



# OPTIONS BYTOWN

380 Cumberland Street • Ottawa, ON • K1N 9P3

## JOB DESCRIPTION

**TITLE:** Housing First Practitioner

**CATEGORY:** Full-time

**SUPERVISOR:** Manager of Housing First

### **JOB SUMMARY:**

Housing First is an alternative to a system of emergency shelter/transitional housing progressions. Rather than moving homeless individuals through different "levels" of housing, Housing First moves the homeless individual from the homeless shelters into their own apartments. The Housing First Program is designed to provide case management and housing assistance to individuals who are homeless. The housing first practitioner will conduct assessments, develop individualized support plans, support the individual in finding permanent housing, develop good working relationships with landlords, link individuals with community resources, conduct visits and teach life skills in the home, and provide case management services in conjunction with community partners.

### ***Intake and Assessment:***

- Accept new clients matched through a centralized process convened by the City (HF Coordination Function).
- Develop an understanding of the client's needs based on the SPDAT assessment, written comments of SPDAT assessor, and with consent, in consultation with people familiar with the client such as emergency shelter staff, street outreach staff, Children's Aid Society, hospital and correctional discharge planners, etc.
- Engage and connect with clients matched to agency caseload.
- Administer agency-specific intake and assessment tools as required.
- Identify, in consultation with the client, housing and support needs.
- Perform other tasks as needed by the organization

### ***Securing Housing***

- Determine available housing options, using the Housing Locator Inventory and other opportunities including social housing and supportive housing.
- Determine client's housing preferences within available options.

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- Arrange viewings and lease signings, and negotiate with landlords.
- Arrange any available rental subsidy, support clients to access other income assistance (housing benefits) and arrange rent-direct payments to landlord.
- Assist client with move-in arrangements including furniture procurement.
- Perform other tasks as needed by the organization

## ***Providing Ongoing Supports:***

- Develop a client-directed case plan to support the long term retention of housing
- Identify a scheduled decrease in case management supports, and have initial conversations around discharge/ graduation
- Conduct regular home visits focused on specific activities and outcomes from the case plan that will result in clients developing the ability to live independently, maintain housing, demonstrate improvements in quality of life, and achieve personal goals.
- Support, through hands-on coaching and practical assistance daily routines such as house cleaning, meal planning, shopping and laundry that will promote client self sufficiency and independence.
- Complete SPDAT assessments at regular intervals (at housing start up and every 30,90, 180, 270 days etc) to measure changes in acuity, share results to document client progress, change/refine case plan and determine whether client capacity to maintain permanent housing is increasing
- Support clients to prepare the following: a monthly budget, weekly calendar of meaningful things to do, a personal guest policy, a risk minimization plan, and crisis plan
- Assist clients to resolve issues that may put their tenancy at risk (e.g. supports to mediate with the landlord and neighbours, referral to money management services etc. )
- Support client through the eviction process, if necessary, drawing on resources available in the community
- Support clients who need to be re-housed to select, rent and move into new housing, with the assistance of the Housing Locator's inventory
- Refer and link clients to other resources that would further support housing retention (e.g. brokering to mental health and addiction services, physical health supports, etc.)
- Assist clients to access employment, educational and volunteer opportunities that promote self-sufficiency, independence and community integration
- Perform other tasks as needed by the organization

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## ***Discharge or Exit Planning:***

- Develop a comprehensive discharge plan to address ongoing support needs, crisis contact information, and additional resources, if needed.
- Complete final SPDAT, and in conjunction with the client implement strategies to build on strengths/assets and develop plans to address areas posing a risk to housing retention (e.g. harm reduction).
- Close the file and report outcomes as required by the City.

## ***Collaboration with other service providers***

- Case conference with other service providers, as required, including as part of the Housing First Coordination function.
- Connect with external resources that may support client needs; establish a referral system that will streamline access and information sharing
- Collaborate with other community agencies and stakeholders to share information, problem solve, identify emerging issues, analyze data and coordinate services.

## ***Follow-up and Evaluation***

- Complete and maintain up-to-date client files, notes and clinical follow-ups in the documentation system
- Document therapeutic interventions and related duties, in accordance with the requirements of Options Bytown using electronic tools and other databases used by Options Bytown
- Evaluate using SPDAT and Outcomes Star Evaluations Job Requirements:

## ***Education and Qualifications:***

- MSW, BSW or undergraduate degree plus college certificate in social service work or related field
- Professional certification or membership in a professional order is a strong asset
- A satisfactory and current Vulnerable Sector Screening
- Bilingualism (French/English and other languages) is an asset

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## ***Experience:***

- Minimum of three (3) years' experience in working with clients who have experienced homelessness.
- Direct experience or in-depth knowledge of poverty, homelessness and the housing first model
- Proven experience working in community services relating to housing, mental health, and addiction

## ***Key Skills and Abilities:***

- Flexibility and a client-centered approach based on client needs
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills,
- Excellent counseling skills based on establishing a respectful and professional rapport
- Organizational skills to manage the workload independently Possess a high level of tolerance and understanding for individuals who present for services with urgent multiple case management and health needs
- Ability to work both independently and within a team environment
- Ability to exercise mature judgment
- Ability to provide community and in-home based services on a regular basis
- Highly motivated self- starter with the ability to coordinate multiple projects and tasks simultaneously in a high pressure environment
- Ability to input data using clinical documentation software, electronic client files and evaluation tools
- Strong decision-making abilities
- Very strong ability to deal with complex, difficult and/or urgent situations

Strong knowledge of empowerment-oriented case management philosophies

- Knowledge of systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, stigma and the isolation felt by individuals and their families with serious mental illness/addictions

- Knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords
- Extensive knowledge of supports and services in the Ottawa Region, including formal and informal resources
- Ability to demonstrate computer skills, specifically Microsoft Office and Outlook

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## ***Personal Suitability:***

- Thoroughness and a strong work ethic
- Ability to establish, maintain and promote excellent working relationships and interpersonal relations with clients, family members, community partners, and all Options Bytown staff
- Discretion and ability to respect confidentiality
- Respect of and a high commitment to organizational values
- Demonstrated flexibility, open-mindedness and desire to learn
- Empathy, tact and diplomacy
- Adaptability

## ***Other Requirements***

- Vehicle and valid driver's license required (frequent travel within the community)
- Assets: Training in CPR, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), motivational interviewing and the management of concurrent disorders

## ***Physical Demands***

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of the job. In the course of performing the job, this position typically spends time sitting, standing, climbing stairs, walking, carrying, and lifting. Coordinates multiple tasks simultaneously. Performs some repetitive motion activities. Operates a computer keyboard, firm/strong grasping required. Makes and receives telephone calls. Daily use of general office equipment: copier, fax machine, phones, etc.

## ***Work Environment***

You may be in contact with individuals and families in crisis who may be ill, using substances and/or not attentive to personal health and safety for themselves. The employee may experience a number of unpleasant sensory demands associated with the client's use of alcohol and drugs, the lack of personal care and the conditions within the client's apartment. The employee must be ready to respond quickly and effectively to many types of situations, including crisis situations and potentially hostile situations.

## ***Hours of Work***

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Flexible work schedule to include some evenings, weekends and rotating on- call services as needed.

Options Bytown is committed to providing quality services by establishing a qualified workforce that reflects the diverse population it serves. We encourage applications from all qualified individuals, including those with lived experience of homelessness, addictions, and mental health problems or illnesses.

Options Bytown welcomes and encourages applications from people with disabilities. Accommodations are available on request for candidates taking part in all aspects of the selection process.

Accessible formats and communication supports are available for applicants on request by contacting our Human Resource Officer at [eteeter@optionsbytown.com](mailto:eteeter@optionsbytown.com)

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