



2008-2010 Service Plan

**Greater Vancouver
Shelter Strategy**

October 18, 2007

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This plan provides direction to service providers and funding partners regarding emergency shelter facilities and services for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 in Metropolitan Vancouver. This region includes the following communities and sub-regions: Burnaby; Langley; Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows; New Westminster; North Shore; Richmond; Surrey (and Delta); Tri-Cities; and Vancouver.

Since 1998, the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (GVSS) has sought to improve access to emergency shelter services. Prior to May 2007 the organization was known as the “Cold/Wet Weather Strategy” and was primarily focused on seasonal shelter services (October through April).

Mission: The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy is a network of organizations responding together to meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk.

Vision: We envision accessible, high quality emergency shelter services as part of a continuum of housing and supports.

Method

This plan draws on existing data and analysis relevant to shelter need and demand. The primary sources used were as follows:

- Focus groups with emergency shelter providers and funders;
- GVSS (formerly CWWS) annual evaluation reports for recent years;
- Evidence reported in the *2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count*;
- Updated emergency shelter inventory.

In addition, the plan reflects the input of GVSS members, interested service providers and people with recent experience of homelessness. This input was gathered through the following activities:

- 8 GVSS Executive Committee members participated in a 2-hour working session in May 2007;
- 34 people with recent experience of homelessness participated in semi-structured interviews, as part of the Including Homeless Voices project;
- Members of the GVSS reviewed and discussed draft versions of the plan, providing feedback and input by email and in person;
- Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness members participated in a facilitated dialogue to provide feedback and input on the Plan objectives.

Evidence of Need and Demand

Quantity of Available Shelter Spaces

As of September 2007 there were 994 emergency shelter spaces in the region, including 884 year-round and 110 cold/wet weather spaces. The *2006-2008 Service Plan* noted that during the 2000-2005 period the number of cold/wet weather beds and mats increased at an average rate of approximately 19% per year, reaching a total 291 in 2004-2005. The expansion of cold/wet weather (CWW) spaces levelled off in 2005-2006, then reversed in 2007. This reversal, in keeping with the intention set by the GVSS, resulted from BC Housing converting CWW beds to year-round ones.

In addition to CWW and year-round spaces, participating service providers, faith groups and other community based organizations in eight sub-regions offered 600 extreme weather response spaces, as of 2006-2007, during cold snaps and other weather occurrences that pose safety hazards to homeless people.

Occupancy Rates

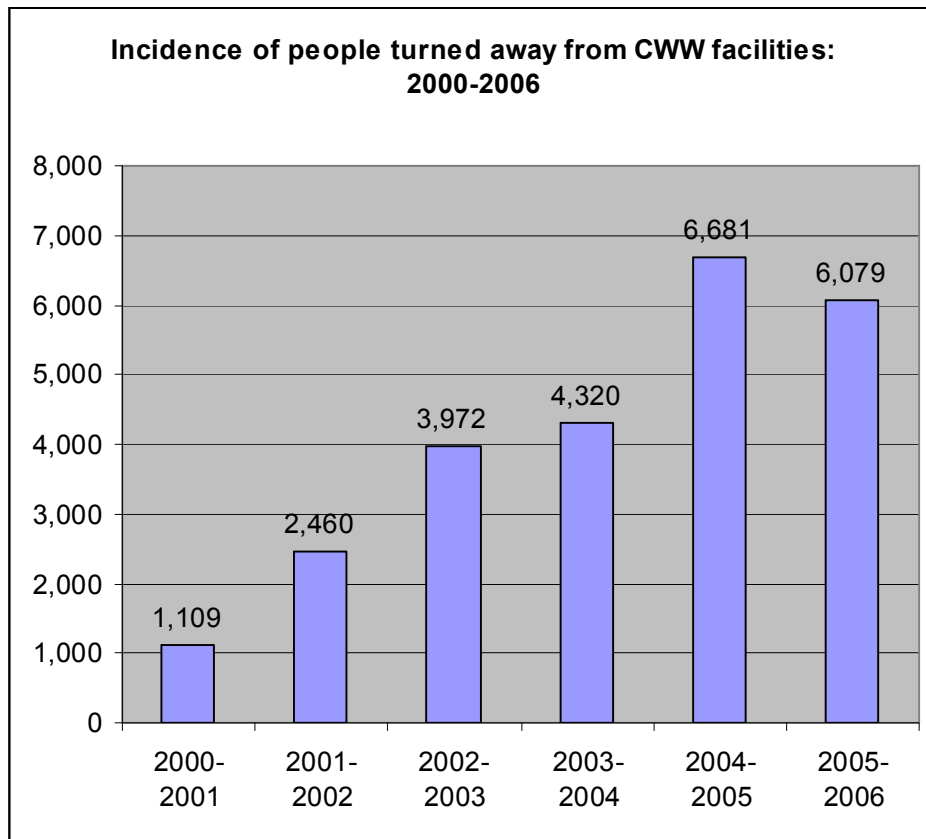
Occupancy rates in Metropolitan Vancouver shelters have risen in recent years. Over the 2000 to 2006 period the average shelter occupancy rates in CWW shelter services increased from 83% to 87%. Average occupancy rates in year-round shelters during the October 2005 through April 2006 period were 95%, up from 94% from the same period in the preceding year.¹ The total number of reported bed nights used during this period was 177,020, up 7% from 164,756 in 2004-2005. These figures suggest that the shelter system experienced increase pressure despite the slightly increased volume of services. Once again, growth in demand during 2005-2006 outpaced expansion of supply.

Incidence of people turned away

Reported incidence of people turned away from CWW shelter services increased each year for which records are available, except in 2005-06.² As illustrated in the following chart, there was a turn-away increase of approximately 502% over the 2000-01 to 2004-05 period (five years), followed by an approximately 9% decrease in 2005-06. This suggests that the region may have begun to turn a corner in overall access to shelter.

¹ Statistical summaries for 2006-2007 were not yet available in time for this document.

² The GVSS acknowledges that figures for incidence of turn-away reflect a roll-up of statistics from a diversity of service providers with variable capacity and methodology for recording these incidences.



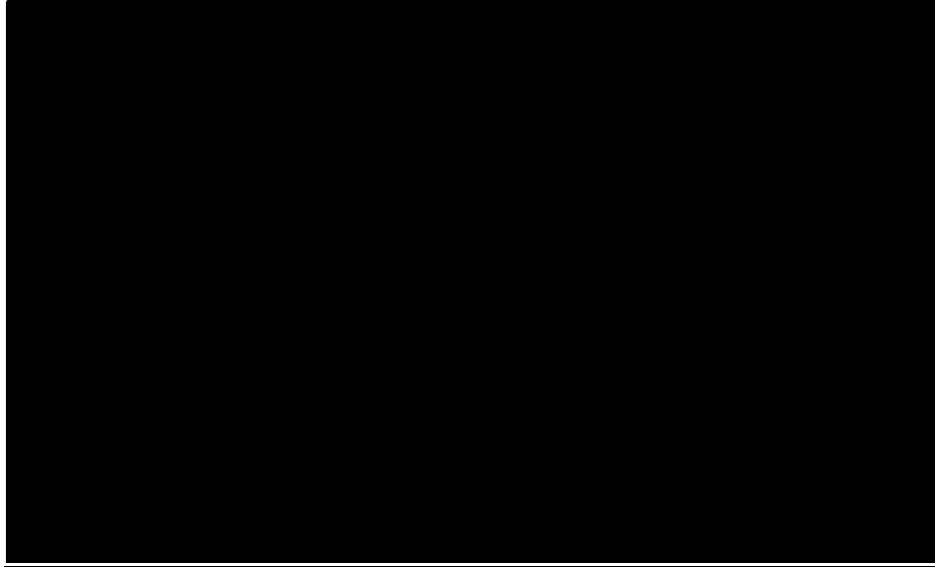
Gender Analysis

Service providers reported approximately 134,785 bed nights provided to males during the October 2005 through April 2006 period and 42,260 provided to females: males used 76% of bed nights and females used approximately 24%.³ Proportionate use of the shelter system by females declined in 2005-2006, with use of bed nights by males up 11% and use by females up just 1%. In the preceding year these figures were 74% and 26% respectively.⁴ This shift was likely due to the proportionate reduction of women's beds in 2005-2006. Beds for men and women declined from 57% to 51%, while beds for women and families declined from 16% to 15% and beds for men increased from 22% to 29%.

³ In addition, 52 bed nights were reportedly used by transgender adults.

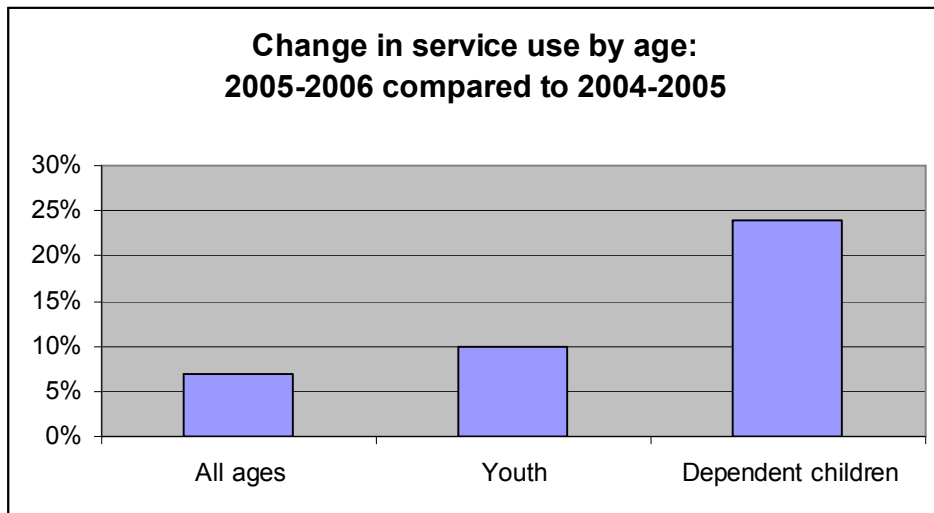
⁴ As a point of reference, the 2005 Homeless Count for the region found that 73% of homeless people were male, 26% were female, and less than 1% identified as transgender.

Shelter Use by Gender: 2005-2006



Age Analysis

Use of the shelter system by children and youth has increased. Service providers reported 4,989 bed nights provided to youth (aged 18 or under) in the October 2005 through April 2006 period, up approximately 10% from the same period in the previous year (from 4,515). They reported 5,919 bed nights provided to dependent children, up approximately 24% from the previous year.



Values and Principles to Guide Service Development

The GVSS Strategic Plan states the following core values and operating principles.

Core Values

We share the following six core values:

- ❖ *All people should have access to permanent, appropriate housing.*
- ❖ *When people become homeless, rapid re-housing is a priority.*
- ❖ *When required, people should have supports to maintain their housing.*
- ❖ *When needed, people should have access to temporary shelter that is safe and healthy.*
- ❖ *People should be able to be housed in their own communities.*
- ❖ *People using shelters deserve respect and dignity.*

Operating Principles

The Strategy works in accordance with the following four principles:

- ❖ *Seeking to balance the continuum of housing.*
- ❖ *Collaboration among funders, service providers, and communities.*
- ❖ *Representation of diverse communities and interests.*
- ❖ *Consensus decision-making.*

Service Development Principles

In addition to the general principles and values stated above, the following five principles will guide development of shelter facilities and services:

1. The shelter system should broaden access and minimize barriers to service;⁵
2. Strengthening partnerships among shelter service providers and others can help improve access to services and coordination of delivery;
3. Shelters need to have capacity to support linkage of clients with other services and stabilized housing;
4. Improving the quality and capacity of shelter services should not result in a decrease in the number of beds available;
5. Coordinated provision of extreme weather response to augment available shelter services.

⁵ This does not mean that every shelter must be minimal barrier, rather that shelter services must collectively work toward meeting the needs of the diversity of people in need of shelter: all ages, all genders, and regardless of life choices.

Service Development Directions

Shelter service development over the next two years needs to achieve the following eight objectives:

1. Continue to meet the ongoing need for emergency shelter services, and for networking and coordination among shelter providers;
2. Continue work to convert cold/wet weather to year-round shelter services, including upgrading these services to year-round standards;
3. Enhance access throughout the region by creating services in sub-regions or communities where none exist;
4. Improve service access and suitability for women and other specific population groups;
5. Reduce demand for shelter by continuing to build capacity for linkage with other services and housing;
6. Reduce incidence of turning people away by improving access to information about currently available beds;
7. Continue to strengthen Extreme Weather Response, including regional and sub-regional coordination;
8. Develop a hot weather component of the Extreme Weather Response program.

Further to point 5 above, the growing interest in rapid re-housing and the 'housing first' approach raises questions about the role of the emergency shelter sector in the housing continuum. Exploration of how shelters can better contribute to stabilizing people's housing will be a key area to look at in upcoming dialogue on these questions.

Conclusion

The GVSS was initially established as the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy to reduce health and safety risks associated with people not having access to shelter in the winter months. It was an interim solution. Conversion of BC Housing-funded cold/wet weather shelter beds to year-round services in 2007 was a major step in the right direction.

The GVSS has been successful in helping to bring about a more geographically balanced range of services in the region, and in some cases seasonal shelter services have been a step toward establishment of permanent shelter and transitional housing. More needs to be done to achieve this balance, however.

One of the next challenges is to convert shelter beds that are not BC Housing funded to year-round ones where it is feasible to do so, while not decreasing the number of beds. The major ongoing challenge that the shelter system faces is the phenomenon of people living in shelters on a longer-term basis. GVSS members acknowledge that lack of access to transitional, supportive, and affordable housing is the key factor in this.

Section 1: Introduction

Purpose

This plan provides direction to service providers and funding partners regarding emergency shelter for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. The plan presents quantitative and qualitative evidence of need and demand as a basis for making recommendations about what facilities, services and programs are required.

Background

This document builds on the evolution of emergency shelter facilities and services planning. Previous documents include the *2006-2008 Service Plan*, last updated in May 2006, and the *2004-2006 Service Plan*, completed May 2004.

Since 1998, the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (GVSS) has sought to improve access to emergency shelter services. Prior to May 2007 the organization was known as the “Cold/Wet Weather Strategy” and was primarily focused on the winter months (October through April).⁶

Highlights of the GVSS Strategic Plan

Mission: The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy is a network of organizations responding together to meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk.

Vision: We envision accessible, high quality emergency shelter services as part of a continuum of housing and supports.

Goals

1. Co-operative planning

Maintain a responsive, effective, and accountable partnership.

2. Emerging issues management

Identify emerging shelter issues and facilitate coordinated response.

3. Communication

Communicate service availability to the homeless, service providers and the larger community.

4. Sustainability

Demonstrate evidence of need to support coordinated funding and service delivery.

5. Service development

Promote coordination and enhancement of services.

⁶ Prior to May 2004 it was known as the Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy. To this day, it remains an unincorporated organization.

The GVSS has functioned as a mechanism for improved coordination and planning of services through the following means:

- Providing a forum for information sharing, coordination and joint problem solving among service providers, funding partners, and other interested organizations;
- Annual evaluation reports, including documentation of service levels, usage statistics, and incidences of people being turned away;
- Strategic and action planning;
- Shelter service and facility planning.

Scope

This plan covers, and focuses primarily on 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

Metropolitan Vancouver includes the following communities and sub-regions: Burnaby; Langley; Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows; New Westminster; North Shore; Richmond; Surrey (and Delta); Tri-Cities; and Vancouver.

The scope of this plan includes emergency shelter facilities, programs and related services provided to shelter users (such as food, transportation, and referrals).

Definitions

“Cold/wet weather” shelter services are defined as shelter facilities and programs that operate continuously during the cold, wet months, typically opening in October/November and closing in March/April.

“Shelter spaces” includes both beds and mats.

“Bed nights” refers to the number of shelter spaces multiplied by the number of nights those spaces were provided.

“Extreme weather response” includes provision of extra shelter spaces for homeless people during periods of extreme winter weather (to prevent hypothermia, critical illness and death). These added spaces may be located in existing shelter facilities, places of worship, community centres or at social services agencies. Extreme weather response also includes addressing the needs of homeless people during extreme hot weather and extreme wind.

Methods

This plan draws on existing data and analysis relevant to shelter need and demand. The primary sources used were as follows:

- Focus groups with emergency shelter providers and funders;
- GVSS (formerly CWWS) annual evaluation reports for recent years;

- GVSS monthly statistical summaries;
- Gaps analysis and principles in *On Our Streets and in Our Shelters...Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* (September 2005);
- Updated emergency shelter inventory.

In addition, the plan reflects the input of GVSS members, interested service providers and people with recent experience of homelessness. This input was gathered through the following activities:

- 8 GVSS Executive Committee members participated in a 2-hour working session in May 2007;
- 34 people with recent experience of homelessness participated in semi-structured interviews, as part of a pilot project on timely inclusion of that population in policy discussions;
- Members of the GVSS Committee of the Whole reviewed and discussed draft versions of the plan, providing feedback and input by email and in person;
- Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness members had an opportunity to review a draft version of the plan, and participated in a facilitated dialogue to provide feedback and input on the Plan objectives.

The GVSS Executive Committee provided advice and feedback throughout the planning, including reviewing and commenting on the analysis of need and demand evidence, the setting of service directions and the formulation of recommendations for action.

Organization of This Plan

The body of this plan comprises three sections:

- A summary of available data related to shelter service demand, including trend analysis at the regional level, by gender and by age (Section 2);
- Proposed services for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, including priority initiatives and service development needs (Section 3);
- Conclusion and recommendations identifying what needs to be done by funding partners, service providers, and multi-stakeholder organizations to implement this plan (Section 4).

Section 2: Service Supply and Evidence of Demand

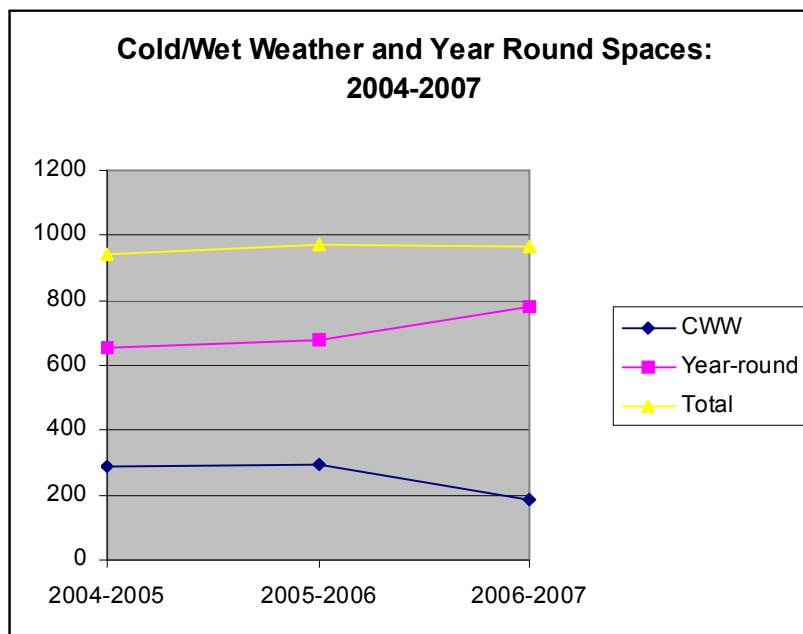
This section provides analysis of shelter statistics that serve as indicators of the levels of supply of these services across Metropolitan Vancouver, and of demand levels. Indicators of supply include number of beds and mats, and the total number of bed nights available. Indicators of demand include number of bed nights used and number of reported incidences of people being turned away.

2.1 Regional Supply of Shelter Services

Numbers of Shelter Spaces

The *2006-2008 Service Plan* noted that during the 2000-2005 period the number of cold/wet weather beds and mats increased at an average rate of approximately 19% per year, reaching a total 291 in 2004-2005.

As shown in the chart below, the expansion of cold/wet weather (CWW) spaces levelled off in 2005-2006, then reversed in 2006-2007. This reversal, in keeping with the intention set by the GVSS, resulted from the February 2007 provincial budget announcement that CWW spaces funded by BC Housing would be converted to year-round ones.



As shown in the table on the following page, as of September 2007 there were 994 shelter spaces in the region. This figure includes 884 year-round and 110 cold/wet weather spaces.

Emergency Shelter Spaces in Greater Vancouver as of September 2007⁷

MEN/WOMEN	CWW Beds and Mats	Year-round Beds	Total
Anchor of Hope	50	0	50
Belkin House	0	69	69
Caring Place	30	24	54
Crosswalk	0	35	35
First Baptist Church	0	5 (pro-rated)	5
Gateway	0	36	36
Hyland House	0	35	35
Lookout Downtown	0	46	46
North Shore	20	25	45
Grandview Calvary Baptist	10 (pro-rated)	0	10
10th Avenue Alliance	0	4	4
Triage	0	28	28
Yukon	0	71	71
Subtotal	110	378	488
YOUTH			
Aboriginal Safe House	0	7	7
All Nations Youth Safe House	0	6	6
Covenant House	0	22	22
Iron Horse Youth Safe House	0	5	5
Walden Safe House	0	9	9
Subtotal	0	49	49
MEN			
The Beacon	0	60	60
Catholic Charities	0	102	102
The Way	0	19	19
The Haven	0	40	40
Richmond House	0	10	10
Stevenson House	0	10	10
Tri-Cities Mat Program	0	4	4
Union Gospel Mission	0	36	36
Subtotal	0	281	281
WOMEN/FAMILIES			
Bridge	0	12	12
412 Women's Emergency Shelter	0	56	56
Fraserside	0	12	12
Powell Place	0	26	26
St. Elizabeth Home	0	32	32
Sheena's Place	0	12	12
Cynthia's Place	0	8	8
Vi Fineday	0	18	18
Subtotal	0	176	176
Grand total	110	884	994

⁷ Current as of April 2007. Some spaces that were CWW were converted to year-round as of April 1, 2007 (e.g. 10 of the Catholic Charities beds).

Supply of Extreme Weather Response Spaces

In addition to the CWW and year-round spaces quantified above, participating service providers, faith groups and other community based organizations in six sub-regional areas (Langley, New Westminster, North Shore, Richmond, Surrey and Vancouver) provided approximately 390 extreme weather response (EWR) spaces in 2003-04 and 2004-05. In 2005-06 and 2006-07 two additional areas implemented EWR (the Tri-Cities and Burnaby), bringing the total regional supply of EWR spaces to 600 plus.

2.2 Regional Demand for Shelter Services

Occupancy rates

Occupancy rates in Metropolitan Vancouver shelters have risen in recent years. As shown in the following table, over the 2000 to 2006 period the average shelter occupancy rates in CWW shelter service increased by approximately 1% per year, from 83% to 86%.⁸

Change in Cold/Wet Weather Occupancy Rates: 2000-2006

Year	Average occupancy rate	Increase (decrease)
2000-2001	83%	Not known
2001-2002	84%	1%
2002-2003	87%	3%
2003-2004	88%	1%
2004-2005	86%	(2%)
2005-2006	87%	1%
Average	86%	1%

Average occupancy rates in year-round shelters during the October 2005 through April 2006 period were 95%, up from 94% from the same period in the preceding year.⁹

The table on the following page shows a detailed breakdown of bed nights available, bed nights used, and occupancy rates for each shelter facility in the region during the 2005-06 season.

⁸ Occupancy rates of less than 100% for a shelter do not necessarily indicate that it was operating below capacity. Due to daily fluctuation in demand, there may be vacant spaces one day and incidences of people being turned away due to no vacancy the following day. Also, some shelters have physical configurations that can necessitate turn-aways even when not all beds are full (e.g. multi-bed and semi-private rooms for families).

⁹ Statistical summaries for 2006-2007 were not yet available in time for this document.

**Bed Nights Available, Bed Nights Used and Occupancy Rates:
October 2005 through April 2006**

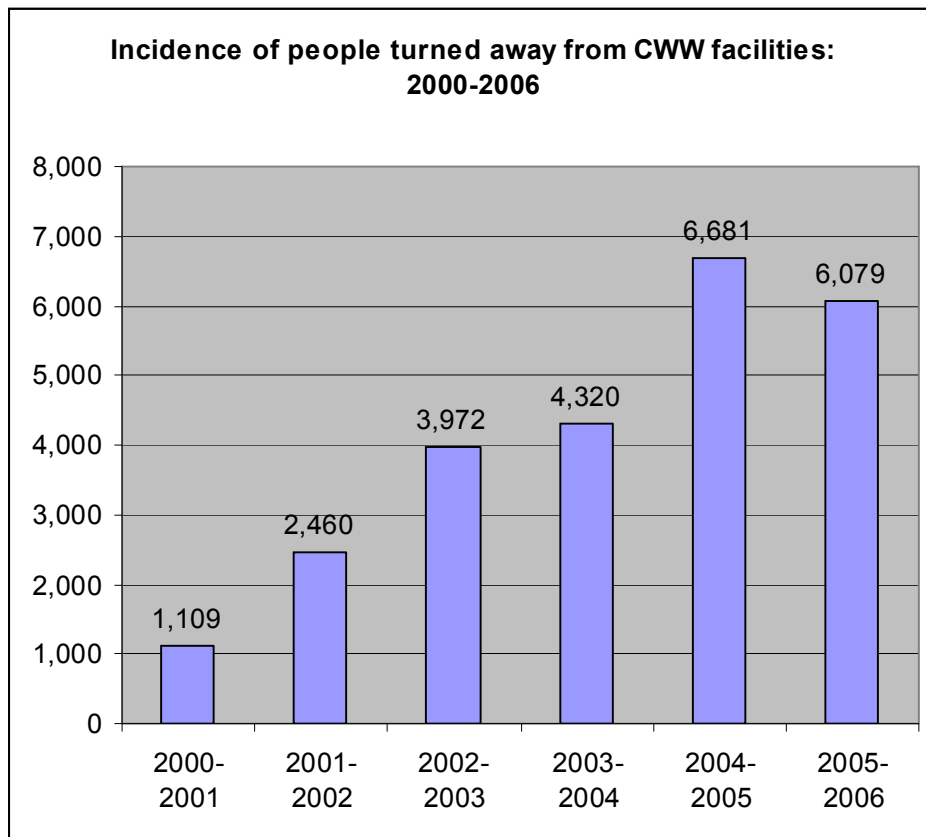
	Cold/Wet Weather			Year-Round			Combined		
	BN avail	BN used	Occup.	BN avail	BN used	Occup.	BN avail	BN used	Occup.
MEN/WOMEN									
Anchor of Hope	7,550	6,766	90%	-	-	N/a	7,550	6,766	90%
Belkin House	-	-	N/a	14,628	14,076	96%	14,628	14,076	96%
Caring Place	4,326	2,737	63%	4,870	4,142	85%	9,196	6,879	75%
Crosswalk	-	-	N/a	7,420	6,701	90%	7,420	6,701	90%
First Baptist Church	-	-	N/a	1,060	1,092	103%	1,060	1,092	103%
Gateway	5,364	4,240	79%	-	-	N/a	5,364	4,240	79%
Hyland House	-	-	N/a	7,499	7,777	103%	7,499	7,777	104%
Lookout Downtown	-	-	N/a	9,640	9,384	97%	9,640	9,384	97%
North Shore	3,234	3,057	95%	5,375	5,257	98%	8,609	8,314	97%
Grandview Baptist Ch.	1,975	1,550	78%	-	-	N/a	1,975	1,550	78%
10th Avenue Alliance	-	-	N/a	650	672	103%	650	672	103%
Triage	-	-	N/a	5,964	5,964	100%	5,964	5,964	100%
Yukon	5,867	5,519	94%	7,596	7,296	96%	13,463	12,815	95%
Subtotal	28,316	23,869	84%	64,702	62,361	96%	93,018	86,230	93%
MEN									
The Beacon	8,760	8,364	95%	-	-	N/a	8,760	8,364	95%
Catholic Charities	1,680	1,680	100%	19,412	18,713	96%	21,092	20,393	97%
The Haven	-	-	N/a	8,460	8,426	100%	8,460	8,426	100%
Richmond House	93	93	100%	1,844	1,750	95%	1,937	1,843	95%
Stevenson House	-	-	N/a	2,120	1,997	94%	2,120	1,997	94%
Tri-Cities Mat Program	-	-	N/a	848	475	56%	848	475	56%
Union Gospel Mission	-	-	N/a	7,632	7,287	95%	7,632	7,287	95%
The Way (Garfield Hotel)	2,160	1,470	68%	4,028	3,993	99%	6,188	5,463	88%
Subtotal	12,693	11,607	91%	44,344	42,641	6	57,037	54,248	95%
WOMEN/FAMILIES									
Bridge	-	-	N/a	2,556	2,536	99%	2,556	2,536	99%
Fraserside	-	-	N/a	2,544	2,080	82%	2,544	2,080	82%
Powell Place	-	-	N/a	5,538	5,388	97%	5,538	5,388	97%
St. Elizabeth Home	-	-	N/a	6,816	7,259	106%	6,816	7,259	106%
Sheena's Place	184	42	23%	3,872	3,321	86%	4,056	3,363	83%
Umbrella	3,926	3,722	95%	-	-	N/a	3,926	3,722	95%
Vi Fineday	-	-	N/a	3,816	2,821	74%	3,816	2,821	74%
Subtotal	4,110	3,764	92%	25,142	23,405	93%	29,252	27,169	93%
YOUTH									
Aboriginal Safe House	-	-	N/a	1,477	1,233	83%	1,477	1,233	83%
Covenant House	-	-	N/a	4,664	4,766	102%	4,664	4,766	102%
Iron Horse Youth S.H.	-	-	N/a	1,060	626	59%	1,060	626	59%
N.S. Youth Safe House	-	-	N/a	1,724	1,124	65%	1,724	1,124	65%
Walden Safe House	-	-	N/a	1,786	1,624	91%	1,786	1,624	91%
Subtotal	-	-	N/a	10,711	9,373	86%	10,711	9,373	88%
Grand total	45,119	39,240	87%	144,899	137,780	95%	190,018	177,020	93%

As shown in the preceding table, the average occupancy rate for all emergency shelter spaces during the October through April period of 2005-06 was 93%, up from 92% in 2004-05. The average occupancy rate for CWW shelters was 87%, compared to 86% in the preceding year. The total number of reported bed nights used was 177,020, up 7% from 164,756 in 2004-2005.

These figures suggest that the shelter system experienced increase pressure despite the slightly increased volume of services. Once again, growth in demand during the 2005-2006 season outpaced expansion of supply.

Incidence of people turned away

Reported incidence of people turned away from CWW shelter services has increased each year for which records are available, except in 2005-06.¹⁰ As illustrated in the following chart, there was a turn-away increase of approximately 502% over the 2000-01 to 2004-05 period (five years), followed by an approximately 9% decrease in 2005-06. This suggests that the region may have begun to turn a corner, after the growth of homelessness outpaced the expansion of shelter in the region for several consecutive years.



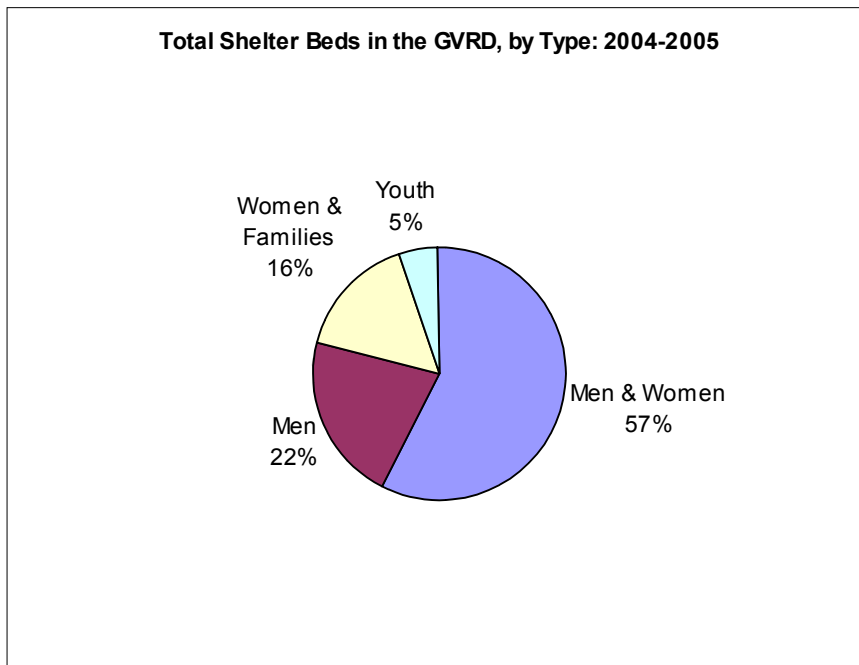
¹⁰ The GVSS acknowledges that figures for incidence of turn-away reflect a roll-up of statistics from a diversity of service providers with variable capacity and methodology for recording these incidences.

2.3 Gender and Age Analysis

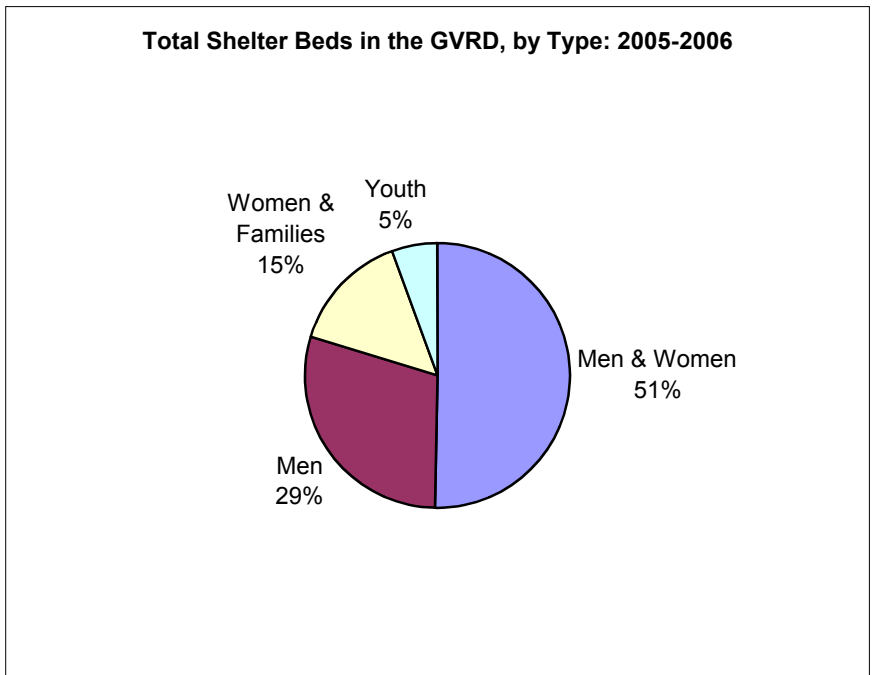
Gender

Proportionate use of the shelter system by females declined in 2005-2006, with use of bed nights by males up 11% and use by females up just 1%. Males used 76% of bed nights and females used approximately 24%. In the preceding year these figures were 74% and 26% respectively. This shift was likely due to the proportionate reduction of women's beds in 2005-2006. Beds for men and women declined from 57% to 51%, while beds for women and families declined from 16% to 15% and beds for men increased from 22% to 29%.¹¹

As a point of reference, the 2005 Homeless Count for the region found that 73% of homeless people were male, 26% were female, and less than 1% identified as transgender.



¹¹ This shift was partially a result of Union Gospel Mission becoming a men-only facility. Even without that change, however, the proportion of men's beds would have risen from 22% to 26%. Another factor was the 13 bed women's Homestead program shifting from being stand-alone to being part of mixed gender Belkin House. Factoring that in would show the proportion of women and families remaining at 16%.



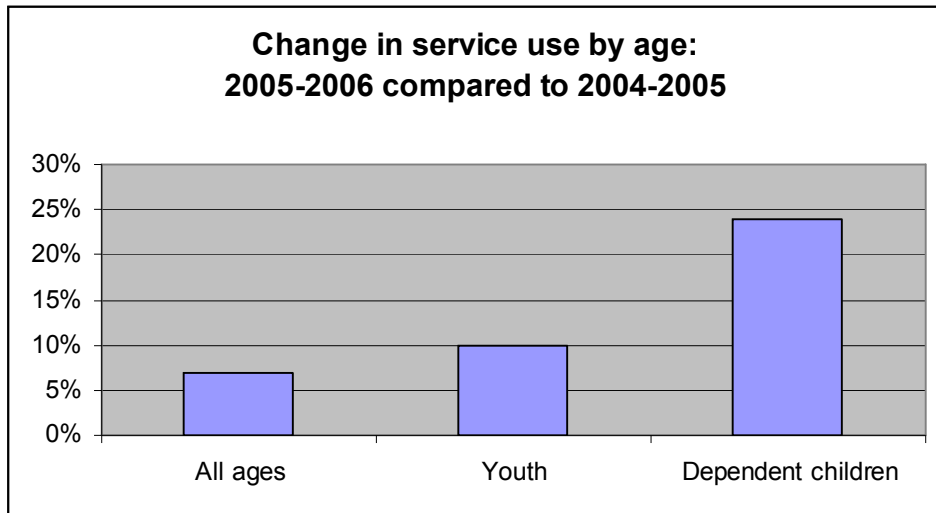
As shown in the following table, service providers reported approximately 134,785 bed nights (76%) provided to males during the October 2005 through April 2006 period and 42,260 provided to females (24%).¹²

Shelter Use by Gender: 2005-2006

¹² In addition, 52 bed nights were reportedly used by transgender adults.

Service use by age

The shelter system served proportionately more children and youth in the 2005-2006 season. Service providers reported 4,989 bed nights provided to youth (aged 18 or under) in 2005-2006, up approximately 10% from the previous year (from 4,515). They reported 5,919 bed nights provided to dependent children, up approximately 24% from the previous year.¹³



¹³ Figures for dependent children for 2004-2005 were incomplete because numbers for one service provider did not break out children and adults.

Bed Nights Used by Gender and Age: October 2005 through April 2006

	Adult Males	Adult Females	Youth Males	Youth Females	Dependent Males	Dependent Females	Total Males	Total Females
MEN/WOMEN								
Anchor of Hope	6,142	624	-	-	-	-	6,142	624
Belkin House	9,638	4,265	-	-	86	87	9,724	4,352
Caring Place	5,987	892	-	-	-	-	5,987	892
Crosswalk	6,397	304	-	-	-	-	6,397	304
First Baptist Church	991	89	-	-	4	8	995	97
Gateway	3,913	327	-	-	-	-	3,913	327
Hyland House	6,765	1,012	-	-	-	-	6,765	1,012
Lookout Downtown	7,756	1,733	-	-	-	-	7,756	1,733
North Shore	7,142	1,172	-	-	-	-	7,142	1,172
Grandview Baptist Ch.	1,400	150	-	-	-	-	1,400	150
10th Avenue Alliance	630	42	-	-	-	-	630	42
Triage	4,028	1,908	-	-	-	-	4,028	1,908
Yukon	9,864	2,951	-	-	-	-	9,864	2,951
Subtotal	70,653	15,469	-	-	90	95	70,743	15,564
MEN								
The Beacon	8,364	-	-	-	-	-	8,364	-
Catholic Charities	20,393	-	-	-	-	-	20,393	-
The Way (Garfield Hotel)	5,463	-	-	-	-	-	5,463	-
The Haven	8,426	-	-	-	-	-	8,426	-
Richmond House	1,843	-	-	-	-	-	1,843	-
Stevenson House	1,997	-	-	-	-	-	1,997	-
Tri-Cities Mat Program	475	-	-	-	-	-	475	-
Union Gospel Mission	7,287	-	-	-	-	-	7,287	-
Subtotal	54,248	-	-	-	-	-	54,248	-
WOMEN/FAMILIES								
Bridge	-	2,536	-	-	-	-	-	2,536
Fraserside	339	1,047	-	-	354	340	693	1,387
Powell Place	-	5,388	-	-	-	-	-	5,388
St. Elizabeth Home	-	4,577	-	-	1,329	1,353	1,329	5,930
Sheena's Place	-	2,263	-	-	551	549	551	2,812
Umbrella	-	3,722	-	-	-	-	-	3,722
Vi Fineday	415	1,253	-	-	594	559	1,009	1,812
Subtotal	754	20,786	-	-	2,828	2,901	3,582	23,587
YOUTH								
Aboriginal Safe House	-	-	765	468	-	-	765	468
Covenant House	3,110	1,222	255	127	-	-	3,365	1,349
Iron Horse Youth S.H.	-	-	429	197	-	-	429	197
N.S. Youth Safe House	-	-	720	404	-	-	720	404
Walden Safe House	-	-	933	691	-	-	933	691
Subtotal	3,110	1,222	3,102	1,887	-	-	6,212	3,109
TOTAL	128,765	37,477	3,102	1,887	2,919	2,996	134,785	42,260

Section 3: Proposed Services for 2008-09 and 2009-10

Based on the statistical and qualitative information presented in this document, the GVSS proposes seven key directions and initiatives for the next two years:

1. Continue to improve geographic balance across the region;
2. Improve shelter access for women, youth, families, and seniors;
3. Continue collaboration with the Aboriginal community to improve shelter access for Aboriginal people;
4. Continue to expand capacity of shelter providers to link clients with other services and stabilized housing, including referral to daytime drop-ins or other respite services;
5. Continue to develop communities' capacity for Extreme Weather Response;
6. Develop and coordinate implementation of a Hot Weather Strategy as part of the Extreme Weather Response;
7. Improve access to information about currently available shelter spaces.

The GVSS understands that BC Housing is developing an Emergency Shelter Program Framework. The intention of the directions and initiatives identified above is to complement that framework.

3.1 Values and Principles to Guide Service Development

The GVSS Strategic Plan states the following core values and operating principles.

Core Values

We share the following six core values:

- ❖ All people should have access to permanent, appropriate housing.
- ❖ When people become homeless, rapid re-housing is a priority.
- ❖ When required, people should have supports to maintain their housing.
- ❖ When needed, people should have access to temporary shelter that is safe and healthy.
- ❖ People should be able to be housed in their own communities.
- ❖ People using shelters deserve respect and dignity.

Operating Principles

The Strategy works in accordance with the following four principles:

- ❖ Seeking to balance the continuum of housing.
- ❖ Collaboration among funders, service providers, and communities.
- ❖ Representation of diverse communities and interests.
- ❖ Consensus decision-making.

Service Development Principles

In addition to the general principles and values stated above, the following five principles will guide development of shelter facilities and services:

8. The shelter system should broaden access and minimize barriers to service;¹⁴
9. Strengthening partnerships among shelter service providers and others can help improve access to services and coordination of delivery;
10. Shelters need to have capacity to support linkage of clients with other services and stabilized housing;
11. Improving the quality and capacity of shelter services should not result in a decrease in the number of beds available;
12. Coordinated provision of extreme weather response to augment available shelter services.

3.2 Quantity of Beds and Mats

Average occupancy rates and numbers of reported incidences of people being turned away from service in the region have continued to rise, despite increased numbers of spaces. In 2004-2005 the Strategy initiated discussion to explore gradual reduction of CWW shelter beds and mats in favour of year-round emergency shelter services and transitional housing. In 2006 focus groups with service providers and funders confirmed the consensus that year-round services and/or transitional housing should replace CWW shelter services in Greater Vancouver.

Participants in both focus groups suggested that patterns of seasonal variation in demand should be the primary factor in determining what seasonal expansion should occur, if any. They noted that incidence of people being turned away is an inadequate demand indicator because people tend not to line up for services that do not exist or are known to have no vacancy.

In 2007 BC Housing announced conversion of CWW beds it funds into year-round ones, to year-round standards. As noted in Section 2.1, this was consistent with the consensus the GVSS had set out to confirm in the *2006-2008 Service Plan*.

However, there may be a continued need to have non-BC Housing funded CWW beds converted to year-round. Also, communities that have never had shelter services may open CWW shelters on a pilot basis to demonstrate the level of need.

The results of the BC Housing investment in upgrading beds to year-round, as well as implementation of the outreach program, will inform understanding of

¹⁴ This does not mean that every shelter must be minimal barrier, rather that shelter services must collectively work toward meeting the needs of the diversity of people in need of shelter: all ages, all genders, and regardless of life choices.

additional service and facility needs. The GVSS also anticipates that the results of the 2008 homeless count will provide further evidence of shelter need and demand.

3.3 Level of Service in CWW and Year-Round Shelters

Shelter providers and funding partners agreed that any CWW beds should have the same levels of service as year-round ones. The GVSS recognizes the resources invested by BC Housing in upgrading the quality of services to year-round standards, and that more investment may be needed to assist CWW beds in reaching the same standards as year-round ones. This upgrading should not be at the expense of existing services.

3.4 Access and Appropriateness for Specific Groups

Participants in the focus groups suggested that more should be done to meet the housing and shelter needs of specific populations, including Aboriginal people, people with dual diagnoses, immigrants and refugees, seniors, people with pets, women, families, young people who are not street entrenched, etc. For many of these populations, emergency shelter services are inappropriate.

Women

The shelter system has not adequately served the needs of women in recent years. The *2006-2008 Service Plan* sounded the alarm as follows: “The gap between the proportion of females using CWW and year-round shelter services during October 2004 through April 2005 (26%) and the proportion of females turned away from services (44%) suggests that there may be a lack of supply of women’s shelter services.”

The *2005-2006 Evaluation* found further cause for concern that the shelter system had failed to respond to the gender gap while in fact worsening relative access for women:

The proportion of beds for mixed genders, and for women and families, declined significantly in 2005-2006 compared to the previous year. Beds for men and women declined from 57% to 51%, while beds for women and families declined from 16% to 15%. Beds for men increased from 22% to 29%.

The 2005 Homeless Count report, *On Our Streets and In Our Shelters*, stated that 73% of homeless people were men, 26% were women, and less than 1% were transgender. The 2008 homeless count report will provide further evidence of women’s shelter need and demand.

Improving access to shelter for women is an even higher priority than in the preceding *Service Plan*. This could be achieved in two ways:

- Increased number of women-only facilities/beds;
- Creation of mixed-gender shelters where appropriate and feasible.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People

The sensitivity of shelter services to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people has been identified as an issue to be explored and addressed. For example, LGBT youth have faced safety issues in shelters.

All-gender shelter services may provide appropriate access for some transgender people. For others, women-only shelters may be preferable. Anecdotal evidence suggests that street-entrenched male-to-female transgender people are some of the highest risk and most vulnerable of shelter clients.

The GVSS needs to learn more about the shelter needs of the LGBT community. Helpful resources include documents such as “Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People” and “Transgender Basics”.

As the needs of this population become clearer, it will be important to develop facilities and services accordingly. For example, in development of new all-gender shelter facilities it is expected that provision of gender-neutral bathrooms will be a best practice.

Families

Recent GVSS documents have raised concerns about shelter access for families. The *2006-2008 Service Plan* sounded the alarm as follows: “anecdotal evidence from GVSS members suggests that shelter service demand for families has been growing.” Then, the *2005-2006 Evaluation* provided quantitative evidence that revealed what could be regarded as an early warning about the rise in multi-generational homelessness: “proportionate use by youth and children both rose, with use of bed nights by youth up 10% and use by dependent children up approximately 24%.”

Evidence of family homelessness from sources such as the regional homeless count may be limited because of the tendency of homeless parents to fear loss of their children. That is one reason why this population has been referred to as “the hidden homeless”.

Hotel/motel access is typically the most appropriate and efficient way to provide shelter to families, recognizing the variable bed and room configurations required. Also, sheltering families in low-barrier services may be inappropriate due to the range of issues and behaviours clients may have. In the hotel/motel service mode, however, it will be important to include the provision of support and referral services.

Youth

Meeting the needs of youth has remained a blind spot in shelter planning. Further engagement is required to develop consensus on the desired regional spectrum of shelter and related services for youth. This may occur through communication

and collaborative planning with youth shelter providers, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, and others.

The 2007 expansion of Covenant House will add capacity to meet youth shelter needs. The 2010 Olympics has taken into consideration youth traveling to such events, and will be providing temporary youth sheltering services. There may be some opportunity to convert some of those temporary facilities to ongoing ones.

We know that that the shorter time a person is on the street, the less likely they are to become entrenched in the behaviours and lifestyles of the street.

Effective, early intervention with street-involved youth will help prevent future expansion demand for adult shelters. Developing a strategy for youth must become a priority of shelter providers and governments.

People With Pets

Few shelters in the region accept people with pets. This barrier to service needs to be addressed.

Seniors

Homeless Count data comparing 2005 with 2002 show that the proportion of homeless people aged 55 and over rose from 5% to 9% in just three years. Similarly, observations from GVSS members indicate that the number of seniors accessing shelter is rapidly rising. The implications of this trend for shelter facility and service development include the following:

- Wheelchair access is becoming more of a requirement;
- Safety considerations are greater (e.g. falls prevention);
- Increased need for special needs meals;
- Increased need for transportation other than transit.

The GVSS acknowledges that hotel/motel/apartment access could be the most appropriate and efficient way to provide shelter to seniors, recognizing the greater health and resource issues that may arise. Typically, seniors require longer stays, and the majority have access to funds at some time during their stay. Also, sheltering seniors in low-barrier services may be inappropriate due to the range of issues and behaviours some clients may have. In the hotel/motel service mode, however, it will be important to include the provision of support and referral services.

New shelter facilities, services and programs developed in the next few years should consider these factors.

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities comprise a large proportion of shelter users. There is an opportunity to develop strategies to better serve this population through

communication and collaborative planning with organizations such as the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.

Immigrants, Refugees, and Ethno-Cultural Communities

Research by MOSAIC on shelter issues faced by immigrants and refugees has provided important information that can be used to better respond to the needs of this population. Translation services are available through multicultural agencies and MEIA.

3.5 Enhanced Food Service Capacity

In keeping with the GVSS value that “people using shelters deserve respect and dignity”, there is need to develop capacity to better meet the unique food service needs of clients. Development of shelter facilities and programs needs to include consideration of how food service capacity will be enhanced.

As noted above, increased use of shelters by seniors necessitates enhanced capacity for provision of special needs meals. People with HIV/AIDS and other major diseases may also have special nutritional requirements. Furthermore, some shelter users may have special food requirements and restrictions associated with their cultural and/or religious identities.

Participants in the 2006 shelter providers focus group identified unmet challenges in meeting the needs of people with dietary requirements specific to their health conditions, such as people with HIV, diabetes etc. This is particularly difficult for shelters with lower per diem rates.

In addition to addressing the food service needs of specific populations, there is an overall need for food service quality standards.

3.6 Linkage with Other Services

Participants in both focus groups came to consensus that all emergency shelters should have staff capacity for linking clients to housing and other needed services, including caseworkers for current clients, aftercare, and outreach to people who have no connection to shelter services. This capacity is especially needed in the face of the current shortage of affordable housing.

The *2006-2008 Service Plan* identified that there was already a high level of consensus among GVSS members about the importance of doing more than provide a warm, dry place to sleep. Service providers have long advanced the view that demand for emergency shelter beds can be reduced through improved capacity to assist clients in linking with needed services (including more stable housing and health, addiction recovery, training, and employment, services). In cases where the shelter service is not 24-hours, it is particularly important to have strong capacity for actively referring clients to daytime drop-ins or other respite services (on-site or off-site). This model involves collaboration with

existing health and social service agencies. Implementation of it may require enhanced capacity for client transportation (e.g. transit access).

The provision of funding for outreach services, starting in 2006-2007, has been an effective strategy for addressing this challenge. BC Housing initially established this funding for a three-year period, so it will be important to confirm continued resources for outreach services beyond 2008-09.

3.7 Hours of Service

Anecdotal evidence suggests that limited hours of shelter service do not provide for durations of sleep adequate to support good health. The GVSS understands that work by BC Housing on shelter standards will address the issue of service hours. Full 24-hour service is the ideal, and the minimum standard should be opening at 7:00 pm.

The BC Housing announcement in October 2007 that it would upgrade shelters to 24-hour service will resolve this issue for the beds it funds. This upgrading will also strengthen the ability of shelters to link clients with housing and other services.

3.8 Access to Information on Available Beds

In the face of growth in the numbers of reported incidences of people being turned away from shelter services, there is a need to develop methods to improve access to information about what services are available. The regional shelter listings produced and regularly updated by the GVSS have served as a useful tool to inform people about what shelters exist. In addition, formal and informal information sharing through the GVSS Committee of the Whole has increased coordination and cross-referral among service providers.

A mechanism to improve access to information about available beds would help prevent incidences of people being turned away. Such a service could be provided by phone and/or through the internet and made available to community resources and/or to the general public. The GVSS recommends the implementation of the free-access "211" community resource service similar to that operating in Ontario and is seeking to work further with Greater Vancouver Information Services to create an accessible shelter information system. The GVSS will continue to offer advice and assistance to develop the emergency shelter component of the 211 system.

Additionally, the GVSS intends to develop its own website for the public to access locally.

3.9 Capacity for Extreme Weather Response

In the past, the only Greater Vancouver community with services in place to provide additional shelter during periods of extreme weather was Vancouver. And then:

- In 2003-2004 four communities implemented an extreme weather response plan for the first time (Langley, New Westminster, Richmond, Surrey) and two other sub-regions indicated interest in developing their own extreme weather response (Tri-Cities and the North Shore).
- As of 2005 both the Tri-Cities and the North Shore had completed their plans and Burnaby was in the process of developing an extreme weather response.
- As of 2007 all eight communities had active extreme weather responses, with support in the form of regional coordination with sub-regional coordination for Surrey and Vancouver.

In the next two years it will be important to continue supporting communities in further developing and implementing extreme weather response plans.

In addition, there is a need to develop capacity for extreme hot weather response. This will include development of a template for community-based plans to meet the needs of homeless people during extreme hot weather spells, supporting communities in adapting that template to their local context, and coordinating implementation of plans at the regional and sub-regional levels. Partnership with the Canadian Red Cross and others will be vital to the success of this initiative.

Section 4: Conclusion and Recommendations

The GVSS was initially established as the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy to reduce health and safety risks associated with people not having access to shelter in the winter months. It was an interim solution. Conversion of BC Housing-funded cold/wet weather shelter beds to year-round services in 2007 was a major step in the right direction.

The GVSS has been successful in helping to bring about a more geographically balanced range of services in the region, and in some cases seasonal shelter services have been a step toward establishment of permanent shelter and transitional housing. More needs to be done to achieve this balance, however.

One of the next challenges is to convert shelter beds that are not BC Housing funded to year-round ones where it is feasible to do so, while not decreasing the number of beds. The major ongoing challenge that the shelter system faces is the phenomenon of people living in shelters on a longer-term basis. GVSS members acknowledge that lack of access to transitional, supportive, and affordable housing is the key factor in this.

Summary of Objectives

Shelter service development over the next two years needs to achieve the following eight objectives:

1. Continue to meet the ongoing need for emergency shelter services, and for networking and coordination among shelter providers;
2. Continue work to convert cold/wet weather to year-round shelter services, including upgrading these services to year-round standards;
3. Enhance access throughout the region by creating services in sub-regions or communities where none exist;
4. Improve service access and suitability for women and other specific population groups;
5. Reduce demand for shelter by continuing to build capacity for linkage with other services and housing;
6. Reduce incidence of turning people away by improving access to information about currently available beds;
7. Continue to strengthen Extreme Weather Response, including regional and sub-regional coordination;
8. Develop a hot weather component of the Extreme Weather Response program.

Further to point 5 above, the growing interest in rapid re-housing and the 'housing first' approach raises questions about the role of the emergency shelter sector in the housing continuum. Exploration of how shelters can better contribute to stabilizing people's housing will be a key area to look at in upcoming dialogue on these questions.

Implications of Demographic Trends

Emerging demographic trends within the population of service users have significant implications for service development.

More research is needed to determine demographic trends within the homeless population. The 2008 homeless count, including comparison to the 2005 and 2002 count results, will produce valuable information on trends.

Other Planning Considerations

Several other factors need to be considered in ongoing service planning. These include:

- The impact of converting provincially funded CWW beds to year-round;
- The future of federal funding through the Homelessness Partnering Initiative;
- Levels of investment by provincial agencies and others in non-market and special needs housing;
- Potential for displacement of people at risk of homelessness as a result of the 2010 Olympics.

Recommendations

To support implementation of this plan, the GVSS recommends that partners take action as follows.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That shelter providers apply for funding to develop and add the required services identified in this plan.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That funding partners allocate resources to proposals by shelter providers to support development of services identified in this plan.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the GVSS work with BC Housing and other partner organizations to review and address the particular shelter needs of specific populations: women; families; youth; seniors; immigrants, refugees, and ethno-cultural groups; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; people living with HIV/AIDS; and people with multiple diagnoses.

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- Karen O'Shannacery, Lookout Emergency Aid Society
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