff supports are crucial and cannot be underestimated. Stronger supports for staff are needed in multiple areas: a) Training and preparation for violent situations; b) Experience of Indigenous cultures, histories and ways of being; c) Self-care to protect staff against PTSD and burn-out. Staff are the catalyst for clients' success – if well trained, with expertise in violent situations and well-versed in Indigenous culture, and supported in their own well being – but also a barrier – through incapacity to support clients needs adequately and efficiently. It is crucial not only for better service provision (and thus the realization of the right to housing), but also for their own health and safety.

Since January 2019, *The National Housing Strategy Act* in Bill C-97 holds the government of Canada legally accountable for their progress in realizing the right to adequate housing. My research has shown that the very abstract and theoretical construct of the right to housing can be well translated into a framework that measures its progressive realization through specific policies and programs (while also being attentive to the related actions of governments, NGOs, private actors, and civil society). It is an example of how these assessments can be used to point out what is going well and which practices need to be improved to comply with the obligations set out by ESC rights and international human rights law. The outcomes of these measurements are a profound and legitimate basis to push provincial and federal governments to support programs and policies that aim to fulfil that right to the fullest potential within available resources.

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Appendix A: Official Interview Request

Dear [Name],

My name is Sophie Stadler and I am a graduate student in the Human Geography Program at the University of Alberta.

I am conducting a study on housing as a human right, and am interested in whether and how this idea is influential or important within Housing First policies and programs in Alberta. I am focussing on three case study cities: Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray.

I am carrying out this work because Canada has made commitments to protect the right to housing, e.g. in the new National Housing Strategy, and because of the critical role of Housing First policies and programs in responding to homelessness.

As part of this study, I am especially interested in hearing the perspectives of people working for Housing First agencies, including managers/directors, team leads, and front-line staff.

I would like to interview you for my research. This interview could occur in-person, at a time and place that is convenient to you in October/November 2018, and would last approximately 45 minutes.

In Spring/Summer 2019 I will reach out to you again with an invitation to a community feedback session, to share the results of my research with you, before they are finalized.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and if you agree to be involved, I will provide you with a consent form describing the study and the details of your participation (including protections for anonymity and confidentiality) on the day of the interview.

This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in this research. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about the study, and to provide more information on what an interview would involve.

Sincerely,

Sophie Stadler,
Graduate Student in Human Geography
University of Alberta

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Could you please describe your job at this agency?
2. How long have you been working with Housing First (HF)?
3. Does your HF program follow particular principles? What are they?
 - a. What is the typical waiting time for housing once someone has been accepted into the program?
 - b. Do you rehouse people if they are evicted?
4. Is the term “rights” ever used in your program? If so, in what kinds of contexts?
(prompts: tenancy rights; right to housing; privacy rights)
5. What sorts of people do you work with - who are your clients/program participants?
 - a. Who do you prioritize for housing?
 - b. What systems do you use to determine priority?
6. What are some of the common barriers to successfully housing a client?
 - a. Could you describe a circumstance in which your program would not seek to house someone?
7. How would you describe your program’s approach to client choice in housing?
 - a. Can you describe where your program’s apartments are located?
 - b. Does this distribution match up with clients’ preferences for particular locations?
8. How does your program approach client choice in service delivery and treatment?
9. Do you have systems in place to request and receive feedback from clients?
 - a. Has there been an occasion where the opinion or experience of a client led to a change in your program? For example?
10. Can you describe how rental apartments are chosen for the program’s housing stock?
11. Can you describe the condition of the rental apartments your program uses?
Are they generally safe and secure (i.e. ‘habitable’)?
Are they generally adequate in terms of cooking facilities, heating, lighting etc.?
 - a. Are you able to secure apartments for clients/participation with accessibility needs due to a disability or illness?
12. In terms of the locations of apartments, which we discussed earlier, do they generally offer reasonable access to everyday amenities (health care, community services, shopping)?

13. Do you find that clients with different cultural backgrounds (for example indigenous persons, visible minorities, recent migrants) have distinctive housing needs?

a. If YES, how does your program seek to meet those needs?

14. How does your program manage the payment of rental costs?

a. Do clients ever lose their housing for financial reasons?

15. Do you measure clients' housing stability? If so how?

16. Are clients expected to graduate from your program? What does graduation look like?

17. How do you organize tenancies for your clients?

Do you follow standard tenancy agreements?

a. Beyond the tenancy agreement, does your organization place any other conditions on clients?

18. What do you do when there are problems between landlords and clients? Examples?

19. What happens if there are problems between a client and a [service provider]?

Rights-based approach in the National housing strategy

*The new NHS has a rights-based approach, which respects that every Canadian has the right to affordable, safe, and adequate housing. That means that homelessness is a human rights breach, which has to be addressed urgently. That is why the strategy has the goal to reduce homelessness by 50% over the next 10 years. To achieve that it follows rights-based core principles like the principle of inclusion - which means respecting the needs of all Canadians for ex. through a separate housing strategy for indigenous people - and the principle of participation - through a federal housing advocate who is in ongoing dialogue with Canadians **in greatest need** to look into systemic barriers they face when accessing affordable housing and ultimately presents solutions to decision-makers to work against these barriers.*

20. Have you talked about the new National Housing Strategy at your workplace?

21. Do you think a rights-based approach will have any influence on your work?

22. Do you think it can improve the practice? Why/ Why not?

Last Question

23. Do you consider the HF approach to ending homelessness in Alberta to be a success? Why/why not?

Is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't touched upon?

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C: Interview Guide (for Indigenous Guide)

1. Could you please describe your job at this agency?
2. Does your work follow particular principles? What are they?
3. How long have you been working with Housing First (HF)?
4. Is the term “rights” ever used in your work? If so, in what kinds of contexts?
(prompts: tenancy rights; right to housing; privacy rights)
5. What sorts of people do you work with - who are the staff members you guide?
6. Which clients receive culture specific services? (Also non-indigenous?)
7. As I understand, you have very unique role within the agency and also within HF programs in Edmonton, can you describe how your role emerged?
8. What are some of the common cultural barriers to successfully housing a client?
 - b. Do cultural issues ever trigger a circumstance in which the program would not seek to house someone?
9. How can clients choose to receive culture specific services?
10. What feedback do you get from the service staff?
 - b. What feedback do they get from clients?
 - c. Has there been an occasion where the opinion or experience of a client led to a change in the program? For example?
11. What are distinctive housing needs of Indigenous clients? (Spiritually?)
 - b. How does your program seek to meet those needs?
12. Do rental apartments for indigenous clients need to fulfill specific conditions?
 - a. Can the program’s housing stock provide these clients with apartments that meet their need?
13. Did you measure clients’ housing stability before and after their cultural needs have been addressed?
16. What do you do when there are problems due to cultural differences between landlords and clients? Examples?

17. What happens if there are problems between a client and a [service provider] due to cultural differences?

Rights-based approach in the National housing strategy

*The new NHS has a rights-based approach, which respects that every Canadian has the right to affordable, safe, and adequate housing. That means that homelessness is a human rights breach, which has to be addressed urgently. That is why the strategy has the goal to reduce homelessness by 50% over the next 10 years. To achieve that it follows rights-based core principles like the principle of inclusion - which means respecting the needs of all Canadians for ex. through a separate housing strategy for indigenous people - and the principle of participation - through a federal housing advocate who is in ongoing dialogue with Canadians **in greatest need** to look into systemic barriers they face when accessing affordable housing and ultimately presents solutions to decision-makers to work against these barriers.*

18. Have you talked about the new National Housing Strategy or the separate housing strategy for indigenous people at your workplace?

19. Do you think a rights-based approach will have any influence on your work?

20. Do you think the separate housing strategy for indigenous people can improve the practice? Why/ Why not?

Last Question

22. Do you consider the HF approach to ending homelessness in Alberta for indigenous persons to be a success? Why/why not?

Is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't touched upon?

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D: Information Letter and Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM for INTERVIEW

Study Title: Housing First and the Right to Housing

Study Investigator

Sophie Stadler
Graduate Student in Human Geography
Dept. of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences
Sciences
University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB
stadler@ualberta.ca

Study Supervisor

Damian Collins
Professor of Human Geography
Dept. of Earth & Atmospheric
Sciences
University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB
damian.collins@ualberta.ca

Background: You are being asked to participate in this research because you have professional knowledge of the principles and practices of Housing First in Alberta.

This research looks at whether Housing First programs in Alberta view housing as a human right for all people. It is interested in how these programs assist clients, and whether they are able to address housing problems in quick and effective ways.

To find out more about these issues, the research is seeking to interview Housing First staff and clients.

This study is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Purpose: This research examines whether, and to what extent, Housing First policies and programs in Alberta respect, protect and fulfill the right to housing. It focuses on three case study cities in which Housing First is well-established: Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray.

This study seeks to find out whether the right to housing is influential in Housing First in Alberta in terms of both policies and the everyday practices. It also seeks to develop an understanding of the right to housing that is meaningful and practical, and to contribute to discussions about rights in Canadian society.

Study procedures: You are being asked to be a participant in this research. It will involve an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes.

The interview will be conducted in person, at a time and place that is convenient to you. It will take the form of a conversation about your knowledge and experiences of working in Housing First agencies.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. After the interview, the recording of our conversation will be transcribed into a written document. I am hoping to interview

approximately 20 staff and managers of Housing First agencies, as well 20 current or recent clients. This work will take place in Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray in 2018-19.

Once I have carried out all the interviews and analyzed what people have told me, I will present my preliminary research findings at a place in your city. This will include a short talk and a written summary. You will be able to attend this presentation and/or obtain a copy of the report if you wish to do so.

Benefits: You will not benefit personally from participation in this research. No compensation is being offered. The study may have a social benefit, in the form of better understanding of the right to housing, and how it can/should inform Housing First policies and practices in Alberta.

Risks: I do not anticipate that the interview questions will cause you any harm or discomfort. However, I will ask you potentially sensitive questions that relate the practices of Housing First agencies and funding bodies. Any answers you provide will be entirely confidential, and your opinions on such matters will not be traced back to you or your employer in published results. You do not have to answer any questions, or discuss any topics, that you feel uncomfortable talking about.

Voluntary participation: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your involvement is completely voluntary. If you received information about this study from your superior at work, they will not know if you agree or decline to participate in an interview

You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time while it is in progress without penalty. You also have the right to decline to answer any question or set of questions.

If you agree to participate in the study but change your mind, you can withdraw within 30 days of the date of your interview. To do so, please contact me via email or telephone, and I will delete both the digital audio file of your interview, and the written transcript. After 30 days, it will no longer be possible to withdraw, as the information you provided will be included as data in the research.

Confidentiality and anonymity: Only the interviewer will know that you have participated in this study. The transcript of your interview will be anonymized, which means that it will not contain any information identifying you.

Both the digital audio-recording of your interview and the transcript document will be stored on computers at the University of Alberta, including password-secured online drives. Only members of the research team led by Dr. Damian Collins will have access to these files.

Reported findings may include direct quotations from your interview. These quotations will not be linked in any way to your name or employer. You will not be able to be identified on the basis of our findings. However, we may use a generic description of your role (e.g. 'support worker' or 'Agency director'), to provide context for your comments.

Study data will be securely stored for 5 years after the study is over, at which time it will be destroyed through deletion of all files.

Further information: If you have further questions regarding this study, please contact Damian Collins via email (damian.collins@ualberta.ca) or telephone at 780-492-3197.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

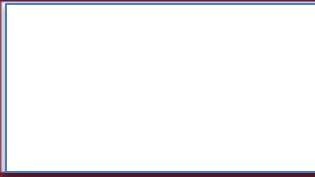
Participant's Name (printed) and Signature

Date

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix E: Summary Research Findings



about the study

Housing First and the Right to Housing
University of Alberta



Does Housing First in Alberta realize the right to housing?

That's the question our research is trying to answer.

Our findings can help to inform a rights-based approach to ending homelessness in Alberta.

This would be consistent with Canada's new rights-based National Housing Strategy.

Contact us if you have questions or want more information about the study.

Sophie Stadler, MA student
University of Alberta
stadler@ualberta.ca
(780)-709-3034

The Right to Housing

The right to adequate housing protects every person's housing security, peace, and dignity. Everyone has the right to access a home that...

- complies to health and safety standards,
- is secure from forced evictions,
- is close to public amenities,
- is affordable (max. 30% of household income).

Homelessness is the most severe violation of the right to housing.

Homeless people have to be acknowledged as rights-holders and homelessness recognized as denial of rights.

Measuring the right to housing

We adapted Fukuda-Parr's⁽¹⁾ four indicators to Housing First:

Non-Discrimination: *Do all clients receive the support they need to succeed to achieve a sustainable home?*

Participation: *Do clients have the ability to participate in decision-making that affects their lives? Are their voices heard?*

Adequate Progress: *Is adequate progress in housing clients ensured through intermediate targets and benchmarking? Do programs ensure clients' health and safety?*

Remedy: *Does HF prevent clients being evicted? Are there procedures to address discrimination and conflicts?*

Your feedback matters

As academics and outsiders to the work of HF staff, we can misunderstand findings or miss important issues. Your feedback is crucial for us to ensure that...

- we know which findings are valid and replicate your experience
- we did not overlook issues that need to be addressed,
- we know which findings are controversial and need to be reflected on.

Please let us know if you agree or disagree with our findings and recommendations.

Please also contact us if you have anything to add or if certain issues should receive more attention than others. Your feedback will be reflected in our final reports.

(1) Fukuda-Parr, S. (2006). Development Goal 8: Indicators for International Human Rights Obligations? *Human Rights Quarterly*, 28, 966-997.



Housing First and the Right to Housing Findings

What's going well

- Eligibility criteria are non-discriminatory
 - Staff support the rights and dignity of clients
 - High needs clients are accepted, but may require supportive housing
- HF Programs**
- Insufficient capacity for all persons in need
 - Some clients' needs are too high for HF
 - Insufficient training of staff for violent situations
 - Inadequate cultural training of staff
- Client Factors**
- Guest management is often difficult
 - Self-presentation in front of landlords is stressful
- Outside Factors**
- Landlords can discriminate against HF clients & programs
 - Social assistance support rates too low; public employees may discriminate on basis of appearance, ethnicity
 - Bureaucratic barriers to re-entering housing system

Challenges

Housing First and the Right to Housing Findings

What's going well

- Big focus on relationship building and learning experience of clients
 - Decision-making: Clients are mostly in the driver's seat; staff in the passenger's seat
 - Harm reduction approach is fully endorsed
 - Staff focus on long-term housing sustainability
- Client Choice In Housing**
- Clients can freely choose their housing within financial limits
 - Client participation in decision-making is always required
- Feedback Possibilities**
- Feedback constantly possible and sought in conversations and client surveys
 - Negative feedback could lead to changes in service provision
- Participation**
- Graduation requirements can limit client choice in service provision to a focus on sustainable housing
- Client Choice In Housing**
- Graduation requirements create pressure to ensure clients are self-sufficient when program ends, which can restrict housing choice

Challenges

Adequate Progress

Benchmarking and Measurements

- All programs do benchmarking
- Staff try to keep clients who have to graduate but cannot due to financial reasons

Adequate Housing Standards

- Housing has to fulfill health and safety standards
- Avoiding slumlords
- Avoiding basement & main floor suites for client safety

Cultural Adequacy

- Staff want to experience Indigenous ways of being
- Indigenous ceremony & teachings for staff can enhance client support & staff self-care

Remedy

Prevention of Rights Breaches

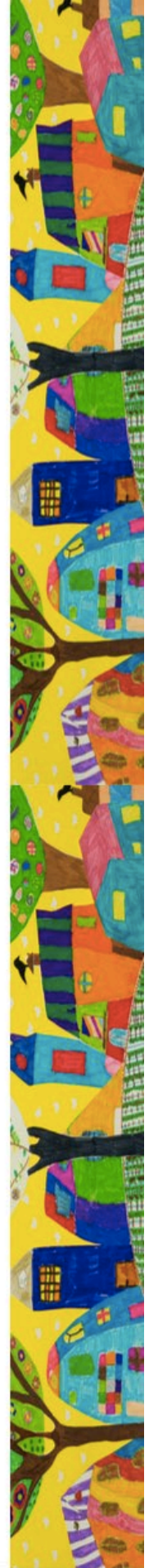
- Staff try to forestall evictions
- Landlords and clients educated on tenant rights and responsibilities
- Standard tenancy agreements and walk-through inspections protect clients
- Staff seek strong relationships with landlords

Redress of Rights Breaches

- Rehousing after evictions is common
- Focus on learning experience in mediating client-landlord and client-staff conflicts
- Grievance procedure for unhappy clients
- Ties with discriminatory landlords are cut

- Third-Party payments help to reduce evictions, but take responsibility away from clients
- Focus on avoiding evictions can limit opportunities to "learn from mistakes"

- Limited financial resources may limit rehousing after evictions



Housing First and the Right to Housing Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Housing Stock: More units/housing owned by HF programs or HF funders. These units could ensure that the most vulnerable and stigmatized clients have access to housing as quickly as possible.

2. Financial Support: Higher financial supports for low-income households outside of HF are needed to ensure clients exiting the program do not lose housing because they cannot pay rent. It could also prevent many people from falling into homelessness in the first place.

3. More Staff Support is needed in multiple areas:

- a) Training and preparation for violent situations
- b) Experience of Indigenous cultures, histories and ways of being
- c) Self-care to protect staff against PTSD and burn-out



Questions or comments? stadler@ualberta.ca
Thank you for your time and effort!