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***Permanent:*** Long-term housing with no maximum length of stay.

***Transitional:*** Time-limited, affordable, supported or independent housing. Tenants can usually remain in transitional housing for up to 2 or 3 years.

***Emergency:*** Short-term shelter for people in crisis. Some emergency shelters also provide meals and support services to the people who stay there.

***Supported:*** Affordable housing where the tenants have access to support services in addition to housing. These services vary and can include:

- Life skills training: income management, job training, medication management
- Medical care
- Social activities
- Problem substance use rehabilitation programs
- Case management

***Abstinence-Based or Dry Housing:*** Housing where tenants are not allowed to drink alcohol or use other drugs while in tenancy. Tenants are expected to be "clean" before moving in and actively working on their recovery while living there. Tenants may be discharged from the program if they refuse treatment for a relapse.

***Low Barrier Housing:*** Housing where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to live there. The aim is to have as few barriers as possible to allow more people access to services. In housing this often means that tenants are not expected to abstain from using alcohol or other drugs, or from carrying on with street activities while living on-site, so long as they do not engage in these activities in common areas of the house and are respectful of other tenants and staff. Low-barrier facilities follow a harm reduction philosophy. See below for more about harm reduction.

***Wet Housing:*** Housing where tenants are not expected to abstain from using alcohol and other drugs, and where entering a rehabilitation program is not a requirement. Tenants

have access to recovery services and get to decide if and when they use these services. Wet housing programs follow a harm reduction philosophy. For more on harm reduction see below.

**Damp Housing:** Housing where tenants do not need to be "clean" when entering the program but are expected to be actively working on recovery from substance use problems.

**Scattered Site:** Housing units are spread out in apartments in various locations around the city rather than all in one common building. These apartments may be either market or social housing.

**Dedicated Site:** Housing units that are placed in a common building where all the tenants are part of the program.

**Private Market:** Traditional rental housing that is run by private landlords rather than a housing program.

**Subsidized:** Housing that receives funding from the government or community organization. Tenants who live in subsidized housing pay rent that is less than market value.

**Social Housing:** Housing provided by the government (public housing) or a community organization (non-profit housing).

**Public Housing:** Housing that is owned by the government.

**Non-Profit or Community Housing:** Housing that is run by a community organization.

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO):** Small, one-room apartments that are rented on a monthly or weekly basis. Tenants share common bathrooms and sometimes also share kitchen facilities.

**Hardest to House:** Refers to people with more complex needs and multiple challenges when it comes to housing, such as mental illness(es), addiction(s), other conditions or disabilities, justice-system histories, etc.

**Group Home:** A home that is shared by a number of tenants who are generally expected to participate in shared living arrangements and activities. There is usually 24-hour support staff on site.

## Other Important Terms

**Harm Reduction:** A philosophy that focuses on the risks and consequences of a particular behaviour, rather than on the behaviour itself. In terms of substance use, it means focusing on strategies to reduce harm from high-risk use, rather than insisting on abstinence. Abstinence is neither condoned nor condemned. Instead it is considered one strategy among many others. Underlying harm reduction is the acceptance that many people use substances, and that a drug-free society is both an unrealistic and impractical

goal. With regard to housing, harm reduction means that tenants have access to services to help them address their substance use issues. It is based on the understanding that recovery is a long process, and that users need a stable living arrangement in order to overcome their addictions. Focus is on being healthier rather than on the unrealistic goal of being perfectly healthy right away. See wet and low-barrier housing above.

**Concurrent Disorders:** When a person is diagnosed with two or more conditions at the same time. In Visions Journal, and in many mental health contexts, "concurrent disorders" is used to describe a person with both mental illness and substance use issues. (Dual diagnosis, which also means co-existing conditions, in Visions tends to be used to describe a co-existing mental illness and a developmental disability.)

**Absolute Homelessness:** People are considered absolutely homeless if they have no physical shelter at all. These are people who are living on the street or in emergency shelters. This is also called 'living rough.'

**Relative or At-Risk of Homelessness:** People who are living in sub-standard, unstable or unsafe housing. This includes people who are "couch surfing," which means they are staying with family or friends, living in trailers, doubled or tripled up in small apartments or living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

**Disclaimer:**

These definitions are adapted from ones found in key literature in the field. We hope they will help readers outside the housing/rehabilitation fields to better understand some of the terms used in this issue. They are purposely brief and in plain language. As such, these definitions may not include all nuances or variations of a term, and alternate or expanded definitions may be used by some organizations. These have been developed by editorial staff and may not be definitions in use by all member agencies in the BC Partners or its funder.

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