



Family Shelter Diversion

A new approach to serving families at risk of homelessness.

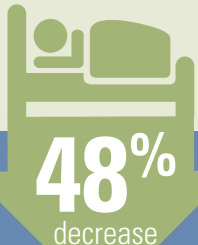
Pilot results

(October 2013 - March 2015)



48%
decrease

in families accessing
EMERGENCY SHELTER
214 in 2012 to 112 in 2014/15
(see table 1 on back)



in families overall average
LENGTH OF STAY
42 days in 2012 to 22 days in
2014/15 (see table 2 on back)



**RETURNED
TO
EMERGENCY
SHELTER**



**AVERAGE COST
TO SERVE
A FAMILY**
in 2014/15 was
68% LESS
than in 2012

This is a short summary of the Family Shelter Diversion pilot. For more information, see the full report online at: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/familydiversion

Pilot diverts 64 per cent of families from emergency shelters.

An innovative pilot that helped 524 families avoid or reduce the trauma and stress of homelessness will become a permanent approach to ending family homelessness in Waterloo Region. The key to its success? Offering families the right housing resources at the right time through a coordinated approach.

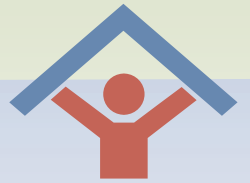
Unprecedented number of families turning to shelters

Family homelessness became a critical issue following the 2008 recession. Family stays in emergency shelters increased more than two-fold and their time spent in shelter doubled. We know that homelessness has both immediate and long-term negative impacts on children and parents – emotionally, psychologically, socially, and physically. With unprecedented pressure on shelter providers at unsustainable costs, a better solution was needed – one that keeps families in housing and out of shelter. The Family Shelter Diversion pilot began in October 2013 in partnership between the Region of Waterloo (with funding and planning support), Lutherwood Housing Services, and Cambridge Shelter. The pilot grew to include the YWCA Emergency Shelter in April 2014. It ran to March 2015.

A new approach to resolving the housing crisis

Connecting families with the right housing resources at the right time through one coordinated point of access to the local housing stability system made a big impact: 64 per cent of families served through the pilot were able to either stay in their current housing or were supported to find another safe and appropriate option, without having to access a shelter first.

Many families didn't need emergency shelter; they just needed someone to help them problem solve. Some families received money through a flex fund to get through a rough period while others were able to stay with a friend or relative until they could find a more permanent home. Families who had no other place to go stayed in the shelter but came up with a Housing Plan with next steps to make sure their stay was as short as possible.



64%

AVOIDED A SHELTER STAY with support through the pilot

What we learned and next steps

Each family's situation is unique; there is no "one size fits all" approach to resolving a housing issue. While some need a relatively small amount of support to avoid a shelter stay, others require more intensive support over a longer period of time. The pilot evolved to accommodate these varying levels of support needs.

From this pilot came a report with 25 recommendations that will be implemented in the context of a full range of housing resources for families called Families to Homes (F2H), with policy direction guided by partner agencies. What was learned will be applied to local services for other population groups to further support the end to homelessness in Waterloo Region.

TABLE 1 Families accessing shelter

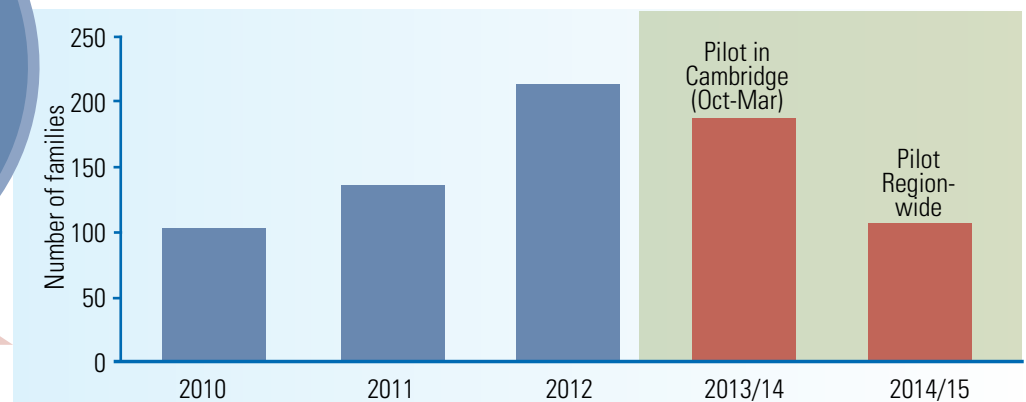
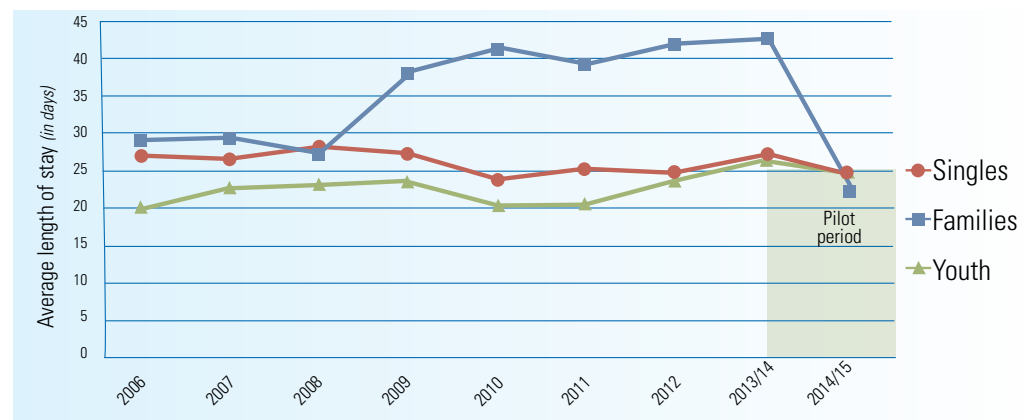


TABLE 2 Length of stay in shelter



The pilot had two types of stays and their results were quite different: Rapid Re-Housing stays were 23 days on average and Regular Shelter stays were 57 days on average.

22% ACCESSED A SHELTER as part of their Housing Plan

14% DID NOT REQUIRE SUPPORT

through the pilot and RESOLVED THEIR HOUSING ISSUE by being connected with other appropriate homelessness prevention resources in the system



For more information on family homelessness see the local report, Ending Family Homelessness in Waterloo Region available online at: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/endingfamilyhomelessness.