

An Evaluation of Rent Assistance for Individuals Experiencing Persistent Homelessness in Waterloo Region





CONTENTS

The Rent Assistance Research Project	01
Housing First as an Effective Homelessness Intervention Model	02
Three Main Takeaways:	
#1 Rent Assistance is Effective at Improving Housing Stability	03
#2 Rent Assistance is Associated with Greater Perceived Housing Quality	04
#3 Rent Assistance Improves Quality of Life & Other Psychosocial Outcomes	05
Recommendations	06



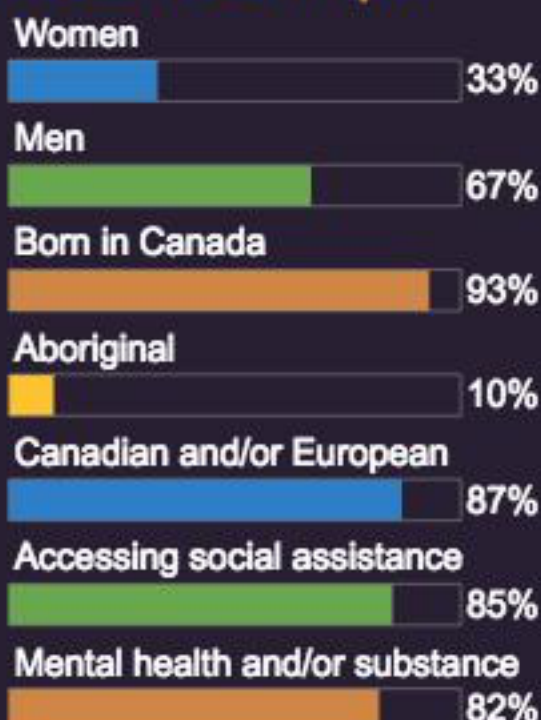
The Rent Assistance Research Project

Research Context

In the summer of 2014, the Region of Waterloo received funding towards rent assistance that would help to house 40 individuals experiencing persistent homelessness in the community.

The Region was interested in evaluating the impacts of the addition of rent assistance to its STEP Home (Support to End Persistent Homelessness) program in order to guide the future direction of these services.

Research Sample



4 years
lifetime homelessness

Three Main Takeaways

Results from the study indicate that:

- #1 Rent assistance is effective at improving housing stability.
- #2 Rent assistance is associated with greater perceived housing quality.
- #3 Rent assistance improves quality of life & other psychosocial outcomes.

Research Design

The research was focused on individuals experiencing persistent homelessness receiving intensive supports in the STEP Home program.

A total of 26 participants who received rent assistance in addition to intensive support were compared with 25 participants who did not receive added rent assistance.

Interviews were done with both groups at baseline and six month follow up.



Housing First as an Effective Homelessness Intervention Model

What is Housing First?


Housing First (HF) is a supported housing model that combines permanent independent housing with individualized support services for individuals experiencing persistent homelessness.

Previous research on HF has shown positive outcomes related to housing stability, community functioning, quality of life, and reduced use of emergency services.

Housing First Principles

HF is based on the following five principles:

1. consumer-driven services,
2. separation of housing and clinical support,
3. recovery orientation,
4. a harm reduction approach, and
5. community integration.

 A key component of HF is rent assistance. Without rent assistance, participants are not able to afford normal rental market housing in the community.

Waterloo Region's Housing First Program

Waterloo Region provides HF services through STEP Home's Housing Assistance with Support (HAWS) program.

STEP Home consists of **intensive case management** plus **HAWS assistance** up to \$350 to be used towards market housing.

Intensive case management services include:

- (a) helping to find and keep housing (i.e., landlord relations),
- (b) regular check-ins,
- (c) collaborative support planning,
- (d) ensuring access to food and basic needs,
- (e) help with navigating formal systems of support,
- (f) liaising with healthcare providers to support care plans,
- (g) assisting with applications for government services, and
- (h) fostering social inclusion.



The 3 main takeaways from the research project are described on the following pages.

#1



Rent Assistance is Effective at Improving Housing Stability

Housing Stability

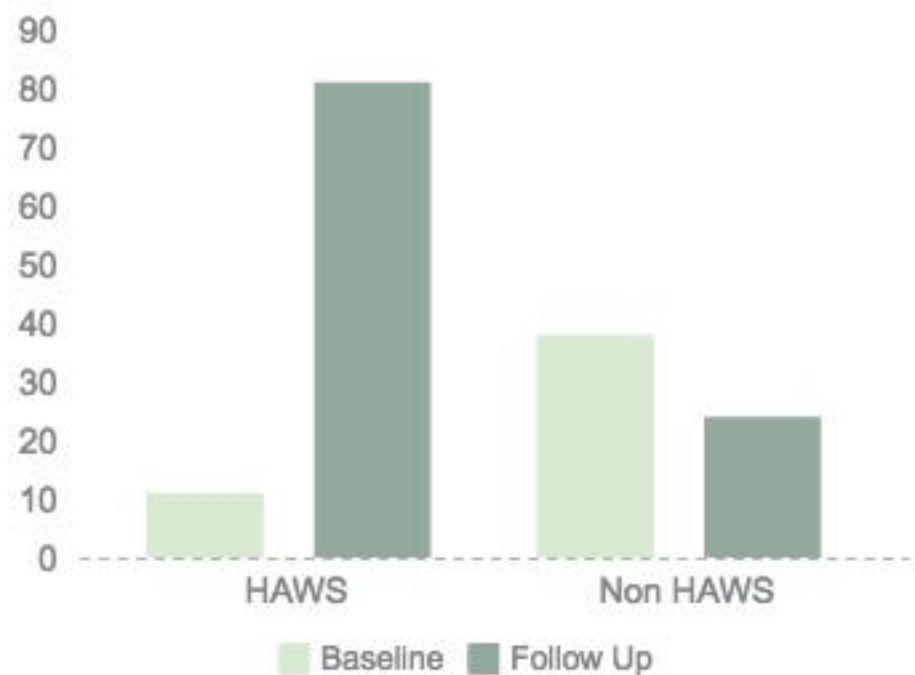
Individuals who had access to rent assistance showed significant improvements in housing stability whereas those without rent assistance showed a non-significant decline.



"Everybody else has a home...except for a few people, and I have a home so it's more like I'm a part of the society, a part of the general ongoing society".

Having access to rent assistance contributed to a greater sense of community integration.

Percentage of Days Spent in Own Apartment Six Months Prior to Baseline and Follow Up



#2



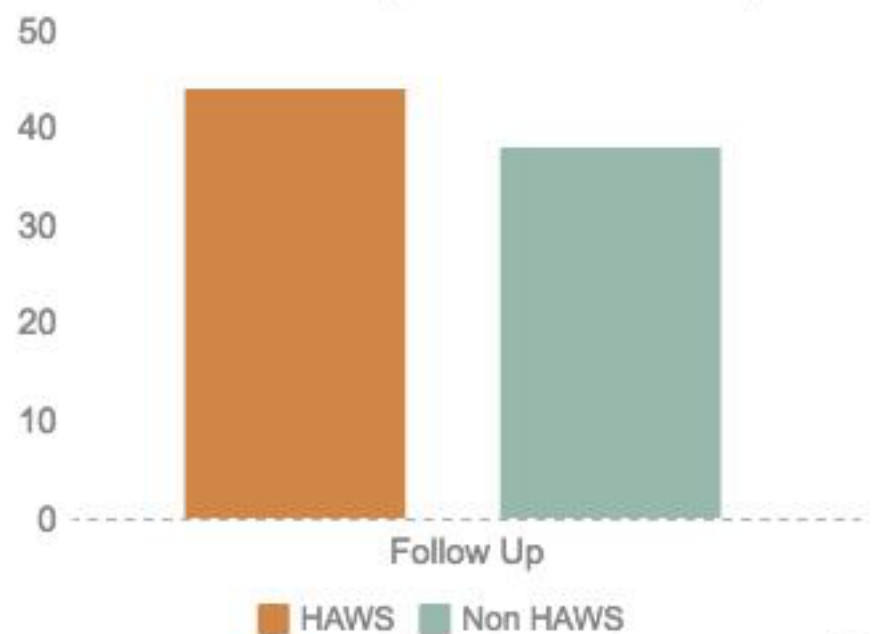
Rent Assistance is Associated with Greater Perceived Housing Quality

Perceived Housing Quality

Housing quality was significantly higher for participants that were housed in the HAWS condition than for participants housed in the non-HAWS condition.



Perceived Housing Quality Scores Among Housed Participants at Follow Up



#3

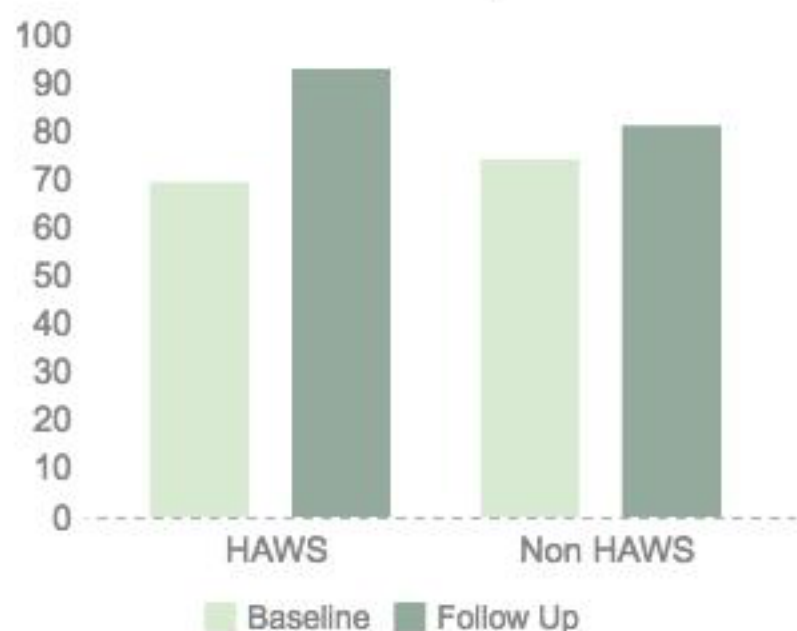


Rent Assistance Improves Quality of Life & Other Psychosocial Outcomes

Quality of Life & Other Psychosocial Outcomes

Participants who had access to rent assistance also showed significantly greater improvements in quality of life 6 months after they moved into their housing.

Comparison of Participants Who Either Received or Did Not Receive Rent Assistance on Total Quality of Life



“...it’s definitely made a huge difference in my mental health, having my own place...”

Promising trends related to community functioning, social support, and food security were also found among participants receiving rent assistance.

These findings show that having access to rent assistance is associated with positive outcomes in various aspects of participants’ lives.

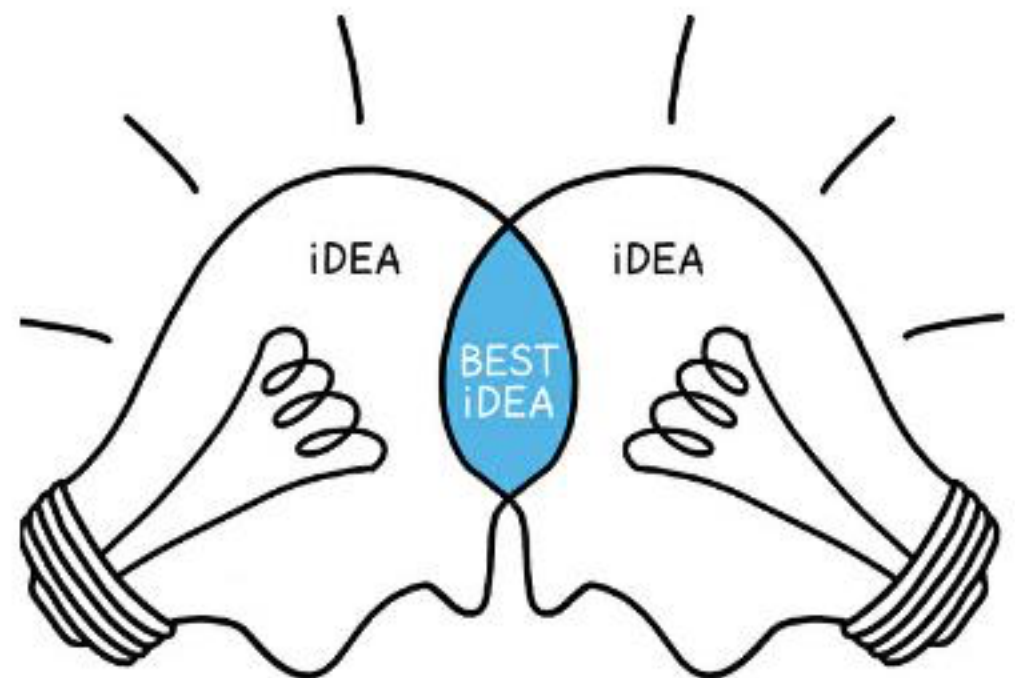




Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Directions in Waterloo Region

1. Based on the research findings, continued investment in rent assistance is recommended until persistent homelessness is eliminated in Waterloo region.
2. Continued engagement in community-based research is also strongly recommended in order to document sustained outcomes and identify other areas of need or interest.
3. Research initiatives should involve the participation of diverse stakeholders, including service providers, persons with lived experience, and government representatives in order to ensure positive and relevant community impact.



Rent assistance is a critical step towards ending homelessness.

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This report can be accessed at: www.homelesshub.ca/

