



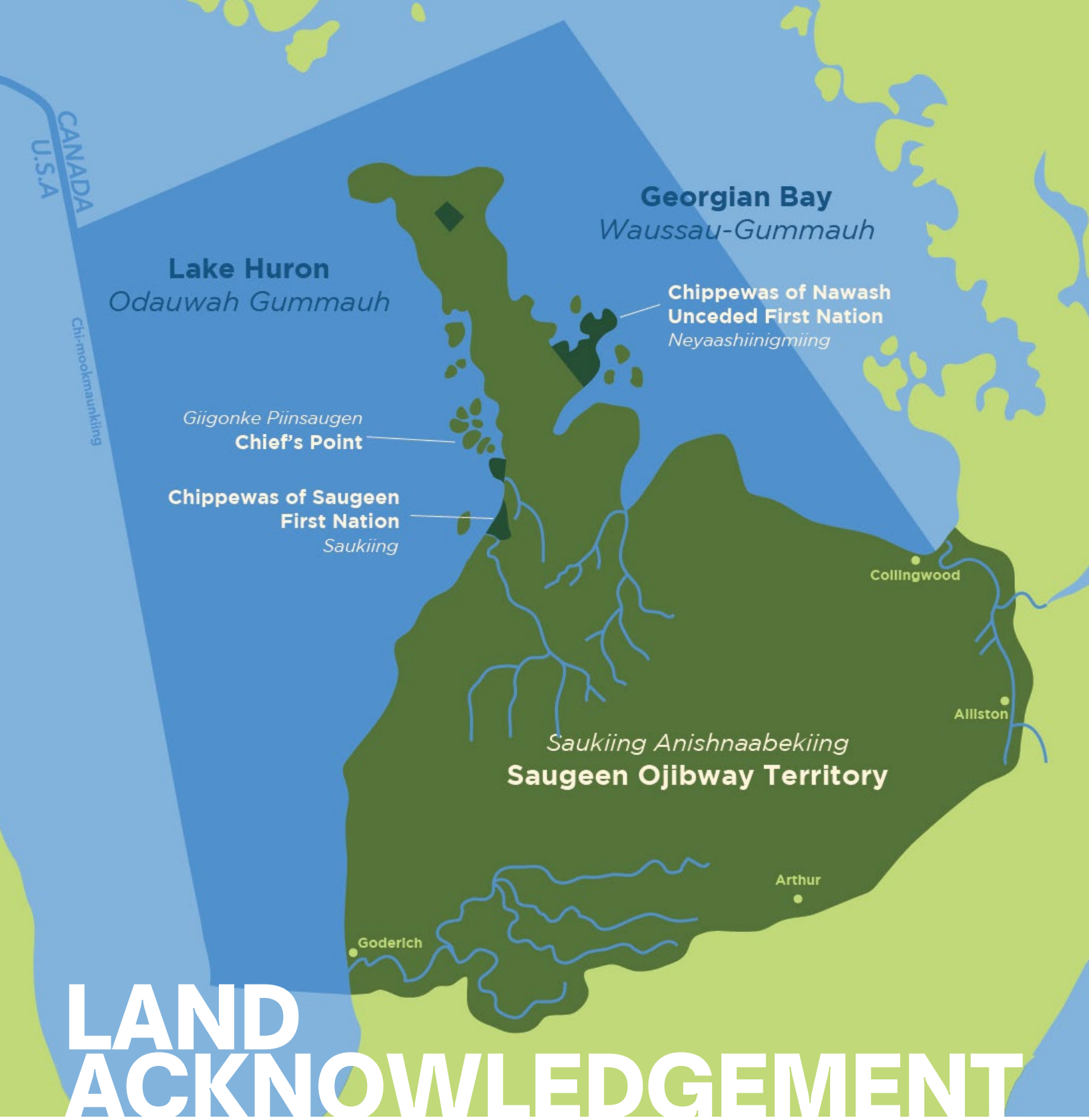
Home Takeover

A Guidebook for Organizations & Service Providers

Pilot Project

A Multi-Stakeholder Approach
to Addressing Home Takeover.

October 2022



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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- 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.



*Layout & Design by Nelson Phillips, Grey Bruce Health Unit Communications Department.
Names mentioned herein are pseudonyms and have been chosen to protect interviewee privacy and confidentiality.

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What is the Guidebook?

This guidebook is designed to assist organizations and service providers to offer opportunities for education and awareness concerning home takeover for vulnerable tenants, frontline workers and the broader community.

The guidebook can be used in conjunction with a standardized presentation (Appendix) and resource materials. Awareness topics include prevention and how to keep homes safe, identification of home takeover, interventions and response and recovery to reduce or eliminate the possibility of a takeover reoccurring.

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 after-care cited in this Guidebook and the Response Framework are a result of the literature review and consultation with Home Takeover Committee members and individuals with lived experience.

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).

Four broad forms of a home takeover have been identified:

- 1) Substance use related takeovers**
- 2) Takeovers related to homelessness**
- 3) Takeovers of older adults**
- 4) Takeovers of people with vulnerabilities**

There are many variations within each broad category of takeover. The takeover of an older adult may be a family member, or someone that has been invited into the home to relieve isolation and loneliness.

Further, these categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, there are a number of instances where a formerly homeless individual has been taken over by drug associated acquaintances.

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) 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 working groups to support implementation of activities outlined in the project logic model.

The Advisory Committee developed foundational tools including a project charter, 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.

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).



“

It began by feeling sorry for people using drugs in the street. I felt bad that I had a place to go, and they didn't.
- Johnny

...my brother got out of jail and his worker called me to ask if he could stay with me for a week because he had nowhere to go and they could not find him a place. Because he has been a problem for me before, I didn't want to say yes, but they kept asking so I said yes... it is hard to say no.

- Kevin

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, household tasks, 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,

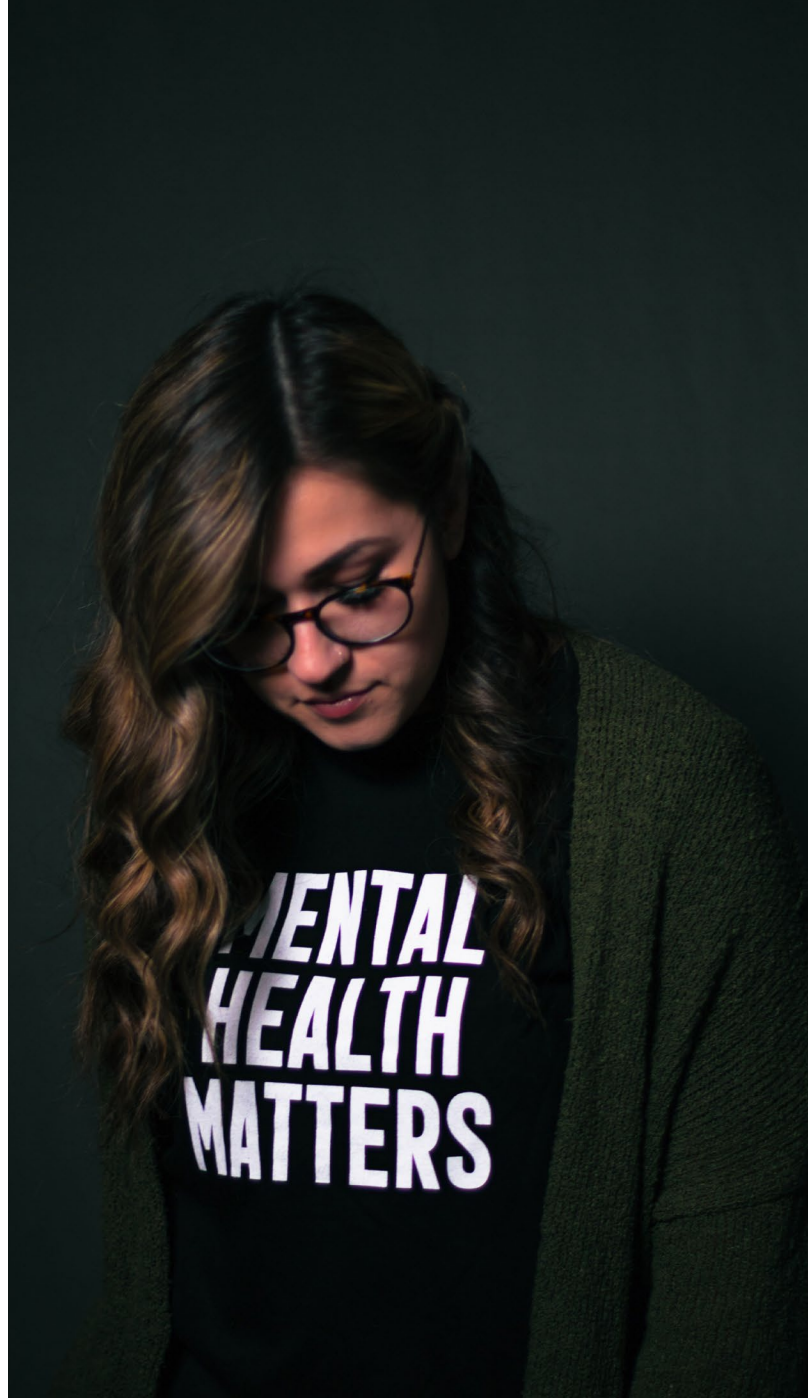


Mental Health

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).

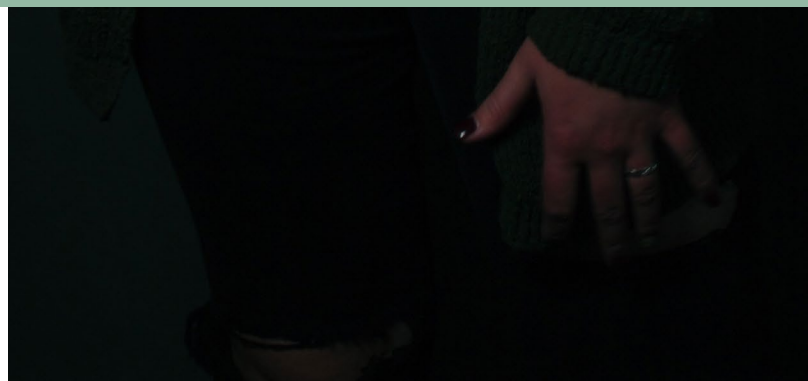
Similar to that, individuals with less than a high school diploma have the highest rate of mood disorders (12.91%), anxiety (12.82%), and suicidal thoughts in the past year. Compared to those with a university degree, mood disorders (6.88%), anxiety disorders (6.33%) and suicidal thoughts in the past 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).

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 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 perpetrator 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.


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



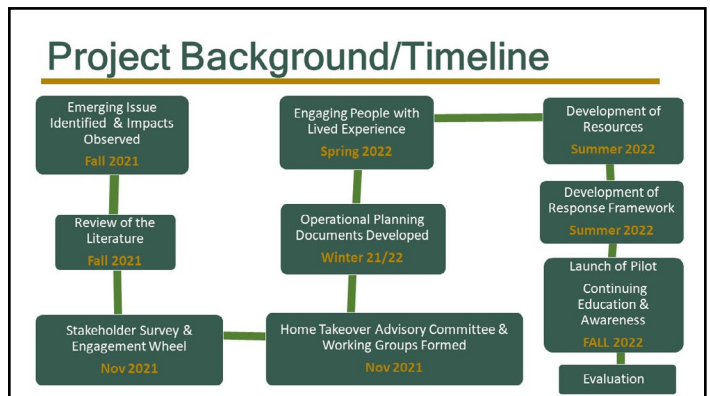
This presentation is intended to accompany the Home Takeover Guidebook (2022)

The guidebook was designed to assist organizations and service providers in offering opportunities for education and awareness concerning home takeovers for vulnerable tenants, frontline workers and the broader community.



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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

- ### Four Broad Forms of a Home Takeover
1. Substance-use related takeovers
 2. Takeovers related to homelessness
 3. Takeovers involving older adults
 4. Takeovers of people with vulnerabilities
- 

How does a Home Takeover Happen?

- Often the tenant/homeowner is coerced or threatened into allowing access to the home

The person who conducts the home takeover:

- May be looking to make money through illegal activity
- May initially offer money, a sense of belonging, or fulfill other unmet social/economic needs
- May exploit a substance dependency

Who is Involved?

The Target	The Perpetrator
The rightful occupant of the home/unit	The person (or people) taking over the home/unit
Tend to have vulnerabilities	
Most likely targets: people who have drug dependency, disabilities, mental health issues, were recently/formerly homeless, immigrants, women, single mothers, low-income women with children, and elderly	May be vulnerable and engaging in home takeover to fulfill their own unmet social or economic needs
Service Providers	

"I began by feeling sorry for people using drugs in the street. I felt bad I had a place to go, and they didn't"


"People found out where I lived and started coming over. Just a few at first and then more. I lost control of who was there and who wasn't. They wouldn't listen to me or leave. I felt angry that they were taking advantage of my house"

Harms & Impacts



Harms & Impacts

- Direct Consequences:**
 - Eviction / Loss of housing
 - Criminal charges
 - Financial cost
 - Safety issues
 - Theft
 - Loss of control over own home
 - Abuse
- Personal Consequences:**
 - Mental & physical health consequences
 - Loss of dignity
 - Decreased self-esteem
 - Loss of self-control and power
- Other Possible Consequences:**
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Forced labour
 - Children may feel scared/confused



Key Factors Contributing to a Home Takeover

- Housing crisis
- Substance use
- Lack of long-term treatment for substance use
- Lack of safe places to use substances
- Mental health concerns
- Isolation, loneliness and marginalization

Interview Participants had:

- Empathy for perpetrator
- Pressure to house perpetrator
- Desire for social connectedness
- Hope for financial/household contributions

Engaging with Indigenous Organizations

- The term "Home Takeover" may be associated with negative feelings and should be used with careful consideration
- Beliefs, traditions and the concept of "home" may differ
- Elders often provide shelter/care to family members
- Overcrowding may happen, and can break down family dynamics
- Principles of Reconciliation

Looking to learn about Indigenous Homelessness, and the 12 dimensions?
Visit: [COHindigenousHomelessnessDefinition.pdf \(homelesshub.ca\)](https://www.cohindigenoushomelessness.ca/homelesshub.ca)




Prevention

- Tenant and worker relationship
- Tenants are connected to supports and services
- Service providers avoid placing clients with friends or family who are vulnerable and/or have a damaging history with the client
- Tenants are aware of the risks
- Agreement that service providers can communicate and share information about the tenant
- Isolation is reduced by ensuring individual feels a part of a larger community, encourage tenant to participate in a community with which they identify

Prevention Resource Materials

- Home Should be Your Safe Place (Postcard)
- Home Should be a Safe Place (Tri-fold brochure)



"I now live alone in my bedroom. They have spread out to all the rooms... I can't use laundry facilities in basement of unit"

Identifying a Takeover

- Direct disclosure
- Reluctant to allow worker into unit, noticeably absent from unit
- Tenant has not checked in with worker in some time
- Increase in complaints (noise, visitors, vehicles/bikes outside)
- Change in tenant's financial situation
- Increase in reports that individual is more isolated
- Content in unit suggests more individuals are staying there than those that reside there



Identification Resource Materials

- Checklist
- Poster :look out for it: home takeover
- Poster: Home should be your safe place



Intervention - What can you do?

- Interventions will be unique
- Tenants should speak with someone they trust (ie/ housing provider, support worker, police, etc.)
- Strategies to make the environment uncomfortable for the perpetrator
- Institute a trespass order
- Drop flyers off and conduct safety door knocks



If the target and service provider have developed plans, goals, boundaries:

- Work collaboratively
- Motivate tenant to resolve the takeover by highlighting how something they care about is being affected
- Play the "bad guy" – prompt target to tell perpetrator they are facing eviction because of the takeover
- Meet with tenant privately
- Use common language
- Use "circle of care"
- Relocate tenant (if possible), involve a security company, change locks on the unit

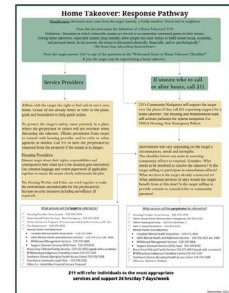
- When perpetrator is a family member, approach other family members to assist in developing a strategy
- Discuss the benefits of housing the perpetrator
- Identify needs of the perpetrator, and assist (if willing)
- Educate tenant on their rights, responsibilities and consequences

"Be very careful; make sure you're in control and as soon as you're not, don't be ashamed – ask for help"

An individual has a right to feel safe in one's own home

Intervention Resource Materials

- Response Framework
- Home takeover Response Pathway



Recovery

- Frequent check-ins and well-being visits
- Work with client to develop recovery plan
- Recovery may be centred on making the home liveable again
- Consider reaching out to the perpetrator (if possible)
- Ensure people removed from home takeover are housed
- Go through preventative methods to avoid future takeovers
- Consider seeking out other housing options if target's safety continues to be threatened

"It was helpful when [housing worker] acknowledged the problem and gave it a name"

Opportunities for Action

Organizations:

- Provide education & training for staff on Home Takeovers
- Adopt and execute Home Takeover Response Framework
- Encourage system changes to collect better local data
- Develop home takeover policy/guideline
- Update lease agreements
- Collaborate with local partners and organizations

"The housing workers encouraged me to call police...and stayed with me while I called"

Opportunities for Action

Service Providers:

- Participate in education & training
- Review and follow Home Takeover Response Framework
- Know your role in preventing, identifying, responding to and supporting recovery
- Obtain consent from tenant to support enhanced communication and information sharing with other service providers

Where to find more info/resources

All home takeover materials including resources, print materials, project summary reports, the Training Guidebook and Response Framework can be found at [Home Takeover \(publichealthgreybruce.on.ca\)](http://publichealthgreybruce.on.ca)

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Owen Sound Police Services

CMHA Grey Bruce
Community Connection 211
YMCA Owen Sound Grey Bruce
Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre
SOS outreach
Owen Sound Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corp.

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