



Annual Report 2020-2021

The past year has been different for everyone, and the Navigator Street Outreach program was no exception. In some ways, the work did not change at all, but in other ways it changed significantly. In the fiscal year of 2020-2021, we supported 241 different individuals in various ways. We also developed some new partnerships and started some new initiatives. Overall, this past year has shown how resilient the clients, and people in general, can be.

Programs

Outreach

The Navigator Street Outreach Program is primarily an outreach service. I spend the largest chunk of my time outside interacting with people on the streets and in the places where they frequent. I have been collaborating with a few other agencies to ensure that we have a good idea of where people are who sleep outside, and how many people there are outside. To help us track how many people are outside we have been doing semi-annual surveys of the people we find to be sleeping outdoors. In August of last year, we counted 50 people to be outside, and in March of this year we counted 14. I have also been developing an outreach map in order to track where people are at in case they will need to be contacted, or for future surveys. We will keep doing these surveys so that we can hopefully track the number of people outside year over year.

Housing

In 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia hired many new housing support workers as a response to the ongoing housing and homelessness crisis. In the past, I have been hesitant to refer clients to other agencies because other agencies were not taking new referrals but, this year, I have been referring more clients to some of these new housing support workers. The housing workers

have been very effective at helping some of the folks I meet in obtaining and maintaining new places to live.

There has also been more of a shift towards non-profit organizations building and acquiring their own housing stock, rather than relying on the private market and rental subsidies to house people. I think this is a great direction to go in, and I was able to help eight clients access housing in these non-profits. All but one of them remained housed at the end of the fiscal year.

COVID-19 also made it harder to house folks in the private market because landlords were more hesitant to do apartment viewings, and there were fewer people getting evicted. Compounding this is the ongoing practice of renovictions by many landlords, which adds to the current number of homeless people, while simultaneously reducing the amount of affordable rental stock. Despite this, I was able to house 34 people in the private market the last year, and most are still in their homes now.

This year, we have also witnessed a visible increase in tents and “crisis shelters.” These visible markers of homelessness have made finding homeless people easier, but also have led to some challenges in supporting people. I have been working closely with community partners and all levels of government in order to find the best way to support people living in these situations.

Employment Support

I was able to help 13 people find and secure employment this year. For the majority of the people I worked with, employment support consisted of getting work boots or enrolling them in a traffic safety (flagging) course. With other folks, employment support consisted of different tools they needed to start working.

Identification Support

COVID-19 drastically reduced the number of people I helped with acquiring identification. Access Nova Scotia closed its offices for a number of weeks over the pandemic, and later moved to an appointment-only system. I helped 35 people obtain identification this past year.

Policy Changes

This past year, the province announced a change to its policy regarding providing income assistance supports to folks without a fixed address. As of July 1, 2021, people who are homeless are able to apply for and receive income assistance even if they don't have an address. They can just state where they want their cheque to be mailed to, and the province will use that address for them. This is a policy change that myself and others have pushed for years, so it was great to see the Department of Community Services be responsive to need.

Medication Support

Last year, the federal government announced the Canada Emergency Recovery Benefit (CERB), which overall was a tremendous help to many people who were struggling in the first lockdown. However, the CERB benefit led to people getting kicked off income assistance because this put them over the income threshold. This resulted in a few evictions and increased rental arrears, but the biggest impact it had on the Navigator program was the increased need for help paying for medications. When someone loses income assistance, they often lose their Pharmacare coverage, and there are not a lot of programs to help with the coverage. This past year, I helped 40 people pay for medications, which is far more than in previous years.

Demographics

From April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, the Navigator program has connected with 241 individuals.

Category	Number of People
Female	55
Male	181
Transgender/non-binary	5
Youth (under 25)	20
Senior (65 and over)	66

Community Partners

In the past year, the Navigator program has continued to partner with different community organizations to ensure effective service delivery to the people we work with. These community partners include:

- Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH)
- Mobile Outreach Street Health Housing First
- St. Mary's Basilica – Our Daily Bread Outreach
- Shelter Nova Scotia
- Halifax Public Libraries
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre
- Mainline Needle Exchange
- Direction 180
- Department of Community Services
- Affordable Housing Association Nova Scotia

- Access Nova Scotia
- Halifax Regional Police
- Salvation Army
- Out of the Cold Shelter
- Dalhousie Social Work Clinic
- Dalhousie Legal Aid
- Metro Works
- Safety First
- Adsum for Women & Children
- Welcome Housing
- Phoenix for Youth
- United Way
- Saint Vincent de Paul Society
- North End Downtown Dartmouth Navigator

Coordinated Access

In the past year, the Navigator program has continued to be involved with the implementation of the Coordinated Access System to end chronic homelessness in Halifax. Coordinated Access is a way of identifying how many people are experiencing homelessness, determining what supports those people may need, and then assigning appropriate supports to those people in order to end their experience of homelessness. There is a group of over 15 organizations, including the Navigator Street Outreach program, that meets monthly to implement the Coordinated Access System.

For more information:

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