

# Working with Survivors of GBV: An Overview of Housing Supports in Ontario

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01**

**Land  
Acknowledgement**

**04**

**THSP Program  
Overview**

**02**

**GBV & Housing**

**05**

**Additional  
Resources**

**03**

**Available Survivor  
Supports**

**06**

**Questions**



# Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

01



# Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, OAITH would like to acknowledge the many territories of Turtle Island (Canada) on which we work and reside. These territories, ceded and unceded, are home to many Indigenous peoples who have lived here for tens of thousands of years and continue to live here. As settlers, immigrants and descendants, and as visitors, we honour and respect the many Indigenous peoples of this land and territory and hope for a more just future together as treaty people.

As a sector we must continuously work on and lean into discussions and actionable change as it relates to reconciliation, and the 231 individual calls for justice. To do this, we require principled leadership that is predicated on the acknowledgment and truths of the harms historically and currently put onto Indigenous Communities. These harms primarily situated in colonial violence, have been upheld for hundreds of years that still exist today in our own organizations, communities and systems.

This process of social change, requires all of us to acknowledge the privilege we all hold as leaders in mainstream autonomous VAW organizations, and being reflective of how colonization has benefited your organizational structure, successes and achievements. We need to shift from remembering Indigenous Women and Girls as Missing and Murdered to knowing them and embracing their strength, their leadership, their solutions and their contributions.

# Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH)

- Established in 1977
- Over 90 GBV shelter member and ally organizations

## Vision

An Ontario that is safe, equitable and just for all women, girls and gender-diverse communities



## Mission

OAITH works towards ending all forms of gender-based violence and oppression through advocacy, education, research and training



# GBV & Housing

02



# The Realities of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- More than 11 million people have experienced intimate partner violence at least once since the age of 15 ([Cotter, 2021](#))
  - LGB+ women (67%)
  - Indigenous women (61%)
  - Women living in poverty (57%)
  - Women with disabilities (55%)
  - All women (44%)
- Children's exposure to IPV has similar effect to other forms of childhood abuse or maltreatment
  - Accounts for nearly half of all cases investigated by child welfare organizations in Canada ([Kimber et al, 2023](#))

# The Realities of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- Ontario has the second highest reported police rates of Human Trafficking in Canada ([Sutton-Prettie, 2025](#))
  - 93% of victims were reported to be women
  - Two thirds of victims are under the age of 25
- Femicide; the gender-related killing of women, children and gender-diverse individuals ([OAITH, 2025](#))
  - In 33% of femicides an intimate partner was charged
  - In 28% of femicides a family member was charged
  - 79% of all femicide cases in 2024-2025 occurred either inside, or outside of a residence

# Housing, Homelessness and GBV

- Being unhoused is both a consequence and driver for experiencing GBV for women and gender-diverse individuals
- The Pan-Canadian Women's Housing & Homelessness Survey ([Schwan et al., 2021](#))
  - 500 unhoused and precariously housed women, girls and gender-diverse individuals surveyed across the country
    - A relationship breakdown or ending was primary reason women and gender diverse peoples lost their housing
    - 75% of women and gender-diverse individuals experiencing homelessness identified as a survivor of trauma and/or abuse
    - Safety concerns often disrupting housing stability
    - Significant barriers to accessing emergency housing and other services



# Available Survivor Supports

03



# Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) Housing



- Subsidized/affordable housing offered by cities, districts, counties or regions
- Rent calculated based on household income (30% of household monthly net income)
- High wait times
- Requires stock to be most effective

# Special Priority Program (SPP)



- SPP provides survivors of GBV and human trafficking with priority access to RGI housing
- Eligibility-Based
- Required documentation
  - Proof of cohabitation within the last 3 months
  - Support letter
  - Discretion available; survivors do not need to put themselves at risk to obtain document
- Wait times can still be high, varies across the province
- Requires stock to be most effective

# Canada-Ontario Portable Benefit (COHB)



- Temporary/time limited portable benefit that can be used to access housing through private market rentals
- COHB is calculated based on the difference between 30% of your household income and 80% of the average market rent in the area
- Availability and amount of COHB varies across areas

# Municipal Rent Supplements/Rent Subsidies



- Temporary, time-limited benefit provided to low-income individuals and families at risk of homelessness
- Provides rental assistance within private market (short-term)
- May be available directly from your municipality

# Transitional Housing, Supportive Housing and Second- Stage Housing



- Short-term affordable housing accommodations during transitional periods/stages
- Wrap around supports
  - e.g. counselling, employment and income supports
- Additional safety measures
- May operate distinctly from the local shelter and units may be located elsewhere in the community



# Transitional & Housing Support Program Overview

04



# THSP Background

**2000**

Created to support system navigation; acting as survivor and system advocates ([Morrow, 2011](#))

**135 orgs**

Following OAITH advocacy to expand and increase funding to the program in 2021 ([Ontario News, 2021](#))

**Resources**

Resource creation in 2024 following consultation with Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What are Transitional and Housing Support Programs and What Do They Do?

- System advocates and system navigation experts for GBV survivors and their children (multiple intersecting systems/services)
- Wide scope of supports within various systems/services
  - Housing, transitioning out of shelter, income supports, counselling, safety planning, supporting childcare providers/legal workers
- Can also support interagency training, collaborative/referral protocols and access to systems planning & response tables (e.g. MARAC, DART, High Risk Tables, Situation Tables)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What are the goals of the Transitional and Housing Support Programs?

- Overall life-stabilization support
- Increasing the safety of survivors of violence and their children
- Helping to reduce systemic barriers
- Assisting survivors in navigating systems
- Assist survivors and their children in healing
- Advocacy and assistance to improve overall health, safety and wellbeing

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Who Can Access Transitional and Housing Support Programs?

- Survivors of violence and/or abuse from a current or former partner
  - Whether or not they are currently experiencing the violence and/or abuse, or if this violence/abuse is recent
- Survivors of violence and/or abuse from a family member/other relationship type
  - Women identified or gender-diverse, age 16+
- Survivors of human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation
  - Including male survivors of human trafficking
- The children or other dependent family members of the survivor

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How to Connect with Transitional and Housing Support Programs?

1. Support your client in calling/connecting with a local agency that runs the THSP to learn more about the available services
1. Provide your client with information about local THSP services
1. Connect directly with the agency to gather information

# Frequently Asked Questions

**I'm working with someone who I'm not sure has experienced abuse or violence- what is the best way to check?**

- Barriers to disclosure
  - Differences in awareness, understanding and self-identification
  - Fear/distrust of systems, system entrenchment
  - Familial, cultural implications
- Using language focused on safety can be helpful when exploring if a client has experienced GBV and/or human trafficking
  - *"Would it be helpful if I provide some information about a cost-free service that can help with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert top priority of client here, for example, finding housing or employment) and can also talk about your safety?"*

# Myths and Realities

## Reality

Situations of abuse and violence are complex, and agencies thought of as “women’s shelters” often have a wide range of support, like THSP which can provide assistance even if someone never stays at the shelter

Wait times for THSP services vary across the province. Some programs may be able to provide immediate support (for example, attending court with a client who only connected a week previous with the agency), while others may have a wait list.

Many gender-based violence services in Ontario are accessible to survivors who identify as women or are gender-diverse, including Two Spirited, and non-binary survivors.

Transitional support can be used by survivors who live in the community, even without staying at the shelter, as a means to make plans to move into a safer environment, increase safety in their current environment and/or receive advocacy/support in navigating various systems and services.

## Assumption/Myth

The best option for most survivors of violence to keep safe is to stay at a shelter.

THSP services in Ontario can't provide immediate support.

Only women can access gender-based violence services like THSP.

Transitional support like THSP are for clients already staying at a shelter.

# Myths and Realities

Survivors seeking THSP service may be seeking shelter services, but not always. Find a shelter near you in Canada via [sheltersafe.ca](https://sheltersafe.ca) Locate a wide range of GBV supports in Ontario via [www.mulberryfinder.ca](https://www.mulberryfinder.ca)

Services and supports related to abuse, including THSP, utilize the language of gender-based violence, as opposed to domestic violence, to recognize violence and abuse occurs in different types of relationships. The term gender-based violence includes:

- Violence and abuse in intimate, and other known relationships (i.e. coworker, landlord, neighbour)
- Human trafficking and exploitation
- Violence and abuse within 2SLGBTQ+ relationships
- Physical and/or sexual violence, threats, emotional/verbal abuse, harassment, stalking, spiritual abuse, financial and coercive control.

Gender-based violence agencies that offer support including a shelter program, THSP, counselling, and children's services have expertise in human trafficking.

Transitional support like THSP are for survivors who need to stay at a shelter.

Transitional support is only for victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence/gender-based violence.

There are no specialized services for human trafficking victims.

# Myths and Realities

Gender-based violence agencies provide a wide range of support for children and youth who have experienced or witnessed violence. When an adult (16+) survivor connects with THSP services, this includes support for their children/dependents.

Every THSP (and gender-based violence service) in Ontario has access to free interpretation services for survivors. However both in-person and virtual live interpretation often needs to be pre-arranged, and crisis line support may only be offered in English. Some THSP programs may also have written information/resources available in multiple languages. Some THSP programs are offered through Francophone gender-based violence agencies.

Gender-based violence services, including THSP are for adults only.

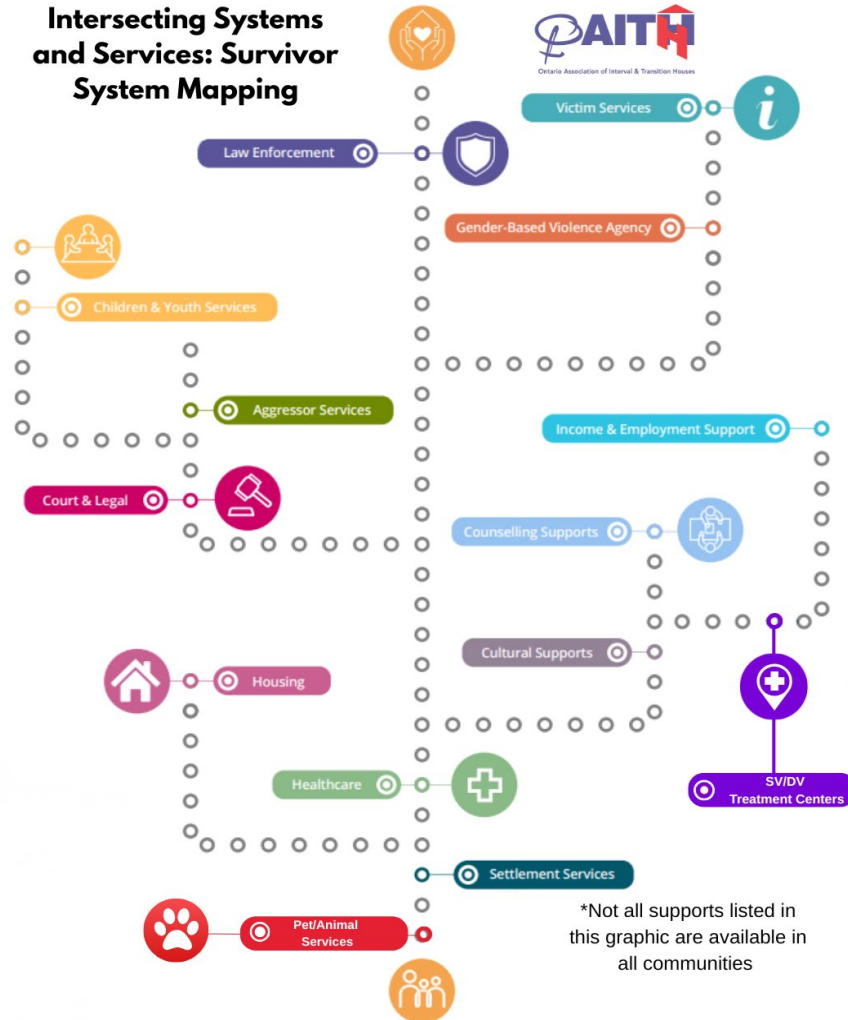
THSP services can only be provided in English.

# Visualizing GBV Service Navigation

- Law Enforcement
- Children & Youth Services
- Aggressor Services
- Court & Legal
- Housing
- Health Care
- Pet & Animal Services
- Victim Services
- GBV Agencies
- Income & Employment Support
- Support
- Counselling Services
- Cultural Supports
- SV/DV Treatment Centres
- Settlement Services



## Intersecting Systems and Services: Survivor System Mapping



\*Not all supports listed in this graphic are available in all communities



# Additional Resources

05



# Additional Resources

## Housing Benefits

- Available in 10 languages
- Infographic, flyer formats
- Accessible online; access [here](#)



This resource provides a snapshot of housing support available in communities across Ontario that may be helpful for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and their children. There are variations in the supports available depending on where you live.

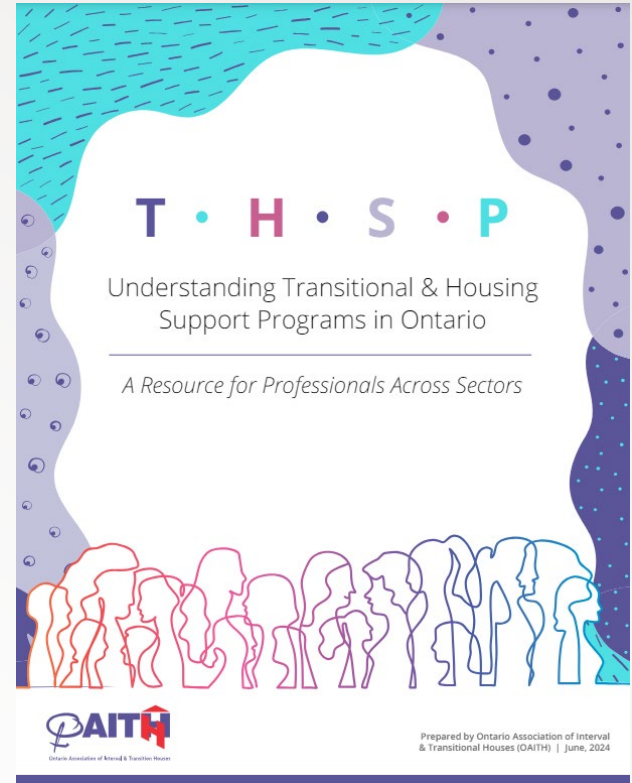
### Quick Tips

- If you are a survivor of violence or abuse, support is available in navigating housing systems in Ontario. Visit [mulberryfinder.ca](http://mulberryfinder.ca) to find a Transitional & Housing Support Program (THSP) in Ontario, or a GBV shelter. Learn more about Transitional Supports: [bit.ly/UnderstandingTHSPEnglish](http://bit.ly/UnderstandingTHSPEnglish)
- Legal advocacy is available for survivors of abuse and violence in Ontario in relation to housing rights. There are Legal Clinics across Ontario that can often provide support and advocacy related to the below housing supports. Find a legal clinic here: [bit.ly/LegalClinicsOntario](http://bit.ly/LegalClinicsOntario). You must live in the area that the clinic is located in to access service. It may be helpful to connect with legal support related to:
  - Being removed from a waitlist for a housing support
  - Being told you are not eligible for a housing support
  - Fighting an eviction from a landlord or social housing provider
  - Ending your tenancy
  - Tenant applications
- Learn more about moving out and how to legally terminate your housing from Steps to Justice: [bit.ly/StepstoJusticeEndingLease](http://bit.ly/StepstoJusticeEndingLease)
- If you are experiencing GBV, you can terminate your tenancy early. Learn more about how to end your lease early on CLEO's website: [bit.ly/MovingOutGBV](http://bit.ly/MovingOutGBV)
- Most housing options have the following eligibility criteria:
  - At least one person applying is over age 16
  - No one living in the home has a current removal order
  - Everyone living in the home is either a Canadian citizen, permanent resident, refugee, or someone who has made a refugee claim or applied for permanent residence (1)

# Additional Resources

## Understanding THSP

- Resource for THSP and other sectors
- Available within OAITH library, access [here](#)



# Additional Resources

## mulberryfinder.ca

- Online GBV Service Directory
  - Survivor/aggressor based
  - Quick Search
  - Provincial helplines
- THSP Directory
- Housing Related Resources
- Request to have your GBV services listed on mulberry finder
  - <https://www.mulberryfinder.ca/login/>



# References

Cotter, A. 2021. Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview. Statistics Canada.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00003-eng.pdf?st=V0yPFJtY>

Kimber, M. McTavish, J. Shouldice, Ward, M.G.K, MacMillan, H. L. 2023. Recognizing and responding to children with suspected exposure to intimate partner violence between caregivers.

<https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/recognizing-and-responding-to-children-with-suspected-exposure-to-intimate-partner-violence-between-caregivers>

Ontario News. 2021. Ontario Increasing Access to Safe Housing for Survivors of Violence and Human Trafficking.

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001131/ontario-increasing-access-to-safe-housing-for-survivors-of-violence-and-human-trafficking>

Morrow, E. 2011. Advocating for Advocacy: The 'Harris Disorder' and how women tried to cure it.

[https://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Publications/HarrisYears\\_Jan11.pdf](https://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Publications/HarrisYears_Jan11.pdf)



# References

Schwan, K., Vaccaro, M., Reid, L., Ali, N., & Baig, K. (2021). The Pan-Canadian Women's Housing & Homelessness Survey. Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.  
<https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/EN-Pan-Canadian-Womens-Housing-Homelessness-Survey-FINAL-28-Sept-2021.pdf>

Sutton-Preddie, D. 2025. Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024. Statistics Canada.  
[https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2025001/article/00008-eng.pdf?st=mFC5t\\_Xk](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2025001/article/00008-eng.pdf?st=mFC5t_Xk)

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). 2025. 43 Women Killed: Femicide Cases Can Be Our Compass To Guide Change. <https://www.oaith.ca/news-events/>



# Contact Information

## Questions?

Want to learn more about GBV  
Training Opportunities?

Contact:  
[info@oaith.ca](mailto:info@oaith.ca)

[www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca)

[www.mulberryfinder.ca](http://www.mulberryfinder.ca)



Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses



# THANKS!



[info@oaith.ca](mailto:info@oaith.ca)

[www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca)

**CREDITS:** This presentation template was created by [Slidesgo](#), and includes icons, infographics & images by [Freepik](#)

Please keep this slide for attribution