



The Navigator Street Outreach Program

Annual Report
2010-2011



The Navigator Program was created to provide street-level support to individuals within the Capital District who are street-involved, particularly street-involved youth (14-30 years old). Started in 2007, the Navigator Program was initially developed by Bernard Smith (Spring Garden Area Business Association), Paul MacKinnon (Downtown Halifax Business Commission), and Tim Olive (Downtown Dartmouth Business Association), with support from a number of community members and Halifax Regional Municipality. The objective of the program is to **reduce the harmful aspects of street-life for individuals and the community**.

A few key statistics from 2010-2011:

- The Navigator approached over 300 different individuals during outreach on the streets of downtown Halifax and Dartmouth.
- 145 individuals took advantage of direct support offered.
- 725 different services were provided.
- An additional 46 individuals accessed support, navigation and/or information services – service that had no direct cost associated.

Direct Support for Work Ready Individuals

Where individuals are motivated and assessed to be job ready, the Navigator is able to offer street-involved individuals key supports to assist in securing and maintaining employment. In 2010-2011, the Navigator Program provided direct support for work-ready individuals through the:

- a) Lunch Program,
- b) Street Sweeping Program, and the
- c) Employment Support Program.

Table 1: Direct Support Programs

Program	# Clients Served	# Services Provided	Cost
Lunch Program	31	218	\$2,616.00
Street Sweeping Program	43	372	\$6,919.20
*Other Work	6	Varied	\$3,057.91
Employment Support Program	74	135	\$6,469.42
TOTAL	154	725+	\$19,062.53

* "Other Work" included watering of plants, newsletter delivery, office assistance and hanging basket removal.

Table 2: Employment Support Program – Service Breakdown

Employment Support Program – Service Breakdown		
Specific Service:	# Services	Cost
Identification	42	\$1,039.76
Work tools	10	\$451.10
Work clothes	12	\$650.50
Work boots	21	\$2,136.68
**Transportation	28	\$840.85
Phone Program	6	\$182.49
**Driving	7	\$409.39
**Other	9	\$758.65
Total	135	\$6,469.42

**Where individuals required additional training or education to improve their employability, the Navigator provided direct support for items such as school fees, transportation, school supplies and course fees (eg. First Aid, Traffic Control). The Navigator also made 32 referrals to a variety of Skills Training and Employability Programs for individuals looking to improve their skill-set or gain work experience.

In January, the Navigator launched the Cell Phone Program exclusively through Twitter. This program takes donated cell phones and activates them up as pay-as-you-go phone for homeless individuals who are engaged in a job search. Not having a phone proves a major barrier to finding employment. The Navigator took to Twitter and requested old cell phones. To date, we have received 19 phones, and have provided four individuals with phones. Two of the four found work within 24 hours, and the other two found work within a week.

Stories of Success

The Navigator worked with a young couple who frequently panned on Spring Garden and both struggled with addiction. Working with Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH) and the ARK, the Navigator assisted the young man to get on to the methadone program at Direction 180. After stabilizing for a few weeks, the Navigator assisted the two to find a new apartment in Spryfield, away from the drugs and drama of their South End rooming house. Once they moved, they no longer spent their days and nights downtown using and panning. The young man has started looking for part-time work, and the young woman has started back on medication for her mental health.

The Navigator worked with a young man to assist him in getting his driver’s license. He was attending the Second Chance Program while supporting his partner and their young son. We arranged a cost sharing program that ensured he received the drivers training he needed, and

covered the costs for licensing and testing. After receiving his license, he insured his vehicle and got a job that night delivering pizza. He has also started his own painting company, and is saving for tools and supplies.

The Navigator supported a young couple who was sleeping in a garbage container behind a downtown business to secure housing. The two had been living on the street for the past three plus years (separately) and needed assistance with the deposit for their power. Once housed, the young man has not returned to panhandling. And after 3 years out of school, the young woman returned to complete her high school through the FLEC program. The Navigator supported her with a bus pass and the lunch program, as she was refused social assistance due to her age (18). The two remained housed seven months later.

Navigation and Support through Outreach (Not Work Ready)

Where individuals are assessed to not be job-ready, or self-identify as needing assistance with issues other than work, the Navigator ensures people are aware of their options and assists them in navigating and accessing services aimed at improving their quality of life. During 2010-2011, the Navigator provided support to a variety of street-involved individuals who were not work-ready. Support generally involved one (or more) of the following issues:

- **Housing** - With the support of the Navigator, 16 individuals who were living on the street or in a shelter found housing. Individuals received help with housing searches, damage deposits, identification, power and phone arrears, rental arrears, transportation to viewings, securing funding and references. To date, all 16 remain housed. Another 11 individuals were referred to Halifax Housing Help. As well, each person that identified they were homeless was referred to an appropriate shelter.
- **Mental Health** - Where individuals identify struggles with mental health, or are identified by the greater community as a concern, the Navigator works with community partners to ensure that people get the care they deserve. The Navigator worked with 35 individuals who were experiencing difficulties with their mental health. Besides checking in on a regular basis (ensuring medical appointments were kept, medications being taken etc.), the Navigator worked closely with the MOSH team, and made referrals to Mental Health Services – Bayer’s Road Mental Health Services, Mental Health/Shared Care, North End Community Health Centre and police.
- **Addictions** - The Navigator supported 29 individuals interested in addressing their addiction with referrals and information. Of these, 8 individuals completed an intake with Addictions Services, and 6 individuals secured a bed at a Detox Unit. Beginning in June 2010, the Navigator worked with a Community Outreach Counselor from Addictions Services for a few afternoons a month to ensure street-involved individuals had access to information and services. The Navigator also worked closely with MOSH and various shelters to ensure motivated individuals received services.

- **DCS Advocacy** - As the ability to secure housing, food and clothing is dependent upon a person's financial security, the Navigator assisted 17 people to access Income Assistance and advocated with the Department of Community Services to ensure ongoing eligibility and entitled benefits.
- **Case Management** – For 13 individuals, the Navigator proved to be a key support. These individuals may have engaged with the Navigator for support offered in finding employment, housing or health care; but also turned to the Navigator on an ongoing basis for support with a wide variety of issues. In these situations, the Navigator provided “case management” support. This support included: attendance at case conferences, court/legal support, crisis support, daily check-in to stay on track with recovery, and venting sessions (in-person or on the voicemail).

Stories of Success

The Navigator worked with a young single mom (and her 5 year old son) to secure rent money that ensured she was not evicted over Christmas. While a number of agencies advocated with Income Assistance to ensure she received the rental benefits she was entitled too, the Navigator rallied the support of a number of community partners to raise the money needed for rent. The Navigator provided her with some minutes for her phone so that she was able to find and secure more affordable housing.

The Navigator worked with a young man with mental health and addictions issues who is well known to the downtown community. The Navigator attended a couple of case conferences with community partners in an attempt to provide options for this young person. In early December, the Navigator assisted the MOSH nurses in getting this young man admitted into the Abby Lane Hospital. After attending mental health court, we transported this young man to the hospital. Since his admission, the Navigator has visited a number of times and has monitored his time while in the community. As he has gotten healthy and clean, he has made the decision to attend a long-term residential treatment facility in the Valley.

Developing Partnerships

The ability of the Navigator to meet the needs of individuals for health, mental health and addictions support on the street is primarily dependant on the partnership that has developed with the Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH) team. The nurses and occupational therapist are able to take primary health care services to the streets of HRM, and ensure that folks living on the margins have access to services that will improve their overall health. The Navigator made 36 referrals to the MOSH team, and the MOSH team worked with an additional 49 individuals who were already connected to the Navigator Program.

The Navigator also regularly visits a number of community programs, including; the drop-in at St. Mary's Basilica, the ARK, Phoenix Youth Shelter, the Out of the Cold Shelter, and the Public Good Society. These visits provide opportunities for a team of support to be created around individuals who are most at-risk, as well as opportunities for the sharing of possible solutions and meaningful resources.

Community Safety and Support

Community Constable Partnership: The Navigator works in conjunction with community policing and private security to ensure safety within our community. Ongoing communication among the navigator, police and security ensures emerging issues are identified and meaningful solutions are developed. Solutions suggested and implemented strive to ensure that the safety of all – street-involved people, business owners and staff and members of the wider community that live and shop in the downtown core – are taken into consideration.

Community Education: The Navigator strives to educate community members about the perspectives, needs and aspirations of the street-involved community. The Navigator also has discussions with street-involved people about the impact of various behaviors on the people around them, including business and area residents. In 2010-2011, the Navigator presented at Adsum Open House, as well as at SGABA and DHBC board meetings. These presentations covered a few key themes: panhandling, addictions, homelessness and harm reduction.

Influencing Positive Change in our Community

The Navigator was invited to participate in a number of community initiatives for 2010-2011. In an effort to develop new and effective strategies that respond to the addiction, health and socioeconomic needs of Capital Health district's street population, the Navigator has been involved with the following projects/committees:

- Community Action on Homelessness (CAH) "Street Health Survey"
- Halifax Connects
- Out of the Cold Shelter
- 3 Trades Skills Training Program
- Street Population Addiction and Wellness Strategy Steering Committee (SPAWS)
- Mental Health Coalition
- HRM Youth Connections
- Homeless Network

Summary

2010-2011 marked the fourth year the Navigator Program operated in the downtown core of Halifax and Dartmouth.

A number of key transitions occurred in the past 12 months that impacted the Navigator Program. In July, Tommy Boutilier accepted the coordinator position with the 3 Trades Program – a seven month program providing training in life and construction skills. EJ Davis was brought on as the Navigator while Tommy took a leave of absence. Then in October, Bernard Smith stepped down from the SGABA and was replaced by Nancy Tissington. These changes prompted a period of introspection, as we looked for new and innovative ways to deliver success with the Navigator Program.

As well as personnel changes, the program saw funding changes emerge in 2011. The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) provided funding for the first three years of the program, but did not renew funding as of April 1, 2011. As well, the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission (DDBC) withdrew from the project as they had committed their support for the “pilot” project term only. The loss of these partners has meant that the Navigator must seek out additional funding sources, and has put a greater financial strain on DHBC and SGABA.

Based on the numbers from the 2010-2011 fiscal, we know the following about the street-involved people in the downtown core (based on self-reports or observed behaviors):

- 15% were women
- 49% were youth
- 9% were seniors
- 50% were homeless
- 35% were panhandlers
 - Of panhandlers: 50% of panhandlers were homeless, 57% struggled with addiction, 6% struggled with a mental health issue, another 21% struggled with both addiction and mental health, 40% were youth, 11% were seniors and 11% were women.
- 60% struggled with an addiction
- 8% struggled with a mental health issue
- 20% struggled with both an addiction and a mental health issue

Given the above statistics around addiction, mental health and homelessness – there is much work to do.

Appendix A

Table 3: Summary of Services and Support Offered in 2010-2011

	# Individuals	# Services
Total Different People Contacted	300+	
Clients Received Direct Service	154	
Total Direct Services Provided		725
Other Clients Supported	46	varied
Lunch Program	38	218
Sweeping Program	43	372
Other Work	6	Varied
Employment Support	74	135
Identification		42
Work tools		10
Work clothes		12
Work boots		21
Transportation		28
Phone Program		6
Driving		7
Other		9
Housing Support	27	
Addictions Support	29	
Mental Health Support	35	
DCS Advocacy	17	
Case Management Support	13	
TOTALS	191	725+