



## BRIEFING NOTE HS14-21

For Information or  For Approval

**Date:** March 24, 2021  
**Purpose:** Housing and Homelessness Service Eligibility  
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**Reviewed by:** Catherine Matheson, CAO

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This briefing note provides information on service eligibility for Housing and Homelessness programs in the district, and the methods that will be used to manage shelter capacity and resources.

### Background:

Over the past year, and tied significantly to the services restrictions and reductions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, visible evidence of homelessness has risen in Nipissing, and across the country. According to the Homeless Hub, the pandemic has forced individuals experiencing homelessness to search for services and beds. Many of the formal and informal supports in urban centres have been intermittently closed and/or only able to offer limited services during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

This forced transience has placed even more risk on an already vulnerable population and created significantly more risk of virus spread within the homelessness population. It has also placed substantial pressure on the capacity of services and emergency shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness, at a time when the pandemic protocols have already forced major limitations on that same capacity.

### Report:

People experiencing homelessness, especially in remote northern areas of Canada, have always been found to migrate to other areas in search of the services and housing they need. In the 2015 report, "*Migratory and Transient Homelessness in Northern Ontario*" to which Nipissing District was a contributing community,

(k)ey findings indicate(d) that migrants constitute about a fifth to a quarter of the local homeless population. Over three-quarters had come from Ontario communities, typically in northeastern or southern Ontario. There was no clear pattern of increases

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Observatory on Homelessness

in the number of migrants in the summer compared to winter. Recent and intermediate-term migrants were similar in a number of respects: most were men, most did not have custody of any children, and the cultural backgrounds reflected the linguistic/cultural composition of the local homeless population. Indigenous people comprised a significant proportion of homeless migrants...<sup>2</sup>

Because transience is an expected characteristic of a population living without anywhere to call home, provincial and federal funding for homelessness services and supports come with regulations and outcome expectations that require communities that receive the funding to treat all individuals accessing services equitably and without discrimination based on the individual's point of origin. This same expectation is formalized within the Housing Services Act:

A local eligibility rule may not treat a household differently from other households because the household resides, or at any time in the past did reside, outside the service manager's service area. O. Reg. 367/11, s. 40.<sup>3</sup>

### **Risk Identification and Mitigation:**

With a legislated requirement from funders that all individuals who are experiencing homelessness will be eligible for services and housing regardless of their geographic origin, the risk of overwhelming an already stretched system capacity becomes a very evident threat. The mitigation of this risk requires the implementation of measures designed to allow equity of access while permitting the community services to create processes that move people through the system fairly and swiftly:

1. Standardized Assessment tools and processes
2. Standardized data compilation and reporting systems.
3. Collaborative and coordinated access processes for services and housing.
4. Evidence-based supports and services shared provincially and federally that encourage equitable funding.

### **Conclusion:**

The implementation of HIFIS, Coordinated Access and a shared By-Name-List will create processes designed to mitigate the capacity and resource risks that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also provide opportunities to plan for future systemic challenges. The DNSSAB will continue to advocate with provincial and federal funders for recognition of the additional challenges and resource costs to services for individuals who are experiencing homelessness in rural and remote communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Kauppi, Carol & Pallard, Henri. (2015). MIGRATORY AND TRANSIENT HOMELESSNESS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO, CANADA PATHWAYS TO HOMELESSNESS IN SUDBURY AND ITS RELATED IMPACTS. *International Journal of Sustainable Development*. 8. 67-98.

<sup>3</sup> Housing Services Act, 2011, ONTARIO REGULATION 367/11