

Housing Supports Initiative Profile

The Housing Supports Initiative, a \$2.56m program funded by the Government of Manitoba and administered by the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association, is currently funding 19 unique projects that expand the capacity of organizations supporting people who are exiting or at risk of homelessness. The Initiative will run for two years, and is projected to improve the housing circumstances of around 450 individuals, and provide eviction prevention support to around 900 individuals.

Sara Riel will deliver mental health and substance use support to individual experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness



Sara Riel provides a safe, inclusive and engaging environment for people facing mental health and substance use/addiction challenges, with a goal of helping them reach their full potential. The HSI funding will help the organisation address the mental health epidemic by hiring new staff to reach out to individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

New HSI-funded staff at Sara Riel include a full-time peer support worker and a case manager, both of whom deliver important mental health and addiction support to people facing housing crises, especially due to COVID-19. These staff provide assisted daily living and wrap around support to individuals residing in the community.

Sara Riel's Executive Director, Tara Snider, says that the need for the type of support the HSI makes possible is "overwhelming", and that Sara Riel currently has 33 people on the waiting list to access services. The new staff will help with this backlog, and will continue to provide much needed assistance with daily living skills. Snider explains that "these positions have assisted with doctors appointments and going to the bank, nutrition, laundry, day to day things. The case manager will sit down with participants and set goals, the individual will be able to move forward".

In addition to the more pragmatic aspects of daily life, the programming involves "working with individuals so they can see alternate ways of doing things. We want to be able to look at positive cognition and see what we can do based on the strengths of participants. The case manager sets goals, and we have a community mentor role with lived experience that can really connect using peer support values to form a relationship that can be built upon", explains Snider. Recovery is not a one-size-fits-all journey, and having dedicated staff to form solid relationships with participants and give them guidance based on a deeper understanding of their personal strengths and the specific challenges they face is important.

Snider goes on to explain that Sara Riel's work, and specifically that of the HSI-funded positions, "is recovery oriented, working with people with mental health, substance use and addiction. It is inclusive and safe, compassionate and respectful. The workers follow harm reduction and trauma informed care, and will continue to learn new skills.