

St. Jude Community Homes

Case Study # 11

Promising Practice

- Sustaining long term tenancies through supports and creating a sense of community in a dedicated building.
- Supporting long term tenants to age in place.

Background

St. Jude Community Homes (SJCH) provides permanent supportive housing for people with mental health issues. Located in Toronto's inner city for over 30 years, the majority of units border the Regent Park and Moss Park Neighbourhoods. Most of the housing units are in dedicated buildings, with a smaller number of apartments made available through rent supplements. The main goals of SJCH are to give people a safe place to call home, connection to community, and a place to thrive in their recovery.

Population Served

Adults who are severely affected by mental health difficulties, in need of affordable housing. Tenants must be connected to a community mental health professional and with 6 months sobriety from an active addiction.

Housing

All housing units at SJCH are self-contained bachelors and 1 bedroom units in dedicated buildings. St. Jude's mandate is to providing quality housing - SJCH owns one of the buildings,

another is through a 50 year lease with a city owned property, and a third dedicated building is with a private landlord where SJCH rents 20 units and office space from the landlord and residents lease their units from St. Jude. SJCH also has a few units in a non-profit affordable housing building that has several supportive housing units through a number of service provider partners. Each building that is owned or leased by SJCH has designated community space open 24 hours a day for resident and staff run events, meetings, groups and opportunities for education or socialization. As a landlord, SJCH operates 24/7 365 days a year including on call afterhours support for maintenance and mental health issues.

Support

Sustaining long term tenancies through supports and creating a sense of community in a dedicated building.

Each resident at SJCH is connected with a resource worker who provides one-on-one supports including goal setting, wellness plans, budgeting, life skills, counselling and community



engagement. In addition, each resident has access to support from any member of the resource worker team, as well as access to a range of opportunities to participate in community activities both internal and external to SJCH. SJCH buildings range in levels of support and onsite staffing - staff are available on site 12 hours each day Monday through Friday, 8 hours on weekends and holidays, 365 days a year. Community development is a cornerstone to the supports provided at SJCH, recognizing social connectedness as an important piece of mental health recovery, wellness and overall



health. Ensuring activities are meaningful to tenants is key. The community development program at SJCH includes a meal program, resident education, social events, house/building meetings, a resident advisory group and other tenant run activities.

Below are key community building learnings from St. Jude Community Homes:

- **Speak about community focus to new tenants right from intake.** When meeting with a potential new tenant it is important to describe the community aspect of the housing program and their rights and responsibilities of being a tenant and those of the landlord. Although tenants are not required to participate in social programming, there is an underlying philosophy of connectedness, group problem solving and joint decision-making that runs throughout all of SJCH's operations. It is important for tenants to determine if SJCH is the right housing and community for their support needs.

- **Recognize tenants for their contributions.** St. Jude hands out annual "Good Neighbour Awards" to residents who have gone above and beyond for their fellow community members. Nominations come from other residents as well as staff. Awards are presented at each Annual General Meeting and find that such recognition fosters pride in one's community and care for one's neighbour.
- **Tap into tenant interests and strengths when planning activities.** SJCH uses codesign approach to actively involve tenants. Staff work with tenants to identify, develop and implement tenant needs and interests for community development activities. This can be done through informal check-ins with tenants, brainstorming sessions, focus groups and surveys, ad hoc working groups, and existing structures such a Resident Advisory Group. Self-determination is not only an important principle of community development but also ensures higher participation when the events are known to be of interest to the service users.
- **Support tenant run programs.** Facilitating tenants to develop and run their own programming supports tenants to take on a leadership role in their community and develop new skills and is also a powerful engagement tool for attracting participants. At SJCH, a tenant started and continues to run a popular regular event called "coffee house" where tenants come together and chat over coffee. SJCH supports this tenant by assisting them with printing posters, and covering the cost of supplies. The tenant invites others to participate and participate in running the program. Some other examples of resident

led-programming include a chair yoga class held once a week, and SJCH's quarterly newsletter - where residents can submit articles, artwork, poetry and contribute their editing skills.

- **Building location and design.** Look for communities with nearby accessible amenities such banks, grocery stores, community centres, libraries, and health care. Ensure both safety and community development is considered in your building design from its outset - ensure there is a common space for a range of activities from movies, yoga to cooking classes.
- **Community Safety.** Like building design consider built form to support safety within the building. In addition, regular tenant education sessions and reminders around personal and community watch safety is central to giving people the tools to keep themselves safe.
- **Hold regular house/building meetings and Town Halls.** House meetings happen at each building once a month and town halls for all residents are held every two months. These meetings are an opportunity for neighbours to get to know about what is going on in their communities, share information with each other and guest speakers and bring up issues or concerns that they may have. At these meetings residents also discuss building safety and the safety within the greater community/neighbourhood. These meetings are an important way for tenants to connect but also to do group problem solving whenever issues arise.

- **Bring tenants together to share meals.** As part of the support program, SJCH provides a meal program for residents who pay for the meal plan. Meals allow residents a chance to socialize, get to know their neighbours, and ensure they have access to nutritious food. In this program, residents pay \$250 per month for the food program and are provided with Breakfast and dinner 5 days a week. Residents rotate participating in set up and cleanup of the program. In 2016, SJCH completed a co design process researching the meal program, dining room environment, kitchen operation and food quality and menu analysis. St. Jude used the findings from this assessment, as well as aggregate data on resident health, and annual surveys to improve and adapt meal planning. This ensures the programming offered is well suited and effective and is meeting the health needs of the residents.
- **Resident workers.** SJCH has a team of residents who are responsible for the cleaning and landscaping and has also included other positions such as Administrative Assistant. Tenant involvement enhances sense of ownership and pride in their home and community as well as provides some extra income.
- **Tenant Directors on Board.** Residents have an opportunities to run for election and participate in the organization's governance as Directors of the Board.
- **Involve residents on staff hiring panels.** SJCH ensures a resident is involved as a member of the hiring panel for employees across the organization. Residents have excellent assessment skills and important to use this strength to provide input into future staff.

Supporting long term tenants to age in place.

Residents at SJCH are getting older. Nearly half of the residents are over 55 and approximately 20% are over 65 years old. SJCH took a number of measures to support their tenants to age in place.

Below are some key learnings to support tenant aging in their home.

- **Conduct assessments and link tenants to supports in a coordinated way.** Noticing the changing age demographics in their buildings, SJCH were proactive in assessing and responding to supports needed by coordinating with their local Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) to do an assessment “blitz” with all of their aging tenants. First, resource workers identified tenants that were likely to need supports related to aging and worked with one point person at CCAC to complete the assessments. CCAC assessed for services needed, as well as apartment modifications including bed rails, walkers, shower modifications and other assistive devices. After this coordinated assessment, 27% of the residents at SJCH began to receive ongoing supports from CCAC.
- **Utilize partnerships for additional medical services.** SJCH partnered with a nearby nursing college to provide routine visits from a Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) who is working towards becoming a Registered Nurse (RN). Students come on site to check tenants’ vitals, talk about medication and give medical advice.
- **Complete an accessibility review.** After receiving funding through the Social Housing Improvement Program (SHIP), SJCH hired a consultant and completed a formal accessibility

review for their main building. Upon completion of the assessment, they are now carrying out modifications include push door openers, a fob system and lift mechanisms.

- **Understand limitations and refer to seniors housing when necessary.** Although SJCH aims to support tenants to age in place and lay the groundwork for a vibrant aging community, there are limitations to the level of supports and medical services they can provide. When supports are not adequate SJCH works with tenants on an individual basis to refer them to seniors housing.

Partnerships

St. Jude Community Homes works with a variety of community partners. A formal partnership exists with House of Compassion, a supportive housing agency for which SJCH provides transfer payments and administrative support. SJCH also works closely with service providers who support their tenants including CCAC, ACT teams, CAMH, Impact teams and other case managers. Because resource workers are onsite where the tenants live they often get a clearer picture of how things are going with their tenants and can communicate concerns with the visiting workers.

Replication and Advice

- **One Team - use a one team approach** where each member of the team, from front line, kitchen, peer and maintenance are integral members who contribute to the success of St. Jude's programs.
- **Meal programs meet support needs, combat isolation and provide nutritious food.**

- Providing high quality housing is essential - clean, safe and well maintained homes help to minimize criminal activity as well as enhance tenant pride and ownership.
- Try to start new housing programs in locations with services nearby including community centres and health centres, but also near affordable grocery stores and community events and programming.
- Consider opportunities for a supported employment program. It gives people meaningful work and training in an environment where people understand the worker's challenges.
- Be clear with tenants about responsibilities of being a tenant and have a strong welcome in the community. Give welcome packages and introduce people to each other.
- Build the community internally but also be a part of the wider community.
- Continuous evaluation and monitoring of changes made through evaluations, focus groups and co-design projects.
- Building design is key - creating a shared space which is clean and inviting promotes wellness and improves security of building.

Outcomes:

Housing Stability

- 3 evictions in 30 years
- 36% have lived with SJCH longer than 10 years and 52% between 5 and 10 years.

Connection to Health Services

- 90% of residents have a doctor
- 88% have a psychiatrist

Reduced Hospitalizations

- In 2016-2017 16 tenants were hospitalized for psychiatric care and 5 residents were hospitalized for physical health care



Shared Resources

- Resource Worker Job Description

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