# Home Takeover

**A Response Framework
for Organizations &
Service Providers**

PUBLIC HEALTH
GREY BRUCE HEALTH UNIT

**Pilot Project**

A Multi-Stakeholder Approach
to Addressing Home Takeover.

**October 2022**

**Georgian Bay**
*Waussau-Gummauh*

**Lake Huron**
*Odauwah Gummauh*

*Chi-mookmaunkiing*

CANADA
U.S.A

**Chippewas of Nawash
Unceded First Nation**
*Neyaashiinigmiing*

*Giigonke Piinsaugen*
**Chief's Point**

**Chippewas of Saugeen
First Nation**
*Saukiing*

Collingwood

Alliston

*Saukiing Anishnaabekiing*
**Saugeen Ojibway Territory**

Arthur

Goderich
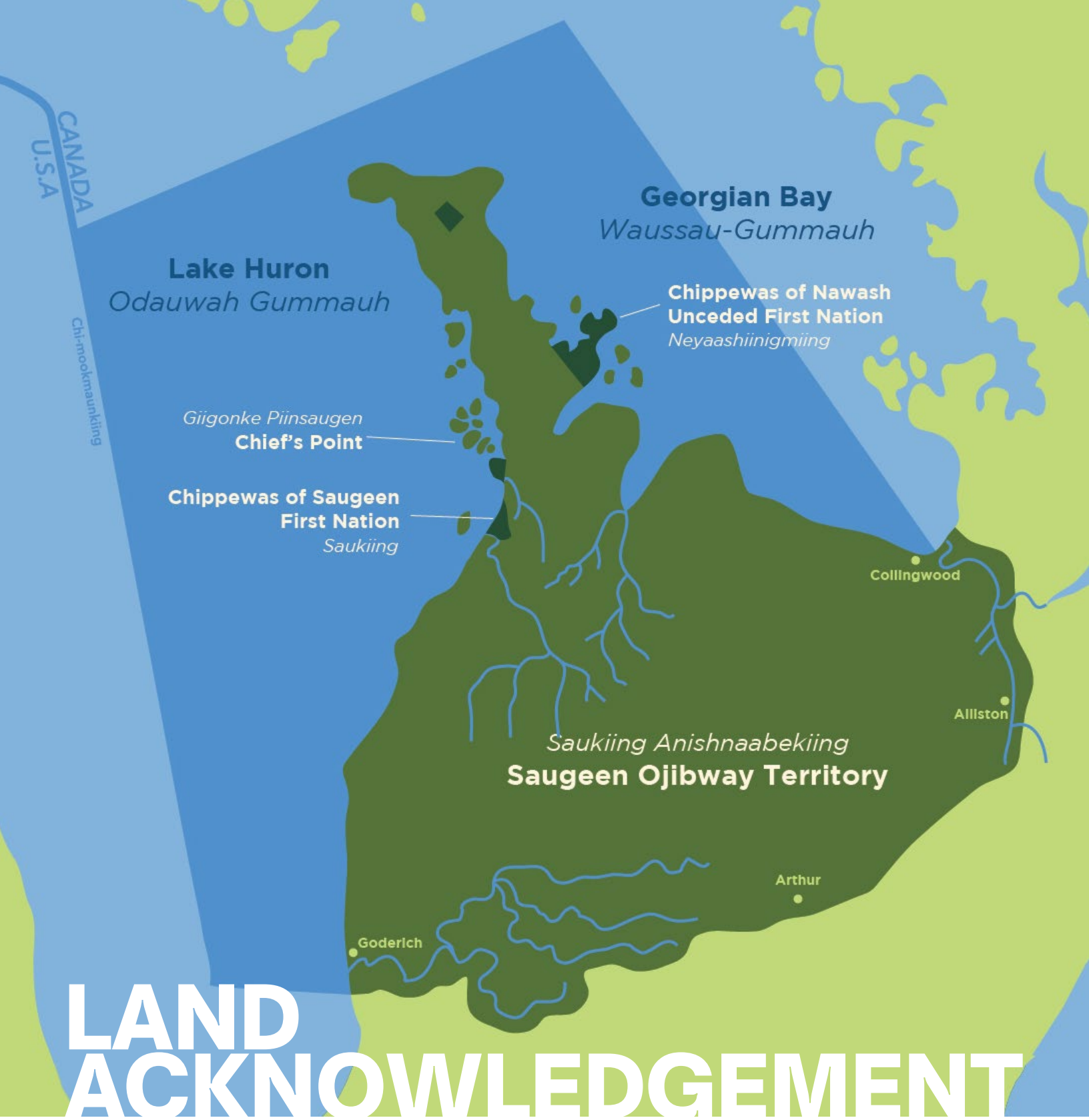
# LAND
# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we are situated on the traditional territory of the Nawash and Saugeen Nations, a place that has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations including the Iroquois Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinabek.

We recognize and respect the Anishinabek as the traditional custodians of the lands and water. We are committed to supporting the Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee Peoples, among other First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Indigenous Peoples globally.

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# Acknowledgements:

Content in the Response Framework was adapted with permission from Crime Prevention Ottawa, Your Home Should be Your Safe Place: Home Takeovers Guidebook.

The Home Takeover Advisory Committee would like to thank the following for their support and contributions to the pilot project:

• Amy Faulkner, Public Health Librarian for her assistance in conducting a comprehensive literature search.
• Interview participants who provided valuable insight into the realities of experiencing a home takeover.
• Indigenous organizations for sharing knowledge about the histories, culture and values among and within First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Indigenous peoples.

Thank you to all of the community partners for their ongoing support and participation in the Home Takeover pilot project. This guidebook would not be possible without the support of the organizations below.

# Contents

# So....

## What is a Home Takeover?

**"Situations in which vulnerable tenants are forced to accommodate unwanted guests in their homes. During home takeovers, vulnerable tenants [may initially] allow people into their homes to fulfill unmet social, economic, and personal needs. In the process, the tenant is threatened physically, financially, and/or psychologically."**
*(The Dream Team, Safe at Home Research Project).*

The emerging issue of home takeover was identified by Grey County Housing in the fall of 2021 during a community engagement meeting. The impacts of home takeover for tenants, families, individuals taking over the unit(s) and the neighbourhood were observed by housing staff.

Home takeover is complex with many intersecting factors, and intervention requires time, referrals and response from a number of organizations (GBHU, 2021). To better understand existing response and gaps in responding to a home takeover, several community partners were invited to join together and participate in a stakeholder survey. As a result, a Home Takeover Advisory Committee consisting of housing organizations, mental health services, police, fire and other community organizations was formed to address the issue collaboratively.

Knowledge keepers and Indigenous organizations were also consulted with and invited to attend meetings. As part of the project planning process, a Stakeholder Engagement Wheel was used as a tool to identify stakeholder interest and level of participation (i.e. Core, Involved, Supportive and Interested) in identified areas of action and deliverables (Tamarack, 2017).

While the group recognized that there is an overarching need for healthy public policies and interventions to address the root causes of vulnerability for the broader community (i.e. access to safe emergency housing, transitional housing and rent stabilization), the primary purpose of the pilot project is to develop a multi-stakeholder Home Takover Response Framework to support tenants living in community housing in Owen Sound. The project goal is to reduce the incidence of home takeovers in community housing.

# Here's the Current Situation:

*Home takeover has not been studied or quantified at the local level. In the absence of formalized local knowledge about home takeover, the following strategies were implemented to help inform the development of the multi-stakeholder Response Framework.*

1) A comprehensive literature search was conducted and summarized. The question guiding the research asked, what, if anything, is known about best practices in the prevention of, response to, and recovery from home takeovers among low-income tenants? Most of the literature review findings used to support project materials and documents are based on grey literature, as the peer reviewed literature examined (5 of 6 articles reviewed) focused on home takeovers in the United Kingdom (GBHU, 2021).

2) A survey was conducted with 22 community partners from various sectors to build an understanding of local awareness of and perspectives on existing response to home takeover. The survey found that 41 per cent of respondents had not heard of the term "home takeover" prior to the launch of the pilot project (Community Partner Survey Results Summary, GBHU 2021).

3) Seven people with lived experience were interviewed to better understand the realities of a home takeover situation (Home Takeover: People with Lived Experience Key Informant Interview Summary, GBHU 2022).

4) Inception of the Home Takeover Advisory Committee and four working groups to support implementation of activities outlined in the project logic model.

The Advisory Committee developed foundational tools including a project charter, logic model, communication plan, and evaluation framework to operationalize the project in a coordinated way to achieve the overall goal. Defining and identifying home takeover as an emerging issue generated conversation amongst service providers. Resources for both tenants and service providers were adapted from Ottawa Crime Prevention to educate and raise awareness about the right to feel safe at home and encourage tenants and/or neighbours to seek help. Committee members attended online training sessions hosted by Ottawa Crime Prevention. A Home Takeover Guidebook and accompanying presentation were developed to assist organizations and service providers to offer opportunities for education and awareness for vulnerable tenants, frontline workers and the broader community.

Moving forward, the committee will continue the process of bringing education and awareness to the forefront of local discussions. With the formal adoption and execution of the Response Framework by community partners, there will be increased capacity to prevent, identify, respond to, and reduce the incidence of home takeovers collaboratively. Indicators outlined in the data collection matrix will continue to be monitored and reported on.

# Who is involved in a Home Takeover?

There are two parties to a home takeover: the person or people taking over the unit (perpetrator), and the rightful occupant of the unit (the target).

## Perpetrator: predominately seen as engaging in home takeover to support business interests in the illicit drug market. Looking to make money typically through illegal activity and may involve gangs. Conversely, the perpetrator may be vulnerable and engaging in home takeover to fulfill their own unmet social or economic needs. Findings from key informant interviews in Grey County found that a lack of temporary housing and mental health and addiction issues were key factors contributing to home takeovers (GBHU, 2022).

## Target: People who are targeted in a home takeover tend to have vulnerabilities. Many tenants are unaware that their personal vulnerabilities make them more susceptible to a home takeover, and they are unable to avoid or escape the perpetrator due to lack of supports and/or resources. Individuals who are more likely to be the victim of a home takeover tend to have vulnerabilities such as drug dependency, disabilities, mental health issues, were recently/formerly homeless, immigrants, women, single mothers and low-income woman with children.Elderly people may also be targeted and this group is especially vulnerable to victimization through financial exploitation.

# How does a Home Takeover Happen?

Often homes are taken over while the property is occupied. The occupant is often coerced or threatened into allowing access. As noted above, perpetrators target the most vulnerable in society. Perpetrators may initially offer money, a sense of belonging, or fulfill other unmet social/economic needs of the target. Perpetrators may exploit a target's substance dependency in order to enter the home by offering free drugs, only to later force the target into participating in the drug trade. Perpetrators may use guilt and manipulation to stay in the home. For example, adult children may use past traumatic events to guilt parents into letting them stay. A home takeover may begin under the pretense of mutual benefits, but become outweighed by harms over time. It is also possible that an abandoned or unoccupied property may be taken over. At this point, the target may or may not be able to remove the perpetrator(s).

# Harms & Impacts:

Consequences of home takeover are numerous. Direct consequences may include eviction, loss of housing, criminal charges, financial cost, safety issues, theft, loss of control of their home and various forms of abuse. Targets may be exposed to threats, violence, coercion, abuse and exploitation, all of which are associated with serious mental and physical health impacts. Personal consequences may include loss of their dignity, self-esteem, self-control, sense of safety and power.

When a perpetrator engages in illegal activity within the unit that has been taken over, the rightful tenant is put at risk of illegal act eviction, which sees a tenant evicted irrespective of their level of involvement or non-involvement with the criminal activity because those activities are occurring within their home. Eviction can be catastrophic to a vulnerable tenant, particularly if they lose their place in subsidized housing.

There can be incidences of sexual exploitation and forced labour with a home takeover, and children and youth are not excluded from these harms. They may be exploited to support the drug trade, made to commit thefts, store illegal goods, or take action against debtors. For children, the home and neighbourhood are crucial in healthy development and mental health.

Neighbourhood violence and victimization impacts children even when the home takeover is not happening in their own home as they are indirectly witnessing the experiences of others.

# Factors Contributing to the Issue:

Several interrelated aggravating factors have been identified and discussed as contributing to the issue of a home takeover. Factors include; the housing crisis, substance use, lack of long-term treatment for substance use, lack of safe places to use substances, mental health concerns and individuals experiencing isolation, loneliness, and marginalization.

One of the components of the Home Takeover Pilot Project was interviewing people with lived experience to better understand the realities of a home takeover situation. There were several factors identified as contributing to the targets' vulnerability to a home takeover including: empathy for the perpetrators' situation and a desire to help; significant pressure to house the perpetrator; a desire for social connectedness; and, hope for financial/household contributions like splitting rent, groceries, householdtasks, drugs, etc. (GBHU 2022).

# Housing and Homelessness

In Grey Bruce, the housing markets are unstable and access to suitable, affordable housing and supports are insufficient (Community Foundation, 2022). Long wait-lists exist for affordable housing and inadequate access to liveable spaces, emergency shelters and transitional housing continue to impact the health and well-being of so many Grey Bruce residents. In 2021, Grey County reported 50,183 private dwellings and Bruce County reported 42,592. Grey and Bruce Counties have more owned dwellings and fewer rental dwellings compared to Ontario and Canada

(Community Foundation, 2022). The high cost of housing and rental rates impact financial health and compromises one's ability to pay bills and access basic needs such as healthy foods. In Owen Sound, more than 40% of homes are rented. This rate is double that of the entire Grey County (Community Foundation, 2022).

In 2021 a homelessness enumeration project took place in Grey and Bruce Counties. In Grey County, 142 households and 77 households in Bruce County indicated they were experiencing homelessness. Results also showed a dramatic increase from 2,731 nights of emergency shelter provided in 2019-2020 to 8,029 nights of emergency shelter in 2020-2021 (Community Foundation, 2021).

Of the participants interviewed (targets and perpetrator) with lived experience during the pilot project, three were currently experiencing homelessness, and three had a history of homelessness (GBHU 2022).

# Substance Use

Opioid-related harms are occurring in Grey Bruce. The number of opioid-related ER visits in Grey Bruce quadrupled between 2003 & 2018, and more than doubled in the past 4 years from 34 visits in 2014 to 89 visits in 2018. The number of opioid-related deaths in Grey Bruce has fluctuated between 2005 and 2018, from a low of 2 deaths in 2008 to a high of 11 deaths in 2017. In 2018 there were 7 opioid-related deaths in Grey Bruce (Grey Bruce Opioid Working Group, 2020).

As part of the homelessness enumeration project on October 18, 2021, substance misuse/use concern was identified as a contributing factor by 50% of Grey County respondents and 21% of Bruce County respondents (Community Foundation, 2021).

# Mental Health

More income and education shows reduced mental health burden. Data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (2015-2018) indicates that 15.7% of adults (18+ years) in Ontario from quintile 1 (lowest income) tend to suffer from mood disorders and 14.24% suffer from anxiety disorders. Compared to quintile 5 (highest income), 6.33% suffer from mood disorders and 6.14% from anxiety disorders. With regards to suicide, 3% from the lowest income quintile have considered suicide in the past year compared to 1.14% from the highest (Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Data Tool).

Similar to that, individuals with less than a high school diploma have the highest rate of mood disorders (12.91%), anxiety (12.82%), and suicidal thoughts in the past year. Compared to those with a university degree, mood disorders (6.88%), anxiety disorders (6.33%) and suicidal thoughts in the past year (1.48%) are much lower (Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Data Tool).

As part of the homelessness enumeration project in 2021, mental health concerns were identified as a contributing factor by 58% of Grey County respondents and 67% of Bruce County respondents (Community Foundation, 2021).

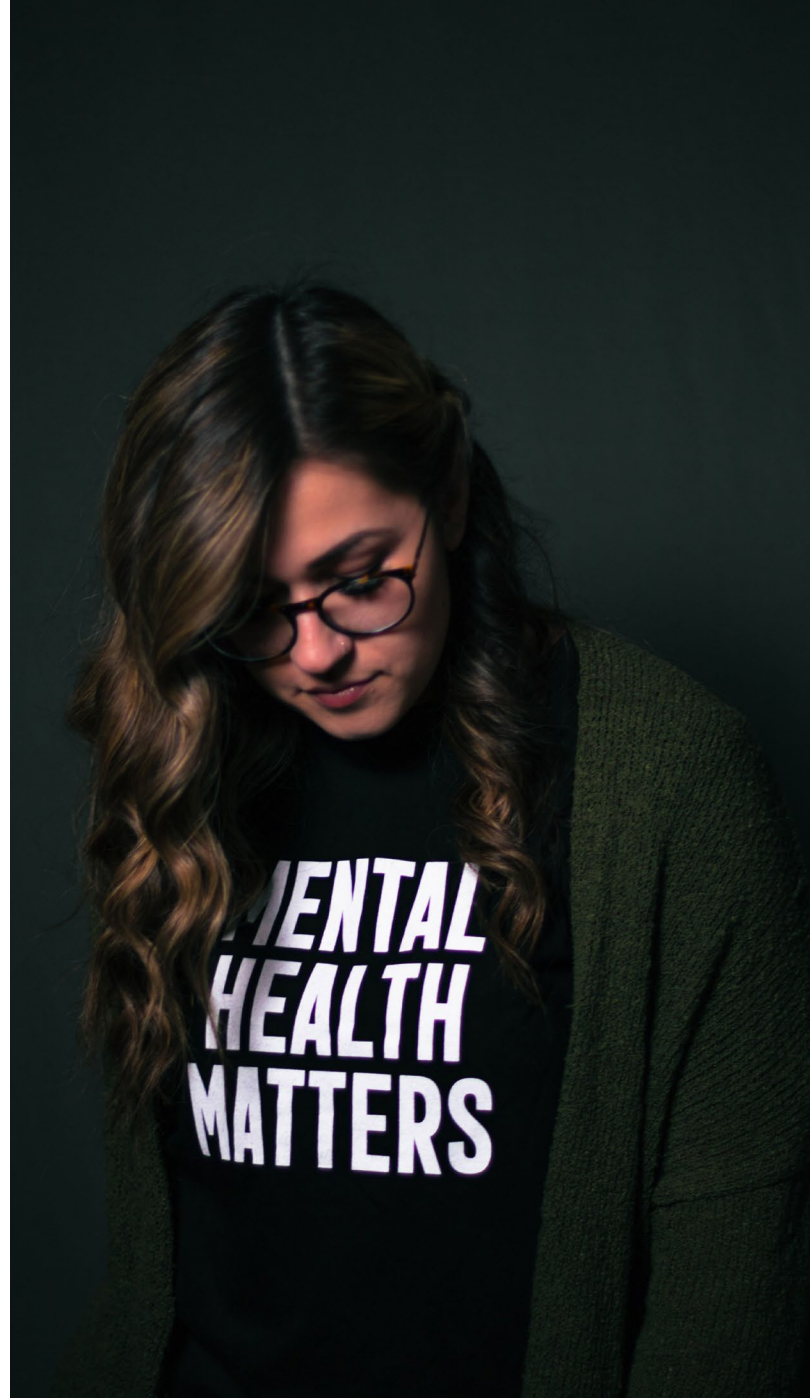**Stigma, societal barriers, and access to quality, affordable and accessible housing need to be considered when understanding Indigenous housing and the influence it can have on physical, emotional, and mental health.**

**(Community Foundation, 2022; Thistle 2017)**
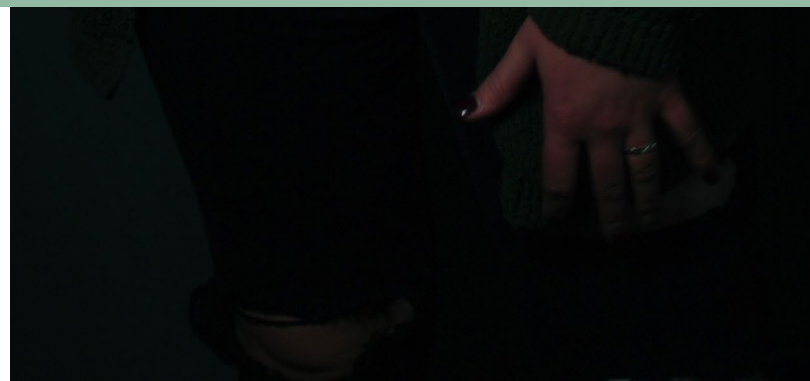
# Engaging with Indigenous Organizations

There are many Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) living in communities throughout Grey Bruce, including two First Nations. Engaging with Indigenous organizations during the pilot project not only provided opportunities to foster relationships, but enhanced understanding on the diversity of histories, cultures, language, needs, values and traditional practices among and within Indigenous communities. Members of Indigenous organizations were invited to join conversations and share stories. Valuable knowledge was shared about the impacts of historical settler colonization, Indigenous homelessness and the 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness framework.

The term "home takeover" may be associated with negative feelings (i.e. fear, conflict, loss, guilt, harm) and should be used with careful consideration when working with Indigenous peoples. Beliefs, traditions and the concept of "home" may differ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In Indigenous culture, "home" is viewed deeply as a web of relationships and responsibilities.

Indigenous Elders commonly shelter grandchildren and adult children to protect them from homelessness.

This care is seen as typical, natural and traditional hospitality. Like non-Indigenous people, Elders are also subject to the harms from predators and housing takeovers when assuming the care role as a result of precarious housing. Drug and alcohol use can cause predators to be removed into the streets, shelters or jail, and Elders can also experience violent treatment and displacement. Elders who take on the care role often sacrifice their own needed care, as they often provide childcare, and are exposed to substance abuse, domestic abuse, overcrowded conditions and other problems (Thistle, 2017). Overcrowding can lead to crisis situations that may result in the breakdown of family dynamics or escalate family violence (Thistle, 2017). Canada has issued calls to action on the unacceptable and overcrowded state of many Indigenous homes (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017).

# Principles of Reconciliation
# & Building Meaningful Relationships

The Home Takeover Advisory Committee acknowledges local and national principles that have been developed to guide collaborative project work and enhance understanding and knowledge that provides the foundation for reconciliation.

Our shared commitment:
We are committed to the 10 Principles of Reconciliation in Section 1 of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (TRC). This includes the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships (Principle 6) and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols and connections to the land (Principle 8).

We are committed to adopting the principles in the Shko Naaniibwida - Standing Strong Together developed by the Giiwe Housing Sharing Circle (Appendix A). The principles in this document are especially important as they were developed locally and will help guide us in building meaningful relationships as the project is implemented and evolves in other areas within Grey and Bruce Counties.

We acknowledge the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendships Centres (OFIFC) principles that can guide us in our practices, projects and in communities in a meaningful way.

# Community Partner Roles & Responsibilities

The complexities associated with home takeover requires good judgement from service providers in deciding appropriate course of action in each unique circumstance.

It is important to note that methods of addressing home takeover are influenced by organizational mandates. Suggested methods for addressing prevention, identification, intervention and recovery cited in this framework are a result of the literature review (this includes the publications from Crime Prevention Ottawa), consultation with Advisory Committee members and qualitative findings from people with lived experience. The response of a home takeover requires all community partners and the public to work collaboratively, including efforts to prevent a home takeover through education and awareness of staff, service providers and tenants.

## The Public

Reports from the public, neighbours, friends and family members are often vital in identifying a home takeover. A Communications Plan for the general public was developed to increase the community's awareness of the term home takeover as well as what it means, who's at risk, the signs of a home takeover situation and what individuals can do if they suspect their loved one, neighbour, customer or client is the victim of a home takeover.

## Grey County Housing

Housing staff have a primary role in all aspects of a home takeover. As the housing provider, housing staff have opportunities to build rapport with tenants and provide education to the tenant on the residential tenancy act. This includes ensuring that the tenant understands that by having others residing in their unit, it puts their tenancy at risk. Education and awareness about how to keep their spaces safe is incorporated into the initial lease signing and Community Relations Workers regularly meet and check-in with tenants.

Housing staff are usually the first to hear of a home takeover, and always try to include the appropriate community partners when responding, depending on the situation. If the tenant has supports and consent has been obtained to share information, housing staff will consult as needed. Otherwise, staff will work with community partners to execute an appropriate response. Depending on the situation and the tenant, staff may offer support in having perpetrators removed and connected to alternative supports by calling security and having a presence in the area.

Staff encourage tenants to contact either housing staff, security, or police for assistance as required. Grey County is also responsible for administering the regional homelessness response programming in partnership with Bruce County. This work is responsible for the coordination of homelessness response supports and this system plays a role in supporting home takeover situations in which an individual's experience of homelessness has contributed to the home takeover situation.

Operated by Grey County, the Short Term Shelter Program will attempt to find emergency shelter or diversion where needed. A Housing Case Coordinator can be assigned when a situation arises where someone is staying in a home which is not their long term residence. Grey County staff will attempt to identify needs and match individuals or families to more appropriate housing options.

## Owen Sound Non-Profit Housing Corporation

Grey County also oversees non-profit housing providers. The same roles and responsibilities (as noted above) would apply to housing staff working with non-profit housing providers.

# Owen Sound Police Services

Police services are often called to respond to complaints of a home takeover. OSPS can assist Grey County Housing and tenants in responding to a home takeover. Training will be offered to ensure staff are aware of the issue and have the knowledge on how to recognize and respond to the complex issue of home takeover. Police have unique and frequent opportunities while working in the community to interact and raise awareness about home takeover. Police may identify a target or perpetrator of a home takeover while conducting wellness checks with individuals who haven't been seen in awhile or haven't followed up with their service provider. In the event of identifying a home takeover, police will contact Grey County Housing and other service providers, as appropriate to support response efforts. Victim assistance may be contacted if the target provides consent.

# Owen Sound Fire Department

The Fire Department can assist Grey County Housing and OSPS in responding to a home takeover. Training will be offered to ensure fire crews are aware of the issue and have the knowledge on how to recognize and respond to the complex issue of home takeover. Interactions with tenants during routine inspections is an opportune time to raise awareness about home takeover. Fire crews may have opportunities to identify and/or respond to a home takeover when they attend emergency calls within the city. In the event of identifying a home takeover, fire crews will contact the fire prevention department to assist with contacting Grey County Housing and other service providers, as appropriate to support response efforts. During a takeover, fire crews/ fire prevention can assess dangers and hazards in the home as well as ensuring safety requirements are met. During recovery, the fire prevention office will assist and support the target(s) as needed with home safety practices, regular inspections and support through the home takeover response team.
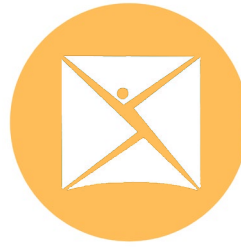
# Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

CMHA will provide education and awareness about home takeovers to staff to ensure all staff are able to recognize a home takeover and report it to the appropriate resources. Education will be offered through CMHA's Recovery College regarding home takeovers and how to maintain a successful occupancy. In situations where the perpetrator of a home takeover is in need of emergency shelter, CMHA refers individual to the appropriate community resource. If perpetrator needs Housing Outreach Support, Addiction Support or Mental Health Support, they will be referred to CMHA's Central Intake.

# Grey Bruce Health Services (GBHS) Outpatient Mental Health & Addiction Services

GBHS outpatient mental health and addiction services can provide education and awareness to clients about home takeover during community clinics and programs. Staff can support clients who report a home takeover situation by referring the client to appropriate community agencies. Staff will assist the client to self-refer if they need mental health supports. Once the client has self-referred, the case manager will contact the client to confirm the referral and arrange an intake assessment for program eligibility. If the client is the tenant and/or perpetrator in a home takeover situation, the case manager will identify whether or not the client is currently receiving mental health services at GBHS. If the client is receiving supports, the case worker will obtain consent and inform the worker about the situation. Case managers will encourage tenants and/or perpetrators to access the nearest mental health walk-in clinic.

# Safe'n Sound Grey Bruce

Safe'n Sound is a non-profit community partner. The drop-in centre plays an important role in homelessness prevention which helps to reduce the incidence of home takeover. Perpetrators and/or targets who have left their home as a result of a home takeover may visit Safe'n Sound for assistance while waiting to connect with the Short Term Shelter Program. The drop-in centre provides food bags, access to a shower, laundry, phone, internet, crisis intervention, peer friendship, service networking, and navigation to community services.

# Bruce Grey Child and Family Services (BGCFS)

Bruce Grey Child and Family Services (BGCFS) are mandated and responsible for child welfare. Staff have opportunities to observe for signs of a home takeover while spending time in the home with service recipients who have vulnerabilities. Staff can talk to the target and/or perpetrator to support and guide them in the prevention, identification, response or recovery of a home takeover. Staff play a role as knowledge builders and help parents understand and recognize the risks and dangers of a home takeover posed on their children. If the situation becomes dangerous or unsafe, staff act by calling police. The Adult Developmental Service (ADS) is a voluntary (not mandated) in-home service. This program also provides an opportunity to educate clients and identify home takeover situations.

# M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre

M'Wikwedong launched an indigenous-led initiative called Giiwe in 2018. Giiwe is an Anishnaabemowin word meaning "s/he goes home". Giiwe creates a safe space to build relationships, foster meaningful collaboration and nurture trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies and organizations. Giiwe established a coordinated housing-related response to Indigenous specific housing needs and preferences in Grey Bruce. Giiwe guides Reconciliation and healing processes for all and is a pathway to moving forward together in a positive way on this shared journey

# Indigenous Supportive Housing Project (ISHP)

Indigenous Housing Outreach workers will assist individuals and families in securing safe, affordable and appropriate housing. The ISHP support and emergency resources are available for individuals and families in crisis situations, transitioning out of hospital or living with the many challenges associated with homelessness within the community. The Outreach Staff will co-design an individual plan with each participant as well as their critically important informal supports. The plans will be culturally sensitive and trauma-informed, assisting to identify challenges, highlight strengths and work together, towards important goals as determined by program participants. The Indigenous Outreach workers will assist in: obtaining housing, moving, transportation, rent/utility supports and deposits, and transitioning to other forms of housing including home-ownership (M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, 2022).

# Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC)

SOAHAC provides a wide range of wellness services to First Nations, Inuit and Metis people in Southwestern Ontario, including traditional healing, mental health and addictions services, and clinical services such as primary health care (nurse practitioners, physicians, registered nurse), diabetes education, nutrition, harm reduction services, and more.

# Community Connection/211 Central East Ontario

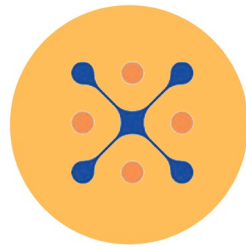211's Community Navigators will support tenants over the phone if they call 211 requesting support for home takeover. The Housing and Homelessness team will activate pathways for system navigation (i.e. YMCA Housing, Non-Emergency Police).

# Support Outreach Service (SOS)

SOS provides person-centred, multi-sectoral health and social community response to improve health outcomes and reduce barriers to underserved community members, with a focus on those who are using substances and experiencing homelessness. SOS can provide education and awareness to clients about home takeover during outreach services. Staff may identify a target or perpetrator of a home takeover while conducting assessments and providing care. In the event of identifying a home takeover, staff will support intervention and response efforts by assessing appropriate services available to both the tenant and/or perpetrator. Service providers may refer clients involved in a home takeover to SOS. SOS provides outreach services at two fixed locations (Owen Sound and Hanover) as well as through a mobile response by means of a Grey County Ambulance.

# United Way of Bruce Grey

United Way of Bruce Grey has a few programs to assist those who are enduring a home takeover. The Financial Literacy program can assist people in understanding their financial responsibilities as it relates to managing a household budget and the positive sharing of costs. The United Way's Utility Program can assist a household recover from a home takeover if increased utility costs result from the home takeover. The United Way can assist with system navigation and connections to additional resources should they be needed.

# Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force (BGPTF)

BGPTF participates in collective impact efforts to support upstream interventions to address poverty-related community issues. The multi-stakeholder Poverty Task Force supports implementation and sustainability as the project aims to improve the health and safety of tenants, families and neighbourhoods living with vulnerabilities such as homelessness, income security, mental health and addictions.

# YMCA Housing

Working alongside Bruce County, the YMCA is the emergency shelter provider across the Bruce region. YMCA provides services and supports to assist youth (aged 16+) and adults who are homeless, or facing homelessness, to find safe, affordable housing. A Housing Stability Worker can arrange short-term shelter as part of a longer-term housing plan. Housing services can also work with landlords to maintain long term sustainable housing.

# Grey Bruce Health Unit (GBHU)

GBHU will continue to support facilitation and coordination of the home takeover pilot project to implement activities outlined in operational planning. This includes communication plans to raise awareness of the issue broadly within the community, ensuring resources are updated and available online, monitoring of the data collection matrix and analyzing data. GBHU will seek opportunities for knowledge exchange and project sharing at the local and provincial level.

# Prevention

*Preventing a home takeover involves a number of interconnected mechanisms and should be personalized based on the needs of the tenant. However, there are many possible methods to consider no matter the circumstances.*

## Takeovers are best prevented when:

✅ There is a trusting relationship between the tenant and the worker. This is fundamental to understanding both the tenant's service needs and in supporting the tenant to disclose information relevant to a home takeover situation. Similarly, fostering a positive relationship between the worker, local police, landlord and the tenant may not necessarily prevent a home takeover, but may be crucial in resolving a takeover and providing support during recovery.

✅ Service providers identify tenants with vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to a home takeover, at the outset of their tenancy if possible. Tenants are connected to supports and services that address their unique vulnerabilities and will assist them in maintaining a safe and positive environment. Security measures could be considered early on to help prevent a takeover.

✅ Service providers avoid requesting placement of clients (who require short-term housing) with family or friends who are vulnerable and have a damaging history with the client.

✅ Tenants are aware of the risks of home takeover and are educated about how to keep their spaces safe. This can take the form of:
 - A discussion with the tenant prior to unit rental about what home takeovers are, what they look like and how to avoid them.
- Resistance training, namely, how to say "no" to someone who wants to come in. Reinforce that there is no shame in asking for help.
- Discussion and planning around what the tenant wants for their home and how to achieve that.

- If the tenant has addictions, educating on how to use substances safely in their home and/or community.
- Ensuring that the landlord has thoroughly explained the consequences to the tenant's housing in the case of a home takeover.
- Acknowledging that perpetrators may be friends of the tenant or friends of friends ("acquaintances") and the challenges associated with these relationships (i.e. losing friends).
- Encouraging tenants to avoid letting one person stay. This can be a "slippery slope" as the word then spreads and it is easy to lose control.

✅ There is an agreement that service providers can communicate and share information about the tenant. In some cases, landlords ask new tenants at the time of rental if they can share information with their worker(s) in case something happens.

✅ Isolation is reduced by ensuring that the individual feels part of a larger community. Building awareness of the issue and a sense of community can also help to facilitate individuals and neighbours to report when they suspect a problem. A neighbourhood watch program might help to engage community members who want to keep their neighbourhood safe.

✅ Encourage tenants to participate in a community they identify with. Community can mean many things:
- Connectedness between tenants of neighbouring units.
- Ethnic communities or communities of culture.
- Communities based on common interests.

# Identification

*Service providers should be aware of the following, as they may be indicators that a home takeover is occurring with the tenant:*

☑ The individual becomes reluctant to allow the worker into the home or requests that meetings occur outside the home.

☑ The tenant has not checked in with the worker in some time and is noticeably absent from the home. Some home takeover targets turn up in shelters despite being legitimate tenants of a rented unit because they have been forced out or no longer feel comfortable in their own home.

☑ Landlords or property managers may receive an increase in complaints about a unit, particularly with regard to noise, excessive visitors, increases in cars or bikes outside, and uncharacteristic presence of young people at the property.

☑ There is a noticeable change in the tenant's financial situation, including an uncharacteristic inability to pay rent, bills or buy groceries.

☑ The tenant's physical appearance has deteriorated.

☑ There is an increase in reports that the individual has become more isolated from friends, family and/or social groups.

☑ If given access to the home, contents within suggest that there are more individuals staying in the unit than those that reside there, or in some cases, the takeover perpetrator(s) are there.

> **"**
>
> **I couldn't comfortably tell people to leave my apartment without fear of consequence.**
>
> **I wasn't in control anymore - it was not my place. I slept with my possessions on me.**
>
> **- Savanna**

The most obvious way to identify a home takeover is through tenant disclosure. However, targets of a home takeover often choose not to report the takeover for a number of reasons. As a service provider, if you suspect that a problem may be occurring in the unit, consider contacting the landlord and other providers (if consent obtained) serving the tenant to share relevant information.

Neighbours can be an asset because they are usually present at all hours. Reports from neighbours, friends and family members are often crucial for identifying a home takeover. Unfortunately, these bystanders may be apprehensive to report for fear of identification by the perpetrator or because of a belief that nothing will

be done in response. In order to encourage bystander cooperation in home takeover situations, those who report should be notified of the process following their statement and assured that all information provided is valuable. Collaborative efforts should continue to focus on safety as a community priority. Creating a culture of safety will allow tenants to feel more connected and a stronger sense of belonging.

While warning signs may be indicative of a home takeover, they may alternatively be suggestive of other unmet needs, particularly when exhibited by vulnerable community members. Providing support in response to such needs is protective against potential future home takeover.

# Intervention

A home takeover can be are resolved by a number of strategies depending on the circumstances. Solutions to home takeover may require differing services and multiple interventions from service providers with varying levels of expertise.

Tenants should be encouraged to talk to someone they trust (i.e. housing provider, support worker). While police are often a good resource to consider, not all tenants will want to explore that route for fear of repercussions. Nonetheless, it is important for the worker to inform the police should the tenant be in danger of imminent harm. If immediate support and navigation of services is required after hours, tenants can call 211. Conceptualizations of a complicit target of home takeovers are common. A form of victim blaming, this promotes fear and takes away from efforts to have targets report their exploitation or seek support from service providers.

**Strategies often revolve around making the environment uncomfortable for the perpetrator. Methods might include:**

☑ Visit the tenant more frequently and at non-scheduled times, including during the evening when more activity takes place. This can also take the form of responding to false noise complaints and other related calls.

☑ Affix postings outside the tenant's door notifying that the unit is being watched.

☑ Work with police and/or security to implement security measures including:

☑ Increased surveillance at the unit and/or surrounding neighbourhood.

☑ Safety audits and crime prevention through environment design type improvements (i.e., increased lighting, removal of shrubs that conceal sight-lines).

☑ Institute a trespass order (if possible), if you are aware of who the perpetrator is.

☑ Drop flyers off and conduct safety door knocks in the affected area.

**If the target and service provider have had earlier conversations about home takeover, refer to the plans, goals and boundaries to help guide action. If the tenant is currently engaged in the intervention, work collaboratively to create a plan unique to their circumstance. Methods that could be part of this strategy include:**

☑ Motivate the tenant to resolve the takeover by highlighting how something they care about is being affected.

☑ Play the "bad guy" by prompting the target to tell the perpetrator that they are facing eviction because of the takeover. If the eviction notice does not persuade the perpetrator to leave, the landlord must make a decision to uphold the notice. Choosing not to could empower the perpetuator to feel empowered by the lack of consequences.

☑ To protect the tenant's safety, meet privately in a place where the perpetrator or others will not overhear when discussing the takeover.

☑ Use common language and review paperwork (if applicable) together to ensure the tenant clearly understands the plan.

☑ Use a 'Circle of Care' approach in which tenant and responding agencies sign a document consenting to information sharing to support the tenant.

☑ Advise the tenant that as a result of confiding and/or seeking help from the worker that it might result in a call to the police (duty to report).

☑ If possible, relocate the tenant. In critical takeover situations, leveraging partnerships may help to facilitate a quicker transfer.

☑ Involve a security company (if necessary) to assist the tenant in leaving the unit.

☑ Change the locks to the unit when the perpetrator is absent.

☑ Call 911 to have the perpetrator removed from the property if the tenant is in danger.

**If the tenant is currently engaged in the intervention, work collaboratively to create a plan unique to their circumstance. Clients needing to contact police and are unable to call themselves, have multiple options that could be part of this strategy:**

☑ Text 211. Available 24/7. **English only.

☑ Online chat with 211 at *www.211Ontario.ca*. Available Mon-Fri 7am-9pm. English only.

☑ Email 211 at www.211Ontario.ca. Email response may take two days. English only.

☑ If requiring language interpretation to communicate needed resources, the 211 helpline has interpreters available in more than 170 languages. Call 211, press 1 for English and then ask for the language you want to speak in and hold while an interpreter is brought on the line.

**In some cases, targets in a home takeover don't recognize it as such or if they do, are tolerant of it due to the benefits associated with housing the perpetrator. This can make developing a home takeover solution increasingly problematic. Consider the following:**

☑ Where the perpetrator is a family member, approach other available family members to assist in developing a personalized strategy.

☑ Discuss what benefits the individual is receiving by housing the perpetrator. How can these benefits be supplemented in a safe way? For example, if the individual is receiving "friendship", consider suggesting programs or groups that support their interests.

☑ Identify the needs of the perpetrator and assist, if willing, with referrals to appropriate community supports and services.

☑ Educate the tenant about their rights, responsibilities and consequences they could face if the situation goes unresolved.

**Whether a target is seeking help or not, it is important to affirm with the individual the right to feel safe in one's own home and the worker's obligation to ensure that happens.**

> **"**
>
> **They did it out of survival and having no place to go, sleep, or use.**
>
> **Pure survival.**
> **- Marty**

# Recovery

**Once a home takeover has been dealt with, steps must be taken to mitigate the possibility of a takeover reoccurring and any potential retaliation against the tenant from the perpetrator and/or associates.**

**Concern is particularly high in situations where the takeover involves gangs and/or drug debts. Measures to support an individual following a takeover may include:**

☑ Changing the locks to the unit.

☑ Frequent check-ins and well-being visits to ensure that the tenant is not being victimized further. The worker(s) can ensure understanding of the situation and assuaging any fears.

☑ Tenant should be central to the development of their own recovery plan.

☑ Discussing with the tenant what kind of supports they need to re-establish a positive environment.

☑ Depending on needs, recovery may be centred on making their home liveable again by changing locks, repairing any damage, cleaning, and making a plan to replace essentials that were stolen or destroyed.

☑ If possible, consider reaching out to the perpetrator. These individuals often have needs that are not met through legitimate means and therefore rely on victimization in order to fulfill those needs. Attempting to connect the perpetrator with appropriate services can act as a means of mitigating the appeal of committing a future takeover.

☑ Ensuring people removed from home takeover situations (both targets and perpetrators) are housed in physically safe locations (e.g. housing that meets fire code).

☑ Cycle into the preventative methods to avoid future takeovers and repeat victimization.

☑ In extreme situations, consider seeking out other housing options where target's safety continues to be threatened.

☑ In some instances, the takeover has not necessarily been successfully resolved, but has ended because the target has either given up their housing or been evicted. In such cases, support may include:

☑ Working with the individual to find new housing.

☑ Attempting to diminish the financial burden placed on the tenant as a result of the takeover, including resolving overdue rent payments and costs associated with damages to the unit.

# Opportunities for Action

*The following opportunities for action are based on the goal to increase community partner capacity to prevent, identify, respond to, and support recovery from a home takeover and ultimately reduce the incidence of home takeovers.*

## For Organizations:

1)      Offer  staff education and training on home takeover.

2)      Adopt and execute the Home Takeover Response Framework in order to increase community capacity to respond to, and reduce the incidence of home takeover.

3)      Review systems and collect data (i.e. tracking on home takeovers through calls, intake and screening, referrals, etc.)

4)      Develop a home takeover policy or guideline that complements organizational mandates, vision and values.

5)      Update housing lease agreements to include home takeover education and safety planning.

6)      Develop, support and advocate for solutions collaboratively that would help to reduce the risk of home takeover.

## For Service Providers:

1)      Participate in education and training opportunities on home takeover.

2)      Understand agency roles in preventing, identifying, responding to, and supporting recovery from home takeover.

3)      Review and execute the Home Takeover Response Framework and Pathway.

4)      Obtain consent or written agreement with the tenant to support enhanced communication and information sharing with other service providers in the event of a home takeover.

5)      Bring home takeover education and awareness to the forefront of local discussions.

# Project Resources

## Home Takeover Training Guidebook:

Assists organizations and service providers to offer opportunities for education and awareness concerning home takeovers for vulnerable tenants, frontline workers and the broader community. A standardized presentation is available to accompany the guidebook.

## Home Takeover Print Materials:

Provides awareness on home takeover for both tenants and service providers on topics such as who is involved in home takeover, prevention and how to keep homes safe, identification of home takeover, response, and resources.

All materials including resources, print materials, project summary reports, the Training Guidebook, and Response Framework can be found at:
publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Environment/Healthy-Housing/Home-Takeover

# Appendix A: Shko Naaniibwida - Standing Strong Together

## Giiwe    Shko Naaniibwida - *Standing Strong Together*    M'Wikwedong

- Acknowledgement of First Nation traditional territory before meetings/gatherings. Avoid asking Indigenous communities to create one for you. Do your research into the history of your area and develop a land acknowledgment based on those findings.

- Ensure cultural safety training is available for all staff

- Promote a formal Indigenous Relationships Committee within your organization

- Know, network and build relationships with all Indigenous service providers in Area 35 (or in your own treaty area)

- Deliver onsite services to Indigenous clients connected to Indigenous agencies

- Develop and discuss a Memorandum Of Understanding with M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, ensuring meaningful collaboration

- When a Cultural Elder is requested to be involved in a program or service activity, kindly discuss how and when a cultural protocol can be used

- Make sacred medicines and the four direction teachings available to clients

- Have a feather and talking stick available for people to use if they choose

- Develop a reconciliation action plan based on the Truth And Reconciliation Calls To Action

- Promote cultural standard policies (ie. smudging, tobacco offering, Indigenous-specific service provision guidelines, etc.)

- Create opportunity to initiate Indigenous inclusion policies and hire Indigenous staff

- Create Indigenous-specific programming delivered by Indigenous staff

- Invite Elders and Knowledge Keepers to attend some meetings

- Be inclusive and aware of special Indigenous days (ie. Pow Wows, Aboriginal Day, ceremonial activities, etc.)

- Promote Indigenous symbols/emblems/art on the premise (ie. art, pictures, Grandfather Teachings, tree of life, flag, treaty poster, etc.)

- Name some of your spaces in the Anishinaabemowin language in partnership with Indigenous Elders or Knowledge Holders

- Provide funding to Indigenous organizations to assign staff who can work with you on reconciliation projects

- Encourage people in leadership roles that are close to you to attend Giiwe Sharing Circles or other Indigenous-led activities. This includes executive directors, board members, program managers, politicians, government officials, staff, etc.

- Begin meetings by reading 2 or 3 of the TRC Calls To Action

**Collaborative work takes time. Go slow, listen, and build meaningful relationships.**

# Appendix B:
# Home Should be Your Safe Place (Postcard)



## Home should be your *safe* place.

It's normal to invite friends, family or people you know into your home. **A home takeover** happens when you can't get them to leave and they start making you feel physically, financially or emotionally unsafe.

### Protect Your Home

- Don't let too many people into your place at once.
- Don't let people break the law in your home.
- Stay connected with people you trust.
- Know the rules of your lease.

### Take Action

Get help. Don't keep it a secret.
Talk to:

- Someone you trust
- Your support worker
- Your housing provider
- In an emergency, call 911

Confidential and quick.
Dial 2-1-1 or visit 211.ca

**211**
HELP STARTS HERE
United Way
Centraide

**Not sure who to talk to? Call 211 or visit www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca**

Adapted with permission
from Crime Prevention Ottawa

# Appendix C:
# Home Should be Your Safe Place (Brochure)

## What is a Home Takeover?

A home takeover happens when you can't get someone to leave your home and they start making you feel physically, financially or emotionally unsafe.

It might seem fair at first - like trading free stuff for a place to crash - but **gets bad over time.**

Home takeovers can be done by people you care about, or by strangers.

## Protect Your Home

### *Stop home takeover before it starts.*

- Don't have too many people over at once
- Stay connected with people you can trust
- Know the rules of your lease
- Set your own house rules and stick to them
- Be careful about who you let stay in your home
- Don't give others your phone or keys

## Is this a Home Takeover?

**Having guests in your home should be nice.**
**Sometimes that changes.**

Ask yourself, are they...

● **doing stuff that could get you in trouble?**

● **making you feel anxious, worried, or unsafe?**

● **making you do things you don't want to do?**

● **staying because you owe them money?**

*If you answered yes to any of these questions, reach out for support.*

# Appendix D: Welcomed Guest or Home Takeover (Checklist)

## WELCOMED GUEST OR HOME TAKEOVER ?

### HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR GUESTS:

It's normal to invite a friend, family member or someone you know into your home.
A home takeover happens when you can't get them to leave, and they make you feel uncomfortable or threatened in your home.

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Is my guest doing something that might get me into trouble with my housing provider or the police? |  |  |
| Would my guest say 'no' if I asked them to leave ? |  |  |
| Does my guest ever make me feel unsafe or afraid (my heart is beating fast, my stomach is upset; I feel dizzy or i'm not sleeping well?) |  |  |
| Does my guest make me do things that I don't want to do? |  |  |
| Does my guest invite other people into my home without my permission? |  |  |
| Does my guest owe me money, or pressure me to lend money? |  |  |
| Do I owe my guests money? If so, do they use that as a reason to stay? |  |  |
| Do my guests do anything to upset my neighbours? |  |  |
| Does my guest stay with me because they give me drugs, alcohol, food, sex or money ? |  |  |
| Does my guest stop me from coming and going from my home? |  |  |

If you answered "YES" to any of these questions , you might be experiencing a home takeover. Get help.

Talk to your support worker, your landlord, a family member, a friend or someone you trust.
Not sure who to call? Call 211.
If you are having an emergency call 9-1-1

To learn more visit **www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca**

Adapted with permission from
Crime Prevention Ottawa

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# Appendix E:
# Look Out For It (Poster)



**LOOK OUT FOR IT**

## Home Takeover

Recognize the signs that someone you know could be at risk of a home takeover.

**HAVE YOU SEEN A CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR**

Is the person more withdrawn?

Not showing up where you normally see them?

Expressing they're always out of money or food?

Showing signs of weakness, weight loss, stress, or abuse?

**HAVE THEY TOLD YOU THEY HAVE A GUEST?**

Increased activity around the unit?

Is the person more withdrawn?

More noise coming from the unit?

People you don't recognize around the unit/building, or the same guest coming and going?

**LEARN MORE**
**WWW.PUBLICHEALTHGREYBRUCE.ON.CA**
Not sure who to call? Call 211.

Autumn 2022

# Appendix F:
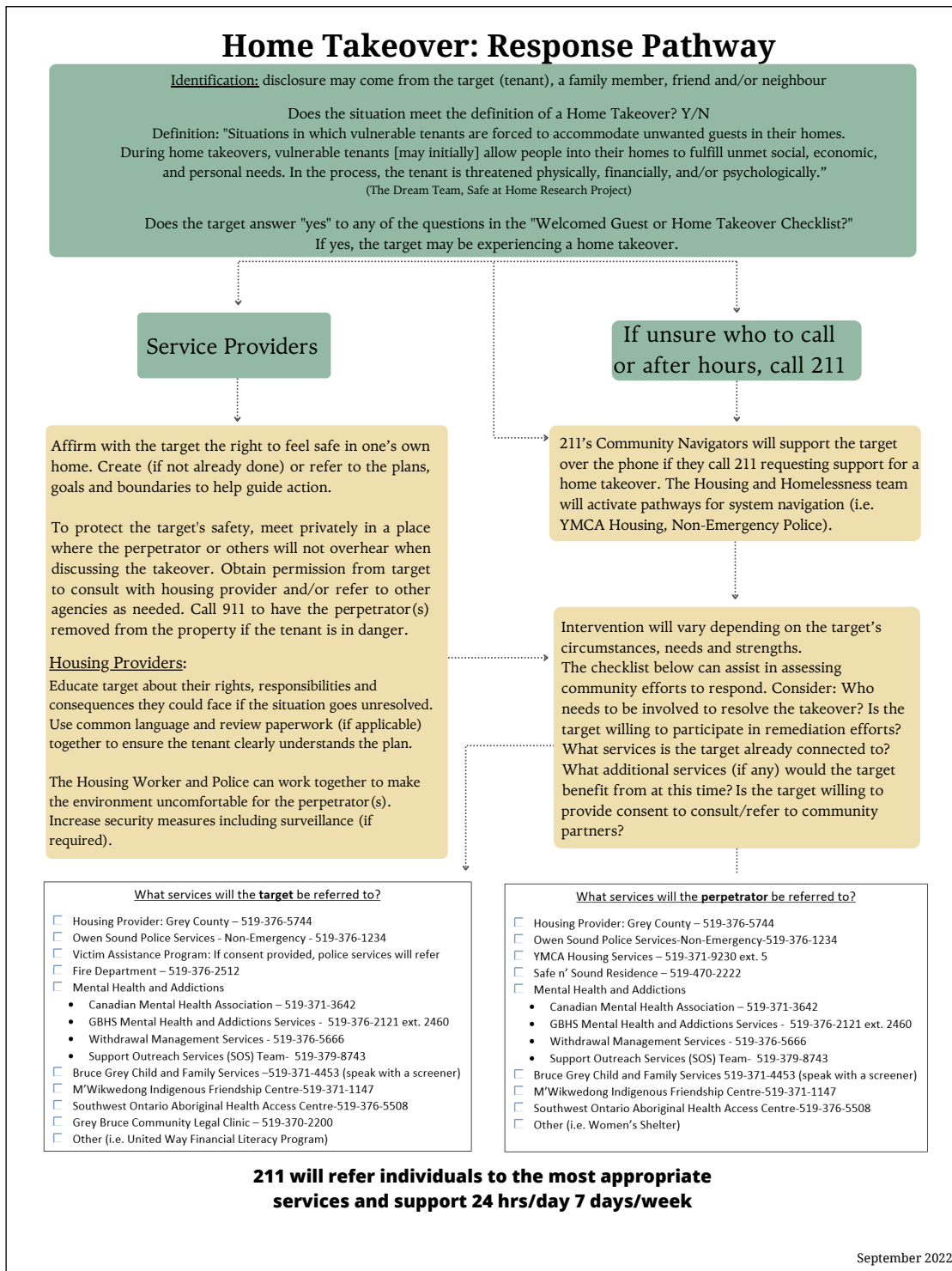# Home Should Be Your Safe Place – Safe Guests Do/ Don't (Poster)

# Appendix G: Home Takeover Response Pathway

## Home Takeover: Response Pathway

<u>Identification:</u> disclosure may come from the target (tenant), a family member, friend and/or neighbour

Does the situation meet the definition of a Home Takeover? Y/N
Definition: "Situations in which vulnerable tenants are forced to accommodate unwanted guests in their homes. During home takeovers, vulnerable tenants [may initially] allow people into their homes to fulfill unmet social, economic, and personal needs. In the process, the tenant is threatened physically, financially, and/or psychologically."
(The Dream Team, Safe at Home Research Project)

Does the target answer "yes" to any of the questions in the "Welcomed Guest or Home Takeover Checklist?"
If yes, the target may be experiencing a home takeover.

### Service Providers

Affirm with the target the right to feel safe in one's own home. Create (if not already done) or refer to the plans, goals and boundaries to help guide action.

To protect the target's safety, meet privately in a place where the perpetrator or others will not overhear when discussing the takeover. Obtain permission from target to consult with housing provider and/or refer to other agencies as needed. Call 911 to have the perpetrator(s) removed from the property if the tenant is in danger.

<u>Housing Providers:</u>
Educate target about their rights, responsibilities and consequences they could face if the situation goes unresolved. Use common language and review paperwork (if applicable) together to ensure the tenant clearly understands the plan.

The Housing Worker and Police can work together to make the environment uncomfortable for the perpetrator(s). Increase security measures including surveillance (if required).

### If unsure who to call or after hours, call 211

211's Community Navigators will support the target over the phone if they call 211 requesting support for a home takeover. The Housing and Homelessness team will activate pathways for system navigation (i.e. YMCA Housing, Non-Emergency Police).

Intervention will vary depending on the target's circumstances, needs and strengths.
The checklist below can assist in assessing community efforts to respond. Consider: Who needs to be involved to resolve the takeover? Is the target willing to participate in remediation efforts? What services is the target already connected to? What additional services (if any) would the target benefit from at this time? Is the target willing to provide consent to consult/refer to community partners?

#### What services will the **target** be referred to?

- ☐ Housing Provider: Grey County – 519-376-5744
- ☐ Owen Sound Police Services - Non-Emergency - 519-376-1234
- ☐ Victim Assistance Program: If consent provided, police services will refer
- ☐ Fire Department – 519-376-2512
- ☐ Mental Health and Addictions
  - • Canadian Mental Health Association – 519-371-3642
  - • GBHS Mental Health and Addictions Services - 519-376-2121 ext. 2460
  - • Withdrawal Management Services - 519-376-5666
  - • Support Outreach Services (SOS) Team- 519-379-8743
- ☐ Bruce Grey Child and Family Services –519-371-4453 (speak with a screener)
- ☐ M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre-519-371-1147
- ☐ Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre-519-376-5508
- ☐ Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic – 519-370-2200
- ☐ Other (i.e. United Way Financial Literacy Program)

#### What services will the **perpetrator** be referred to?

- ☐ Housing Provider: Grey County – 519-376-5744
- ☐ Owen Sound Police Services-Non-Emergency-519-376-1234
- ☐ YMCA Housing Services – 519-371-9230 ext. 5
- ☐ Safe n' Sound Residence – 519-470-2222
- ☐ Mental Health and Addictions
  - • Canadian Mental Health Association – 519-371-3642
  - • GBHS Mental Health and Addictions Services - 519-376-2121 ext. 2460
  - • Withdrawal Management Services - 519-376-5666
  - • Support Outreach Services (SOS) Team- 519-379-8743
- ☐ Bruce Grey Child and Family Services 519-371-4453 (speak with a screener)
- ☐ M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre-519-371-1147
- ☐ Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre-519-376-5508
- ☐ Other (i.e. Women's Shelter)

**211 will refer individuals to the most appropriate services and support 24 hrs/day 7 days/week**

September 2022

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