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# Encampment & Homelessness Response: HEART & HEARTH

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People experiencing homelessness are living in unsafe conditions in encampments throughout multiple communities in British Columbia.

To address these challenges, BC Housing is working with partners to provide people living outdoors and in encampments with better access to a range of support services, new shelters, and housing options through new programs funded by the Province under the Belonging in BC Homelessness Plan: Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH).

## How the program works

The Ministry of Housing, in collaboration with BC Housing, works to identify priority communities for the program based on needs and existing resources. The Province may enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with a municipality to implement the

program. The MOU commits both governments to work together to better support people who are unhoused and sheltering in encampments. This includes increased coordinated outreach services through HEART working to facilitate new shelter and housing spaces through HEARTH.

BC Housing will establish a working group made up of Ministry of Housing, municipal staff, First Nations, Indigenous groups, the Health Authority, and non-profit service providers to guide the program implementation. Each is community-specific and informed by local partners. The goal of each plan is to support people living outside to move indoors and become connected to the services they need.

The HEART and HEARTH program is guided by a shared commitment by all partners to prioritize the health, physical safety, cultural safety, and dignity of people sheltering outside.

### **Homeless Encampment Action Response Team**

HEART is a new way to coordinate teams with service providers and partners to support encampment response. HEART members will collect and share information about local homelessness, address mental health, physical, cultural, and social support needs of people living outdoors, and analyze system gaps and challenges, all with the goal preventing homelessness and resolving encampments.

BC Housing is leading the coordination of HEART teams. These teams will include municipal staff (eg. bylaw or engineering), Indigenous service providers, First Nations, healthcare providers, and non-profit organizations. BC Housing recognizes that our community partners are already doing significant and valuable outreach work on the ground; HEART brings dedicated support for coordination to help increase impact and address local challenges.

The HEART model is based on a successful pilot program that has been operating in the City of Victoria since May 2017. On a weekly basis, a multidisciplinary team of community partners and outreach workers have been reaching out to some of the community's most vulnerable citizens in parks and on the street. Within the first year of the project, they met more than 140 individuals. The team made personal connections, encouraged access referrals to shelter, social assistance and health care service. Victoria's pilot program was instrumental in designing and implementing encampment resolution plans in that community.

### **Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing**

Along with the coordinated support services provided through HEART teams, it is also critical that additional housing and shelter projects are opened as soon as possible. HEARTH is a funding program administered by BC Housing for the development and operation of new emergency housing and shelter options identified in encampment response plans.

As outlined in MOUs established with municipal partners, cities will bring forward available land and expedite rezoning and permitting approvals for new shelter and supportive housing projects.

## How communities are prioritized and selected

Through the Belonging in BC Homelessness Plan and Budget 2023, funding was approved to establish five regional teams for HEART and HEARTH in regions throughout BC.

The Ministry of Housing's priority community selection is based on a variety of factors, including the existence of a complex encampment or encampment areas. The Ministry also considers the following data and information: need and gap analysis of existing services in a community, coordination with other services, housing planned or in process, trend data on homelessness and encampments, and the need to balance response in rural and urban communities and regions.

To date, the Ministry of Housing has signed HEART & HEARTH MOUs with the cities of Prince George, Kelowna, Abbotsford, Nanaimo and Victoria.

## Timeline

Community-level HEART & HEARTH working groups and HEART outreach teams will be established in 2023. Timing will be dependent on individual community MOU signing.

HEART teams include new and existing local outreach and service providers. BC Housing anticipates community teams will be launched under HEART by Fall 2023. HEART team capacity to deliver services to people experiencing homelessness and in encampments will expand as new employees are hired and partners are integrated.

HEARTH shelter and housing will begin operating by mid 2024. Permanent housing options that require construction will take longer to complete.

Non-profit service providers interested and able to rapidly operate new HEARTH shelter and housing developments will be encouraged to apply through a competitive process. Once sites are confirmed, a Request for Pre-Qualification will be posted on [BC Bid](#), starting as early as fall 2023.

Both the HEART and HEARTH programs are part of [Belonging in BC](#), the Province's plan to prevent and reduce homelessness.

## Housing Assistance

Are you eligible?

Rental Housing



Rental Assistance Programs



Homelessness Services



Emergency Shelter Program

Emergency Shelter Map

Drop-in Centres

### HEART & HEARTH Programs

Homeless Outreach Program

Find a Homeless Outreach Worker

Homeless Prevention Program

Find a Homeless Prevention Program Outreach Worker

This is Me... Period.

Housing with Support



Tenant Programs & Resources



Women Leaving Violence



Secondary Suite Incentive Program



BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations (BC RAHA)



BC Home Owner Mortgage and Equity Partnership

BC Housing gratefully acknowledges that we live and work on the unceded traditional and ancestral homelands of hundreds of Indigenous Peoples and Nations across British Columbia, each with their own unique traditions, history and culture. We are committed to strong Indigenous partnerships and relationships based on principles of Reconciliation.



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