

NEXT STEP PROGRAM

Second Stage Housing

Evaluation Highlights

Acknowledgments

The assistance of second stage housing groups and the women who used their services was much appreciated in this evaluation. The information provided in surveys and case studies helped improve understanding of the role second stage housing plays in addressing family violence.

Next Step Program (1991-95)

The Next Step Program was a four-year (\$20.6 million) program delivered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to provide capital funding primarily for development of second stage housing. Non-profit groups obtained fully-forgivable capital loans to build or acquire housing for women who have left abusive domestic situations.

Impact of Next Step Program

Next Step contributed to a major expansion of second stage housing in Canada with funding for **an additional 174 second stage units** developed by 35 groups. More than 85% of these were in communities where there was *not any* second stage housing before the Program.

There are now **68 second stage housing projects in Canada, compared with 22 in 1992.**

What is Second Stage Housing?

Each year more than 45,000 women who leave violent domestic situations stay in *first-stage* or emergency shelters. Most stay only a few weeks before they have to find other housing for themselves and their children.

Second stage housing can provide more security than other housing, support services and peer support, and longer stays than in first stage shelters. For women using second stage, **personal safety** is the most important aspect followed by support services (especially counselling and referral to other services). In second stage housing, women usually have their own apartment units for themselves and their children.

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Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Programme L'étape suivante – maison d'hébergement transitoire – Points saillants de l'évaluation

Typical Next Step Second Stage

Most Next Step second stage housing (75 per cent) involved several dwelling units in one building.

Most units were two-bedroom (36 per cent) or three-bedroom (32 per cent) units. Over a third of Next Step units were in newly-constructed buildings while 45 per cent were in buildings that were acquired and modified. The average capital cost for a Next Step unit was \$72,000.

The monthly rent for a two-bedroom Next Step unit averaged \$413 which was somewhat lower than average rents (\$460) in other second-stage housing.

Services Provided

Various service models are used by second stage housing groups. There was no *requirement* in the Next Step Program that the groups receiving capital funding should have access to government financing for client services. In fact, only a third of Next Step second stage groups receive operating funding for services, compared with three-quarters of pre-Next Step second stage housing that receive government funding for client services.

However, all Next Step groups provide some services to their second stage clients as well as housing. All provide referrals to services in the community, and about 90 per cent provide counselling, support groups, and accompaniment services (to court, social services, etc.). More than half of Next Step groups offer six or more services for their clients. In fact, the evaluation found that Next Step clients have access to as many services as clients in other second stage housing.

Services are provided in three ways:

1. the second stage group itself
2. local first stage shelters
3. community agencies

The study shows that first stage shelters play a major and increasing role in providing services to women who use second stage housing.

Clients of Second Stage Housing

Women from all age groups and social backgrounds use second stage housing. This section highlights the characteristics of Next Step clients and compares these with the profiles of women who use second stage housing generally and of women who use first stage shelters.

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Age Groups

Women using second stage housing tend to be in their 30s and 40s whereas high proportions of women using first stage housing tend to be in their 20s. Three-quarters of women using Next Step second stage were between the ages of 30 and 49.

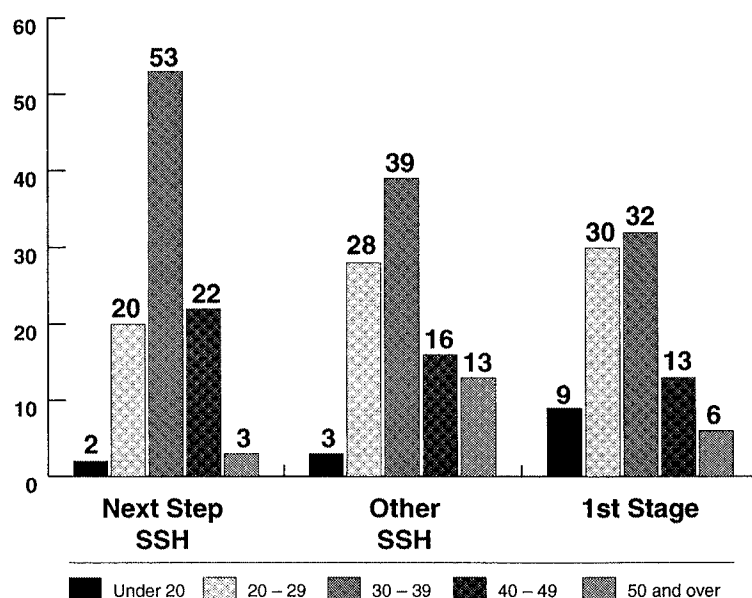
Children

More than 75 per cent of Next Step clients were women with their children. In other second stage housing, 60 per cent of clients were women with their children living with them. In first stage housing, 56 per cent of clients were accompanied by their children when they stayed at first stage shelters.

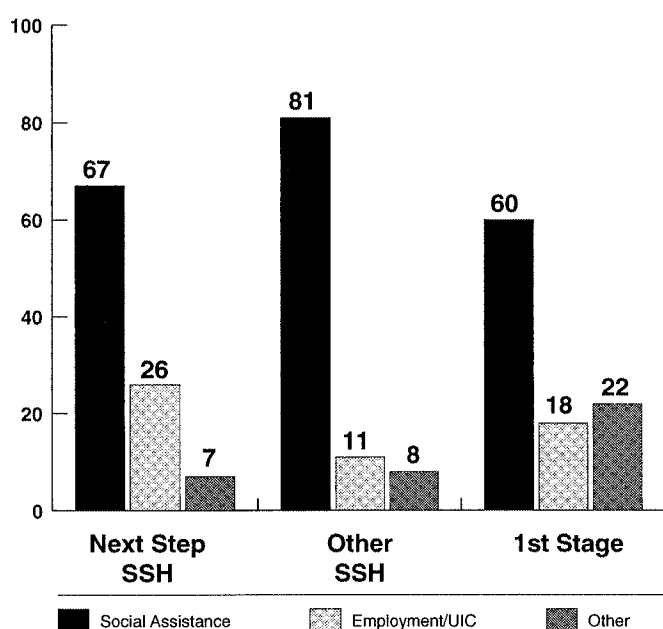
Education

Women of all education backgrounds use second stage housing. Most (more than 80 per cent) have completed high school, and more than 30 per cent have some post-secondary education. More than 20 per cent have completed university or college education. In contrast, the majority of women using first stage housing have fewer education qualifications.

Clients' Age Groups (%)



Clients' Main Source of Income (%)



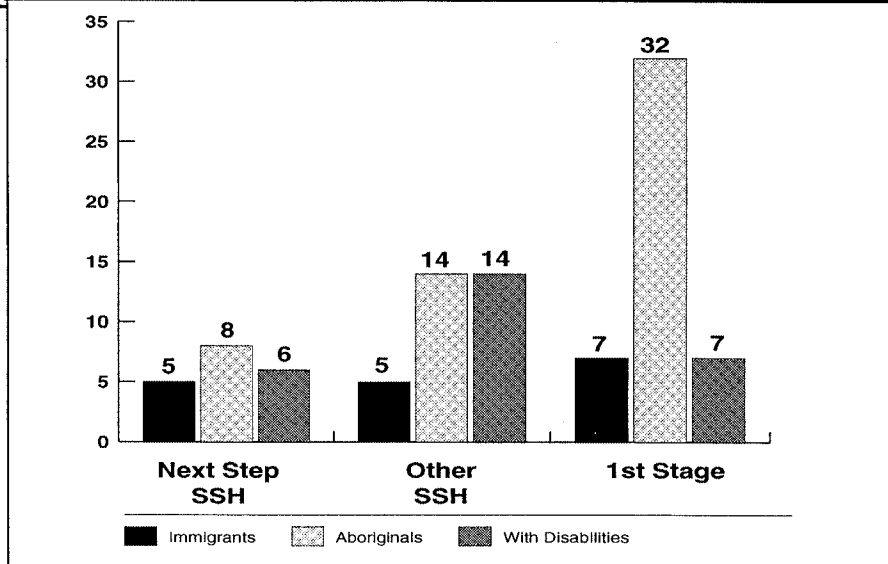
Incomes

A higher proportion of Next Step clients have employment incomes than do clients in other second-stage and first-stage housing.

About a quarter of Next Step clients have employment or UIC income while two-thirds obtain most of their income from social assistance. In other second stage housing, higher proportions of clients have social assistance income.

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Percentage of clients – other client characteristics



Other Characteristics

Next Step clients include five per cent who are immigrants, eight per cent who are of Aboriginal or First Nations ancestry, and six per cent who are women with disabilities. Next Step had fewer First Nations clients and fewer clients with disabilities than other second stage housing and first stage shelters.

Client Satisfaction

Most women who use second stage housing report high levels of satisfaction with this type of housing. Next Step clients were even more satisfied than women who used other second stage housing.

Safety & Security

Personal safety and security reasons are the main factor in women's decisions to use second stage housing. Most second stage housing has several special security features to meet this need.

Nearly 80 per cent of Next Step clients and 95 per cent of other second stage clients said they were satisfied with the safety and security of second stage housing.

However, more than half the organizations that operate second stage housing and nearly 40 per cent of first stage housing groups felt that more security measures were needed in second stage housing. Nearly 30 per cent of clients reported that their abusive partner had contacted them or their children against their will, either at their homes or while they were staying in second stage housing.

Housing Satisfaction

Second stage clients are very satisfied with the housing provided in second stage. Nearly 90 per cent of Next Step clients said they were very satisfied with the **quality of the housing**.

About half the women were very satisfied with the suitability of the housing for their children and three-quarters were very satisfied with the availability of most services nearby, except for the availability of daycare.

Length of Stay

On average, women stay seven to eight months in second stage housing, but the range is quite broad (from one month to two years). About one in three women stay less than six months; nearly half stay six to ten months, and 17 per cent stay more than 11 months.

Most second stage housing programs have policies on the maximum length of stay, typically about 12 months. However, in almost all cases, the length of stay can be extended. Although most allow women to stay more than once, most women stay only once in second stage housing, less than 10 per cent of women having multiple stays.

While half the women were very satisfied with the length of time they were allowed to stay, about 20 per cent reported that the length of time was too short.

Housing Affordability

Evidence has shown that more than 40 per cent of women experienced increased financial difficulties after leaving an abusive situation.

Most second stage housing (more than 80 per cent) has some units that are available on a rent geared-to-income basis. Both the women who use the housing and the groups providing the housing feel that Next Step housing is affordable. Three-quarters of Next Step clients were very satisfied with the affordability of their housing, and 22 per cent were satisfied.

These views may be surprising given the proportion of their income that the clients spend on rent and utilities for second stage units. On average, women spend over 40 per cent of incomes on housing, and nearly a third spend over 50 per cent of their income on housing. To some extent these high percentages are related to the shelter allowances available as part of social assistance incomes which are paid as rent rather than rents based on the rent-to-income scale. However, client satisfaction is also related to an appreciation of the prices and conditions of alternative accommodations in the rental market.

All of the women surveyed in second stage housing perceived housing affordability as their main problem when they move on from second stage. Many with low incomes have difficulty finding housing unless they are able to obtain social housing. In fact, finding affordable housing was a more widespread problem than safety from their abusive partners. Of the women who had moved on from second stage, 58 per cent said they had problems finding affordable housing.

Second Stage Makes a Difference

The evaluation looked at the effects of second stage housing by comparing the differences for women who stayed in second stage compared with women who used regular social housing when they left abusive situations.

Women who used second stage were far more likely than similar women in non-profit or rent supplement housing to express satisfaction with the housing, the security provided, and the support services available.

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TWO KEY SUCCESSES of second stage housing were:

Improved quality of life for women

(e.g., feel more secure and settled, more involved in social activities/less isolated, and better their economic situations with skills training)

Improved children's lives (e.g., do better at school, make new friends, happier, and improved behaviours)

These results show the positive impacts of second stage housing for women who have left abusive situations, suggesting that the services provided go beyond the provision of the housing alone. Many women felt that second stage housing enabled them to break the 'cycle of abuse', and helped prevent their children from growing up to become abusers or victims.

Not only was second stage housing effective in serving women, but also the evaluation found that second stage housing was more cost-effective than social housing in assisting women who had left abusive situations.

Future Needs

Currently there are roughly 500 units of second stage housing in Canada. They are used by about 850 women each year.

More than 45,000 women stay in first stage shelters every year, and it is estimated that up to seven per cent of these women may be interested in second stage housing.

Under current conditions of fiscal restraints, alternatives for providing this type of supportive housing warrant consideration. One alternative discussed in the report would be to develop partnerships between local housing agencies and experienced first and second stage housing groups. This approach would ensure that necessary services are provided along with affordable housing.

On a broader front, women leaving abusive situations require opportunities to improve their own economic situations so that they have alternatives to returning to abusive partners for economic reasons. Enhanced service linkages to enable women to access training and skills development services could have long term benefits.

CMHC, as part of the federal government's Family Violence Initiative, continues to provide support to groups that operate shelters through the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP). SEP provides grants for repairs and shelter improvements.

For additional information on this evaluation, please contact Patricia Streich, CMHC, Audit and Evaluation Services at 613-748-4600.

The evaluation report (*A Place to Go: An Evaluation of the Next Step Program for Second-Stage Housing in Canada*) was prepared for CMHC by SPR Associates Inc., Toronto. This project was funded by CMHC but the views expressed are the personal views of the authors) and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

Copies of the evaluation report may be obtained by calling 1-800-668-2642 or by e-mail: chic@cmhc-schl.gc.ca.

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.