

**Promising Practices for Landlord Engagement and Retention and Mitigating Tenancy Risk
in the Mental Health and Addictions Sector**

Final Report

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Abstract

This report has two main purposes. The first is to identify which social service providers are involved in finding rental accommodation for clients and determining the challenges which are faced by these organizations as a consequence of landlord's concerns about renting to marginalized individuals. The second is to identify the approaches social service providers use to mitigate these landlord concerns to create best practice recommendations for the Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Pine Ridge (HKPR) region. Research was completed using an extensive and thorough literature review, email fact-finding and an online survey.

Findings from this research included the identification of organizations within the HKPR region that work in housing and with individuals who are marginalized. The mitigation methods these organizations use such as rent supplements, arranging for repairs, and paying for damaged property to mitigate different landlord concerns were also identified. The main concerns landlords have are non-payment of rent, damaged property, and neighborhood. Innovative programs such as RentSmart Ontario and the critical role these programs play is highlighted in addition to new adaptations on the previously established Housing First ideology with the Tiny Homes program.

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Key Terms & Definitions

Chronic Homelessness: The condition of being currently homeless and having been homeless for six or more months in the past year.

Client: A person who is using the services of another person, company, or organization.

Damage: Alteration or harm caused to something that reduces its value, condition, or usefulness.

Damage to Property: The act of damaging and therefore negatively altering property that results in corrections or fixes having to be made.

Drug Addiction: The condition of being mentally or physically dependent on a drug, while experiencing unpleasant effects until it ceases.

High-Risk Tenant: Presenting high potential to cause issues for the landlord and their property.

HKPR: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Pine Ridge.

Homelessness: The condition of being without a permanent home in the form of a house, dwelling, apartment, etc.

Housing: A building that is considered a home; house, apartment, dwelling but in a collective sense.

‘Housing First’ Model: An approach that prioritizes providing independent and permanent housing for those who might be experiencing homelessness.

HSJCC: Human Service and Justice Coordinating Committee.

Incarceration: The state of being in prison.

Landlord: A person who rents a house, apartment, dwelling, etc. to a tenant.

Landlord Concern: A landlord having concerns for potential issues or challenges associated with renting to someone.

Landlord Engagement: The process of engaging a landlord to work with housing organisations and tenants.

Marginalized: The act of treating or grouping people as insignificant or inferior based on a trait they possess. For the purposes of this project, marginalized groups are those who are recovering from incarceration, have experienced a drug addiction, have mental health issues or may be chronically-homeless.

Mental Health Issues: Difficulties that may be experienced in the ways of disorders or illnesses that affect the mental health of a person in a negative way.

Neighborhood Disturbance: Causing a disturbance, such as vandalism, mischief, or high levels of noise within a neighborhood that disrupts and upsets surrounding residents.

Non-Payment of Rent: The failure to pay an amount of money that is owed to someone else.

Property: A house, dwelling or apartment that belongs to a specific individual.

Rent: The payment made by a tenant to their landlord for the use of their house, apartment, dwelling, etc.

Rental Accommodation: Having a room or house which someone lives in or stays at for the exchange of money in the form of rent.

Social Service Provider: A person or organization (government, non-profit organization, etc.) that provides a service which aims to help or strengthen disadvantaged individuals (e.g. health care, welfare, counseling, etc.)

Tenant: A person who rents a house, apartment, dwelling, etc. from a landlord.

Introduction

The ability to live in a house is a human right in Ontario based on the Human Rights Code (1). Different laws, building codes, and tenancy acts allow the provincial and municipal governments to help govern rental housing (2). Although housing is a right; people who are recovering from incarceration, have experienced a drug addiction, have mental health issues or may be chronically-homeless all struggle with housing (3,4). Those life experiences directly impact their chances of being able to rent a house as landlords view tenants with those life experiences as being high-risk (5). The marginalized individuals are viewed as high-risk because the landlords have legitimate concerns when renting to them such as non-payment of rent, damage to their property, and neighborhood disturbances (3,4,6,7).

Each of the mentioned groups will face unique challenges in terms of renting a house for different reasons. For example, tenants may not be able to pay rent due to having to pay other bills first, having insufficient income, or having to pay damages. The significance of this is highlighted in 2014, in which one in five households were spending over 50% of their income towards rent (8). This puts them at risk of homelessness as it reduces their flexibility towards other expenses and this risk will continue to rise as the cost of renting increases in Ontario (8). According to the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit, altering locks, preventing landlord entrance to the unit, and providing false information are other commonly reported offences (9). Due to all these risks, it is possible landlords may discriminate towards these groups (2,10).

The rental housing market is no stranger to discrimination. There have been many reports produced over the years indicating how landlords are less likely to rent to different marginalized groups (2,3,10). One report by researchers from Guelph University showed that individuals stating they were from a shelter when asking about the availability of a unit were four and a half

times more likely to be told the unit was falsely unavailable (11). Landlords refusing to rent to individuals based on certain characteristics such as income is illegal, however when seen from the landlord's perspective and how housing a high-risk tenant can influence their livelihood it can be understood why they choose low-risk tenants (3,10).

The one aspect landlords are considering when they are deciding who to rent their property to, is whether it is good business or not (6). Some landlords are willing to rent to high-risk individuals to help the community and the high-risk individual, but not all willing to take that risk (3,6). The landlord is at risk of losing income and having other properties of theirs be less valuable by association (6). Therefore, the landlord may refuse to rent to those who are marginalized not because of their life experiences, but because it is not good for business (4,6). By renting to someone who has a stable income, clean history, and presents minimal risks, the landlord is renting to a lower-risk tenant which reduces the risk of their business being negatively affected (4,6). This is not a surprise as the rental market across Canada is very competitive, with extremely low vacancy rates, which favours landlords putting higher-risk tenants at a disadvantage (2,3)

Social service providers who work in housing play a critical role in trying to find rental accommodation for marginalized individuals (12). The legitimacy of the landlord's concerns and the risk the organization's client presents to the landlord must be considered when compared to the effectiveness of the organization's strategies to mitigate those concerns. This is crucial as landlords, as well as government initiatives and non-profit organizations, are pivotal partners with housing organizations to help provide reliable housing for their clients (5,6,12). For some landlords, despite high level of engagement with the tenants, issues still occur (2). However, successful strategies for landlord engagement have been identified which include organizations

helping with tenant screenings, providing tenant education, offering rent supplements and deposits, and having housing workers involved with the tenant (2,6,8,12). These strategies have been seen in some programs such as Housing First models (2,3,6,12). Housing organizations across the Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Pine Ridge (HKPR) region have claimed these strategies are essential in building strong relationships between landlords and housing organizations as they can provide guarantees on rent, social services, and communication between the different parties (2,3). Through the continued efforts of housing organizations to develop relationships with landlords and effectively mitigate their concerns, access to housing for marginalized people would increase.

The HKPR Regional Human Service and Justice Coordinating Committee (HSJCC) is bringing forward this project. The HKPR Regional HSJCC has a membership representative of social service and justice providers such as the police, mental health services and the courts whose vision is to help reverse the stigmatization and criminalization of people with mental health illnesses and addictions who may have been a part of the Justice System (13).

The goal of this research is two-fold. The first is to identify which social service providers are involved in finding rental accommodation for their clients and determining the challenges that are faced by these organizations as a consequence of landlord's concerns about renting to marginalized individuals. The second goal is to identify the approaches social service providers use to mitigate these landlord concerns to create best practice recommendations for the HKPR region. These goals are outlined through the research questions asked by the HKPR Regional HSJCC regarding this project:

1. How do social service providers address and mitigate landlord concerns about property damage and other losses in renting to marginalized individuals?

2. What organisations across the region are directly involved in finding housing for individuals?
3. Have these organisations faced challenges with tenant damage to property?
4. How have these organisations addressed landlord concerns or direct costs to landlords related to property damage?
5. What measures, if any, have organisations taken to mitigate risks for landlords?
6. Is landlord litigation or landlord's refusal to rent a significant concern for organisations?
7. What innovative approaches to mitigating landlord risk exist in other communities?
8. What is current best practice in mitigating landlord risk and insuring a supply of housing for populations who present with complex needs?
9. What direct research should be done with landlords?

With this project, it is possible to provide social service providers in the HKPR region with more effective methods for mitigating landlord concerns. By doing so, it would allow marginalized groups who experience homelessness to have a better chance of finding rental accommodation. Through a literature review, email communication, and surveys the research will be conducted to identify the issues social service providers face when finding rental accommodation for marginalized groups, and the innovative and successful methods being used to address the concerns of landlords.

Methods

Answering the research questions associated with this project required research conducted via a combination of an extensive and thorough literature review, email communication, and online surveys.

Literature Review

The literature review was completed to obtain background information on housing organizations in the HKPR region, landlord concerns when renting to marginalized populations, and ways to mitigate those concerns. Information on innovative approaches and best practice methods to mitigate landlord concerns as well as future research which should be done with landlords was also obtained via the literature review. The literature consisted of the following sources: journal articles, housing, homelessness and landlord engagement reports, housing organization websites, and online news articles. These sources were mainly obtained from online web searches using the Google and Google Scholar search engine and online journal databases PubMed and Scholars Portal Journals. A wide variety of searches were completed with an emphasis on the core search terms: “Renting to Marginalized Populations”, “Landlord Concerns When Renting”, “Landlord Engagement Programs”, “Mitigating Landlord Concern”, and “Best Practice Methods to Mitigating Landlord Concern”. Additional sources were obtained from individuals who were contacted via email to learn more about different topics and research already completed in this area of work. The literature review was completed throughout the duration of the research project, with focus changing based on results from the survey responses.

Online Surveys

An online survey was created using Qualtrics and sent out via email using an anonymous link. The survey consisted of 19 questions with the first two questions asking for participants’

consent to the terms and conditions of the survey and asking for permission to use the organization's name in the final report. If the participant answered 'no' to consenting to the terms and conditions of the survey, their survey was finished, preventing them from answering any of the other questions. However, they could continue the survey without giving permission to using the organization's name in the final report. The last question of the survey also gave the participants the option to include their contact information so they could be contacted in the case where more information was wanted in the form of an interview. None of the survey results warranted interviews, so they were not conducted as part of the research.

The remaining 16 questions were a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A. The survey was designed to address all the research questions which could not be answered through the literature review and was to be completed by any organization that worked in housing in the HKPR region. Approximately 50 recipients were sent an anonymous link to the survey which allowed their personal information to be unknown, unless otherwise given in the last question. Some of the recipients of the survey worked for the same organization, however due to organizations having multiple locations across the HKPR region, multiple responses from the same organization were allowed. The survey was sent out by Kerri Kightley to encourage responses from participants as her name is well known in the housing community within the region and thus would initiate a greater response.

The surveys were sent out and opened on January 14th, 2018 and closed on February 5th, 2018. A second email was sent out by Kerri on January 26th, 2018 to recipients with the same link to the survey as a reminder to complete it and was another way to increase the number of responses.

Once the surveys closed, all responses were exported from Qualtrics and imported into Microsoft Excel. This allowed for easy manipulation of the results by being able to sort them by the different responses for the survey questions. All the responses were first sorted by whether they were 100% completed or not. They were then repeatedly and uniquely sorted for each question to allow for easy tallying of the different answers corresponding to each question. These tallies were then created into graphs and charts to provide a simple way of displaying the analyzed results of the surveys. Answers which required written responses and therefore could not be sorted were individually read and analyzed and with some being subject to further research.

An ethics application and ethical data storage form were completed for the survey. Both forms were sent to Trent University's Forensic Science Research Ethics Committee for approval on November 11th, 2017. Edits were required for both documents over the course of getting them approved, with both getting final approval on December 14th, 2017.

Email Communication

Email communication was a primary method of obtaining information about active housing organizations in the HKPR region and for additional information based on survey results and online web searches.

A list of housing organizations who would be the recipients of the online survey was created through the help of housing service managers via email communication. Then, after a meeting with my host Dave Jarvis, the Chair of the HKPR Regional HSJCC, it was recommended contact be made with Kerri Kightley, a Regional Housing Coordinator for FourCast. Through email communication with her, a contact list for the survey recipients was created in combination with the organizations found previously via the literature review.

Email communication continued while conducting research using online web searches and after receiving survey results. Many emails were sent out to different housing organizations, landlord engagement programs, housing service managers, and housing companies within cities inside and outside of the HKPR region such as Peterborough, City of Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland County, Port Hope, Toronto, and Brandon, Manitoba to obtain more information about their work and the potential applications they had to the research questions associated with the project.

Results

This results section presents data and information in response to the research questions associated with this project. The research questions are answered using the different methods as described above; a literature review in combination with email communication and the online survey. The specific research questions which are answered using the results are italicized and bolded. First, the overall outcome of the survey and the organizational background questions will be addressed to provide an overview of the results of the survey.

Online Survey

The survey received 33 responses representing organizations that work in housing across the HKPR region. Of the 33 responses, only 1 was discarded as it was deemed an outlier because they answered 'No' to Question 4 which asks, "Is your organization involved in finding and/or supporting housing for clients?". By answering 'No', it indicates they are not an originally intended recipient of the survey. The other 32 responses were analyzed and used to present data in the remainder of this report as they answered saying they were involved in finding and/or supporting housing for their clients. It should be noted that not all respondents answered every question in the survey, and thus the actual number of responses to each question should be considered when looking at the percentages.

Organizational Background Questions

The questions and results presented in this subsection are not ones used to directly answer the research questions for the project. They are used to help frame and provide background information related to the organizations who answered the online survey.

1. What type of clients does your organization work with to find housing accommodation?

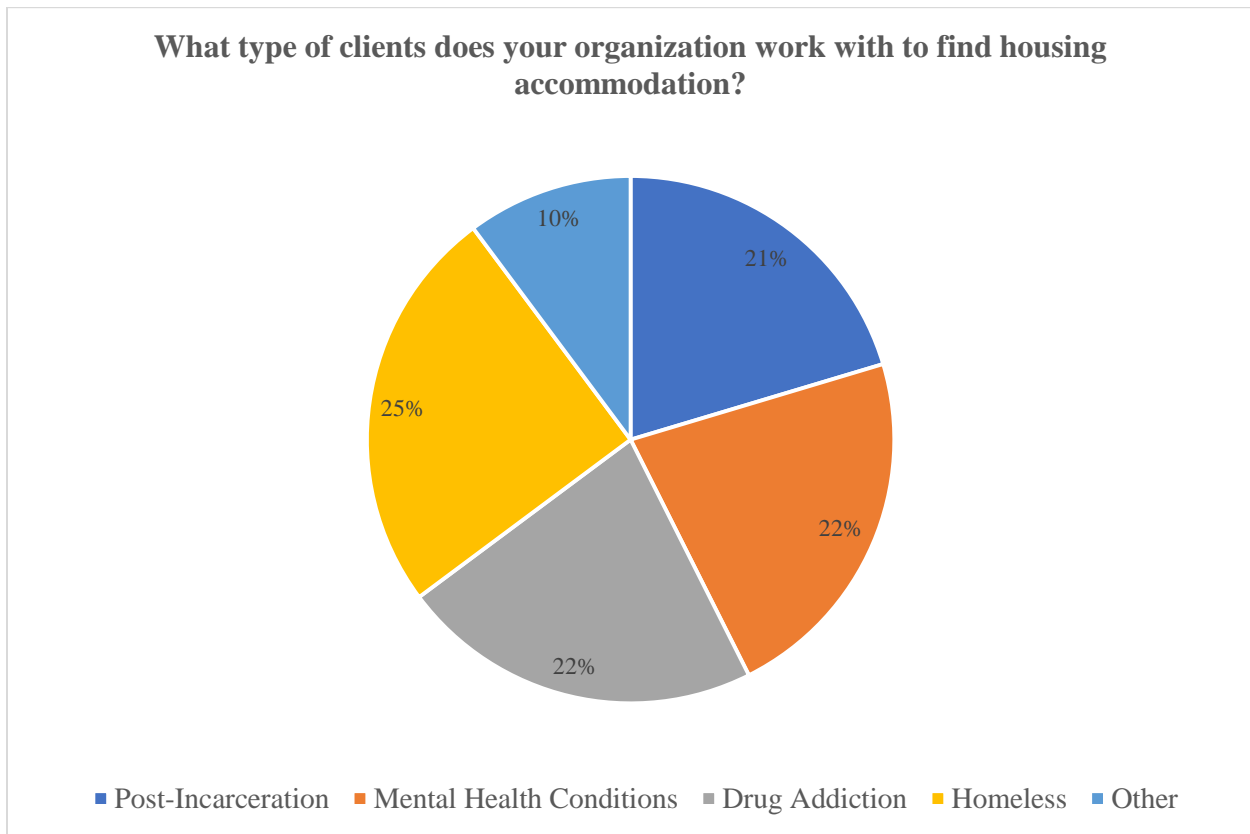


Figure 1: Types of Clients that Organizations Involved with Housing Assist

The most common type of client that the responding organizations worked with to find housing were those who experienced homelessness at 25% (n=27). Clients experiencing mental health conditions, drug addiction, and post-incarcerated were also highly represented at 22% (n=24), 22% (n=24), and 21% (n=22) respectively. There were 11 respondents who indicated they worked with other types of clients, those being youth and families, disabled individuals, women who have been abused, and more. Overall, there were 28 individual responses for this question.

2. Does your organization rent properties that it either owns or directly manages to clients?

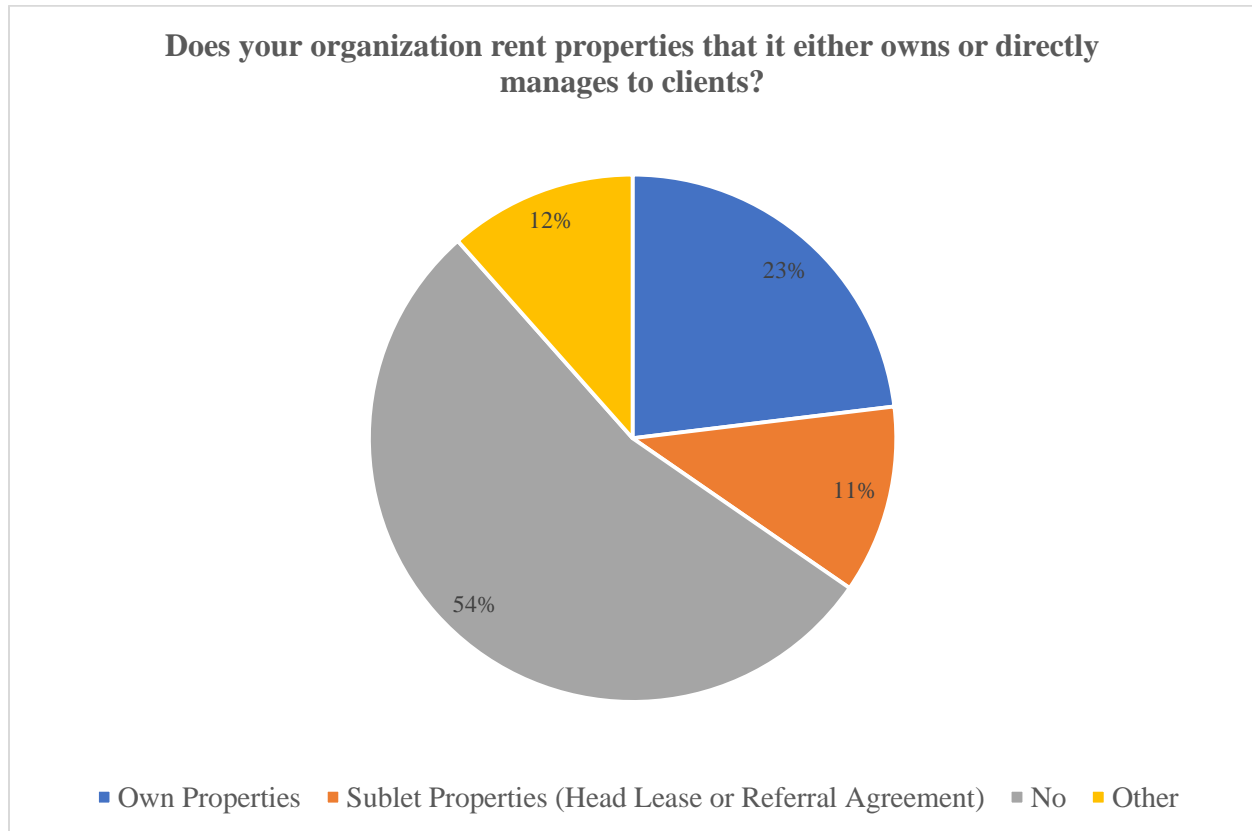


Figure 2: Types of Properties Organizations Offer Their Clients

Over half of the respondents, 54% (n=14), stated they do not either directly rent properties or sublet properties to their clients by answering no to the above question. Of the two previously mentioned options, 23% (n=6) of respondents indicated they will rent their own properties to clients whereas 11% (n=3) of respondents sublet their properties either through a head lease or referral agreement. There were 3 respondents who indicated they offer other types of services regarding renting with 2 of them stating they facilitate subsidized housing. There were 26 individual responses for this question.

3. Does your organization have established agreements with landlords to facilitate the renting of accommodation?

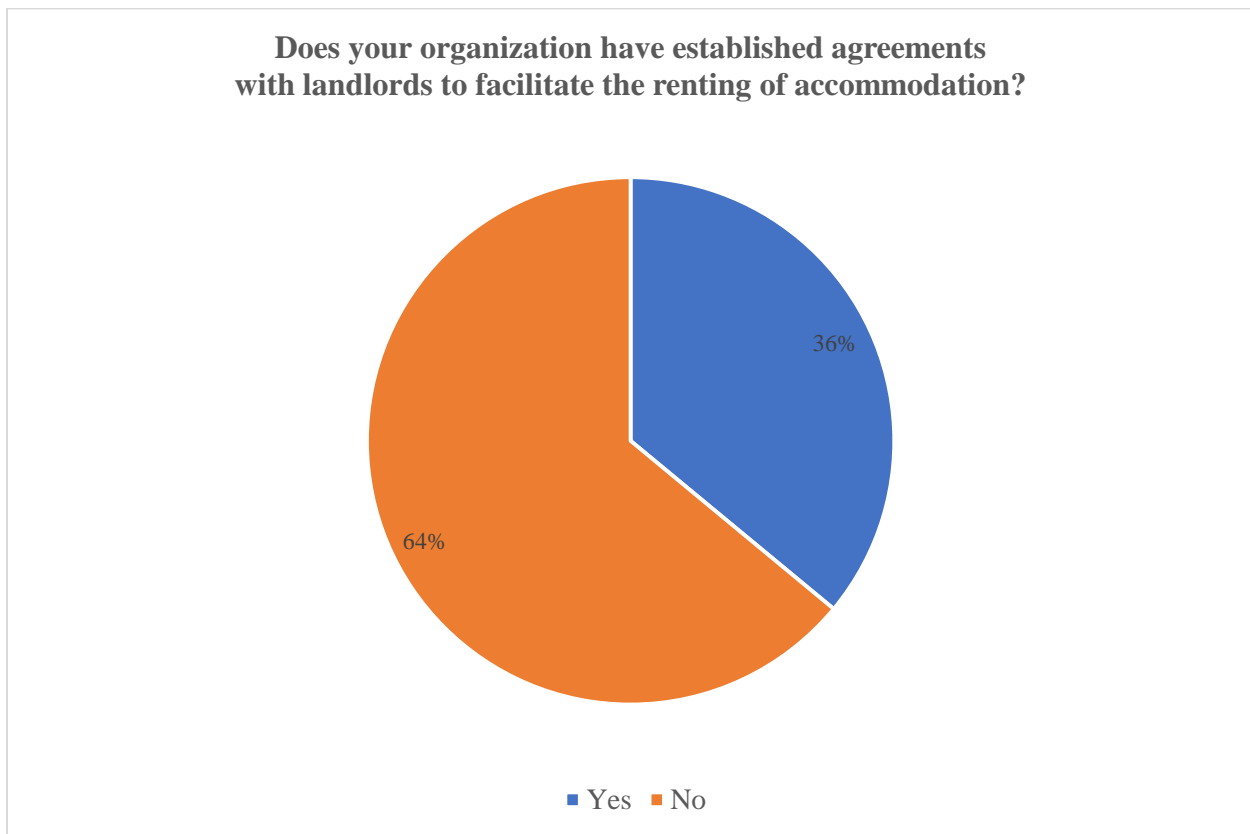


Figure 3: Landlord Established Agreements with Organizations Involved with Housing

Close to two thirds, 64% (n=16), of the respondents stated they do not have established agreements with landlords to facilitate the rent of accommodation. There were 9 respondents however who indicated they do have established agreements in place to assist with facilitating rental accommodations for their clients. There were 26 individual responses for this question.

4. Does your organization support clients in finding housing accommodation in the private sector?

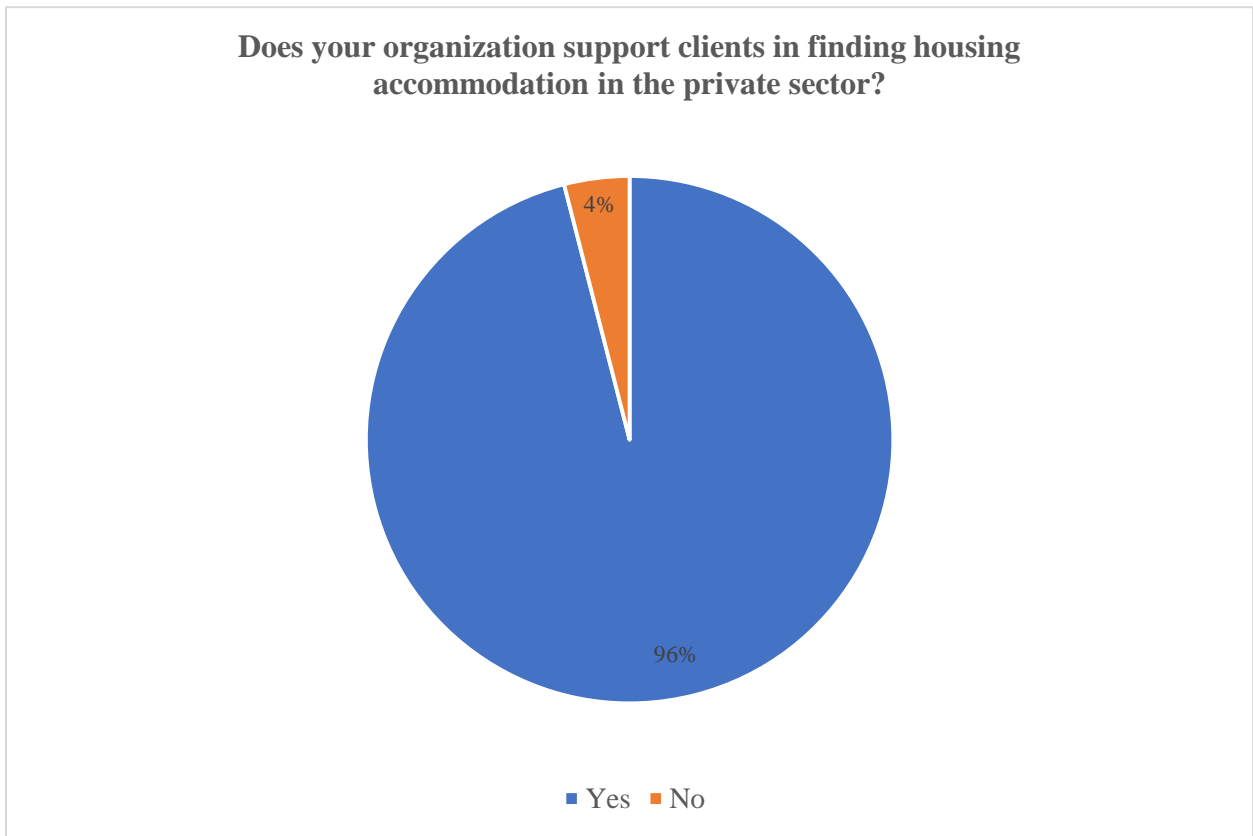


Figure 4: Private Sector Support from Organizations Involved with Housing

There were 27 individual responses for this question, with 96% (n=24), saying they do support their clients in finding housing in the private sector. There was only 1 respondent who answered saying no, that they do not support their clients in finding housing in the private sector.

Research Question Results

How do social service providers address and mitigate landlord concerns about property damage and other losses in renting to marginalized individuals?

This is a guiding question for the project and will be answered via the culmination of answers for the other research questions. The other research questions are more detailed and tailored to answer the specific components of this question.

What organisations across the region are directly involved in finding housing for individuals?

By using all three of the research methods described above, it was able to be determined that the following organizations are directly involved in finding housing for individuals within the HKPR region:

- A Place Called Home – City of Kawartha Lakes
- Brock Mission – Peterborough
- Cameron House – Peterborough
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- Community Care of the Kawartha Lakes
- Cornerstone Family Violence Centre Cobourg
- Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough
- Fourcast – Cobourg
- Fourcast – Lindsay
- Fourcast – Minden
- Fourcast – Peterborough
- Four County Crisis
- Greenwood Coalition – Port Hope
- Haliburton County
- Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Pine Ridge Health Unit
- Haliburton Highlands Health Services
- Haliburton Highlands Mental Health Services
- Housing Access Peterborough

- John Howard Society – Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton
- John Howard Society – Peterborough
- Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag Services Circle
- Northumberland County
- Northumberland Hills Hospital – Community Mental Health Services
- Peterborough City and County
- Peterborough Homelessness Coordinated Response Team
- Peterborough Housing Corporation
- Salvation Army Cobourg
- The Help Centre – Northumberland
- Transition House
- United Way
- Warming Room Community Ministries
- Women’s Resources of Kawartha Lakes
- Youth Emergency Shelter – Peterborough
- YWCA Peterborough/Haliburton

Have these organisations faced challenges with tenant damage to property?

To answer this research question, the following questions were asked in the survey: “What types of issues/concerns do landlords have with tenants that are also your clients?” and “Do landlords request compensation for repair costs and/or loss of rent to your organization?”.

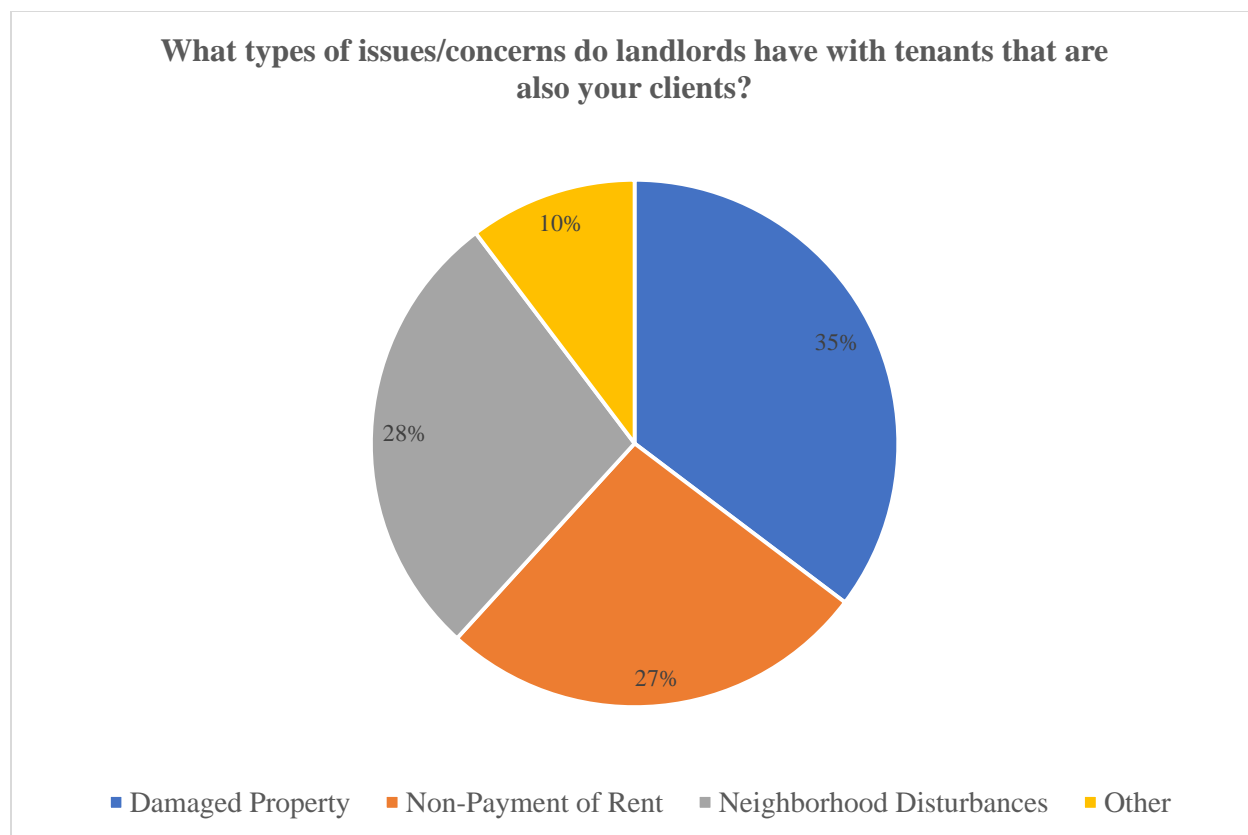


Figure 5: Landlord Issues and Concerns with Organization's Clients

This survey question aimed to be able to identify if the respondents were aware of landlords having concerns when renting to their clients and if so, which concerns were more frequently identified. There were 25 individual responses for this question, and from the responses it was seen that damaged property was the most prevalent concern at 35% (n=24). The other two common concerns were neighborhood disturbances at 28% (n=19) and non-payment of rent at 27% (n=18). There were 7 respondents who indicated landlords had other types of issues with their clients which were concerns such as hoarding, illegal activity within the unit, domestic abuse, pet problems and more. From these results, almost all respondents, except 1 indicated landlords are concerned with damaged property with their clients. Approximately 76% of respondents indicate non-payment of rent and neighborhood disturbances are also highly prevalent concerns landlords have with their clients when renting to them.

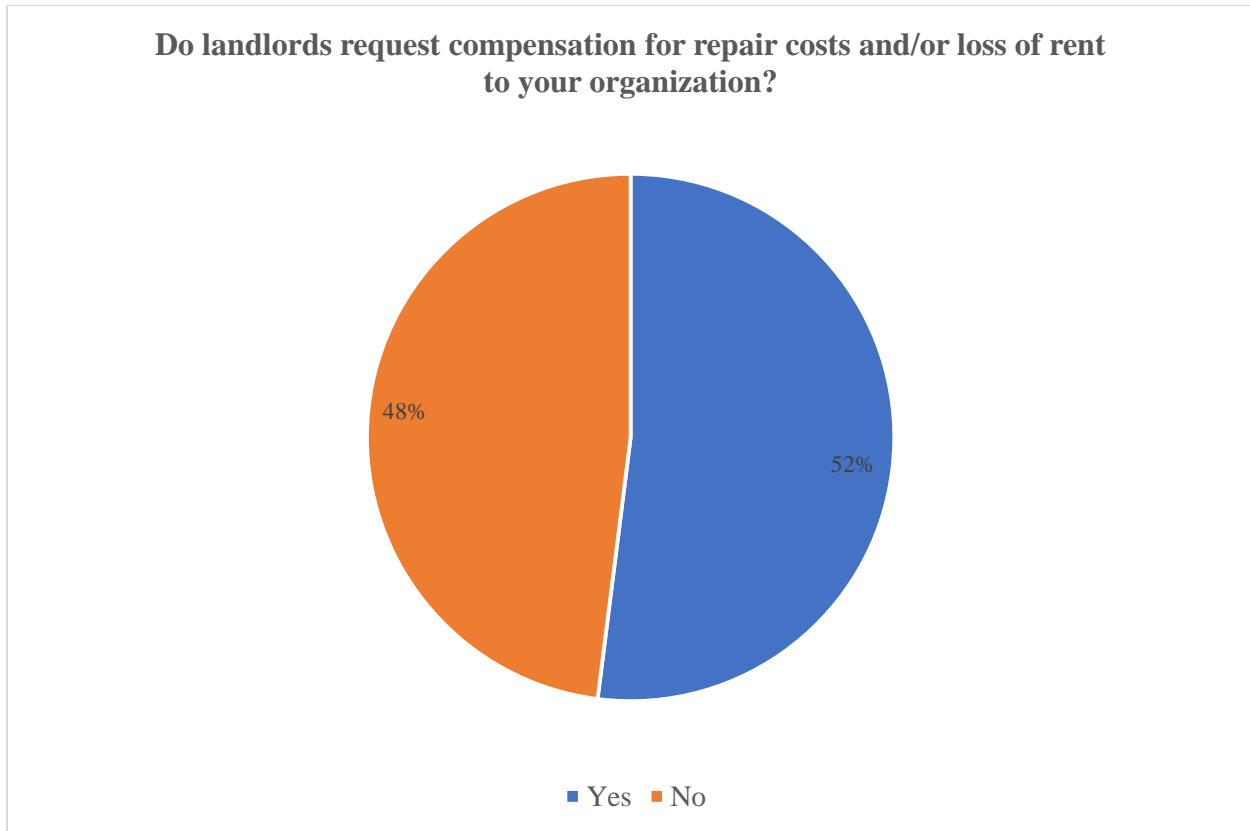


Figure 6: Compensation Requests from Landlords

There were 25 individual responses for this question, with 52% (n=13) of the respondents saying landlords do request compensation when faced with damaged property. That means 48% (n=12) of respondents are not asked for compensation from the landlord.

How have these organisations addressed landlord concerns or direct costs to landlords related to property damage?

To answer this research question, the following question was asked in the survey: “What does your organization do to mitigate and address the concerns that landlords have when renting to marginalized individuals?”

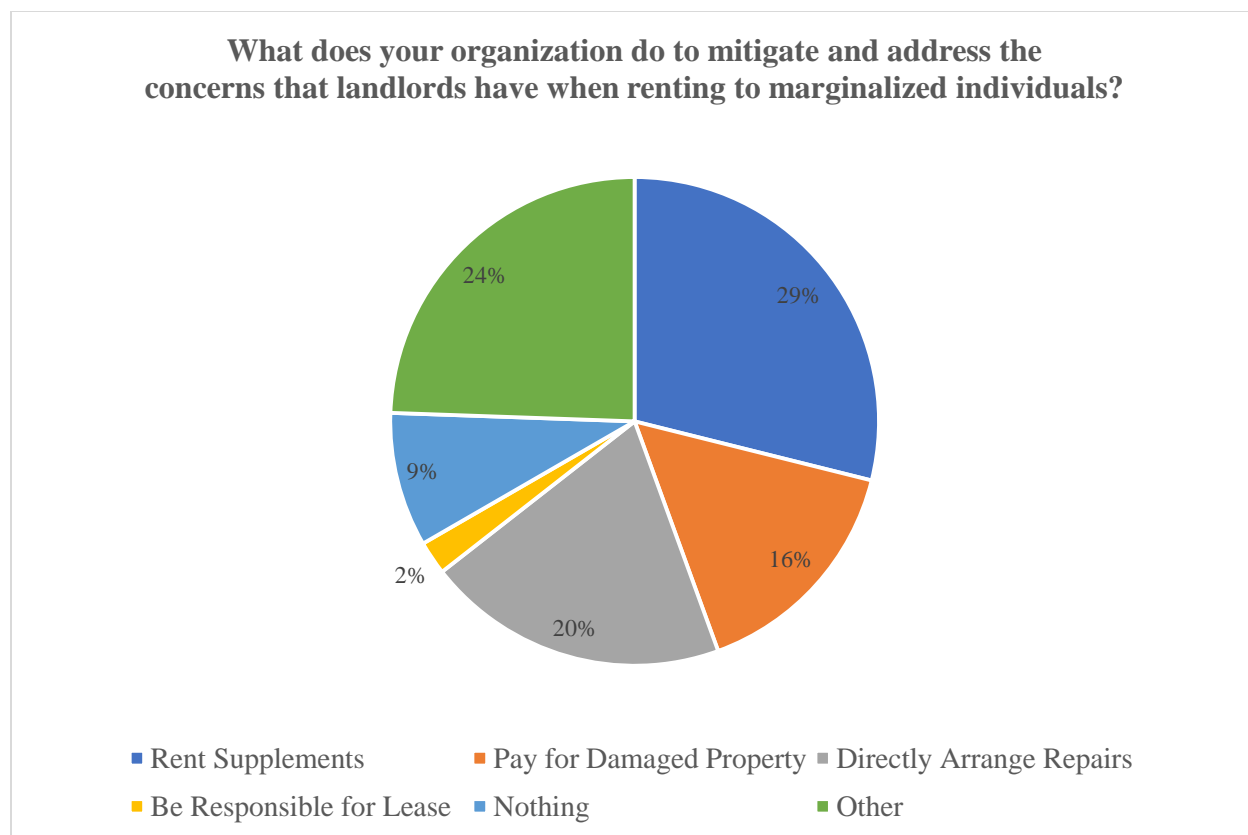


Figure 7: Organizations Involved in Housing's Mitigation Methods

This survey question was asked to see which well-known methods to mitigate landlord concerns are used within the HKPR region in relation to resolve property damage and its associated costs. The options of 'Pay for Damaged Property', 'Directly Arrange Repairs', and 'Other' are of interest for this question. The question had 25 individual responses from respondents. The most frequent option out of the three was 'Other' at 24% (n=11) with the other options being having immediate responses to landlord concerns, supporting clients with their housing, monitor tenants on a weekly or monthly basis for property damage, and facilitating conversations between the landlords and the tenants. The next highest option was directly arranging repairs at 24% (n=9), resulting in paying for damaged property being the least common option at 16% (n=7). It is seen that none of the options for mitigating landlord concerns

in relation to property damage stand out as a clear leader as the highest option was only chosen by 44% of the respondents who answered this question.

What measures, if any, have organisations taken to mitigate risks for landlords?

To answer this research question, the following question was asked in the survey: “What does your organization do to mitigate and address the concerns that landlords have when renting to marginalized individuals?” with the results being represented in Figure 7 above.

For this survey question, all the options are of interest as they are all able to mitigate risks for the landlords in different ways. Overall, rent supplements are the most common method to mitigate landlord concerns 29% (n=13). That also means since only 25 respondents answered this question, rent supplements are only used by 50% of the respondents who answered this question. The results for ‘Pay for Damaged Property’, ‘Directly Arrange Repairs’, and ‘Other’ are all reported above and hold true when applied to this question as well. The other relevant option of ‘Be Responsible for Lease’ was seen as the least chosen option at 2% (n=1). The responses for other for this question which were not described above were landlord referral agreements, direct payment of rent monthly, client having a trustee to ensure rent is paid for on time, and rental agreements that include different assessments, care plan development, daily supports for the client, damage funds, availability to meet regularly to address any concerns, and unit inspections based on needs of each individual being supported. The other options described above are also relevant for this question as well and should be considered valuable when looking to answer this question.

Is landlord litigation or landlord's refusal to rent a significant concern for organisations?

To answer this research question, the following questions were asked in the survey: “Is landlord litigation a concern for your organization?” and “On a scale of 1-5 how significant are landlord concerns to your work? (1 = Not Significant - 5 = Very Significant)”.

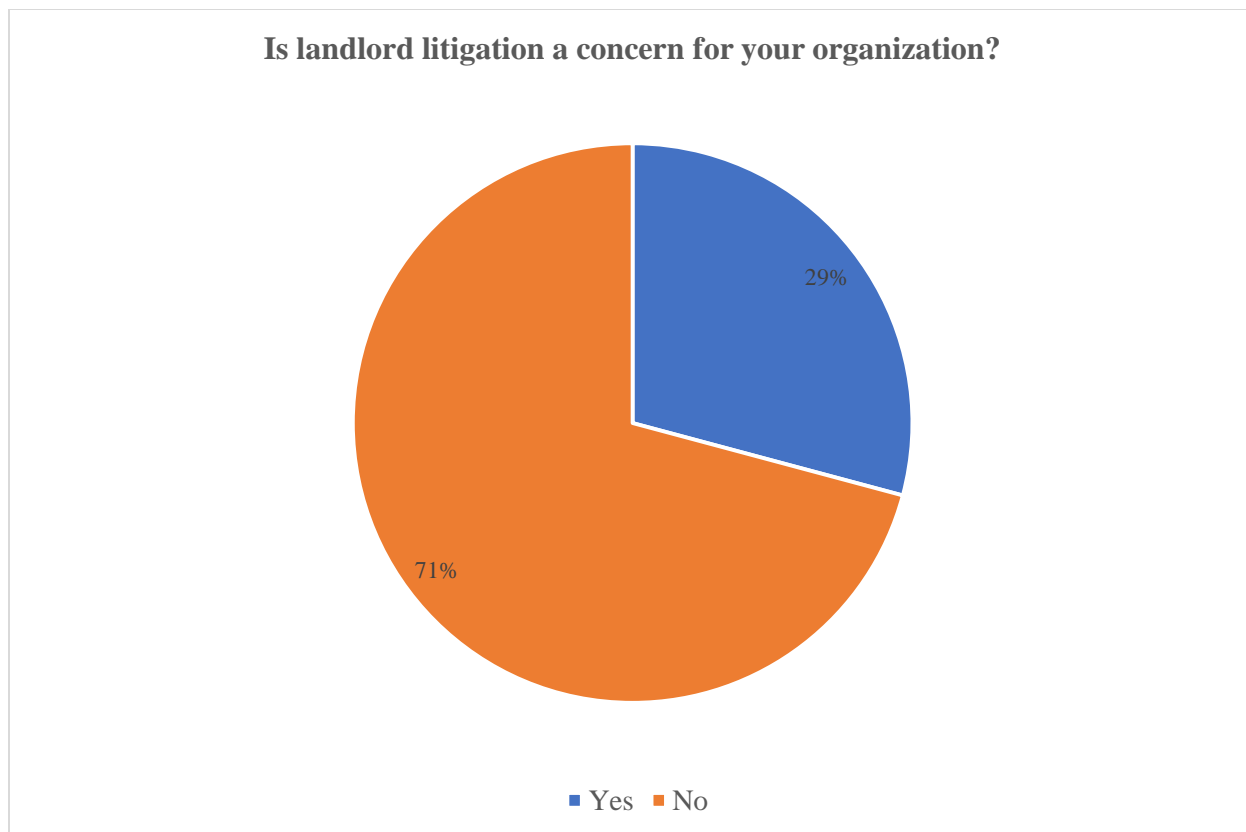


Figure 8: Landlord Litigation Being a Concern for Organizations Involved in Housing

This survey question is asked to directly answer the first part of the research question about determining if landlord litigation being a concern for the organization. There were 24 individual respondents to this question, with 29% (n=7) of them saying landlord litigation is a concern for their organization and the remaining 71% (n=17) saying landlord litigation is not a concern for their organization.

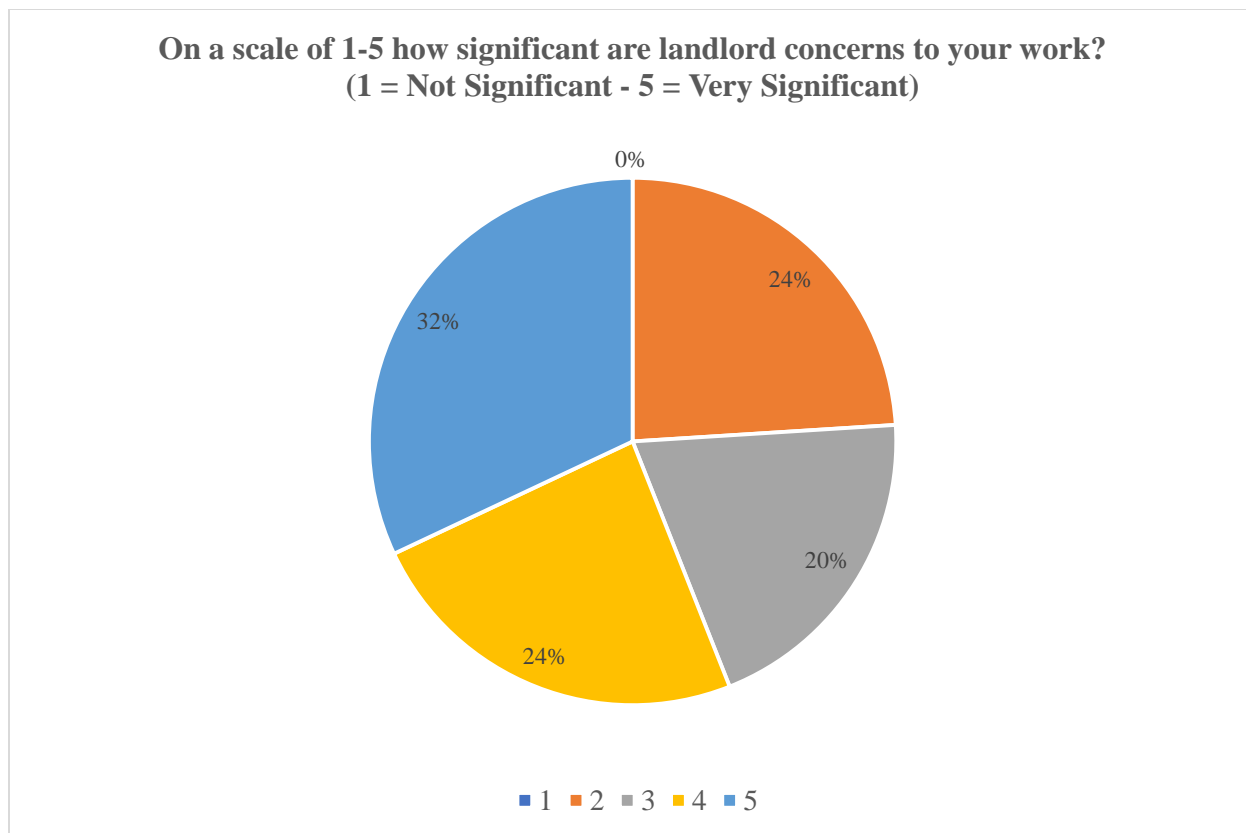


Figure 9: Landlord Concerns and Their Significance to Organizations Involved with Housing

This survey question is designed to provide insight to how significant landlord concerns are to the organizations and their work and therefore give an indication about a landlord's refusal to rent as if the organization is not concerned about the landlord concerns then the landlord's refusal to rent will most likely not be a concern of theirs either.

For this survey question, the answers from the respondents are subjective as the answer is a scale that has no true values to select. The respondent must decide how significant the landlords concerns are to their work, and then decide which number, from 1 to 5, is most appropriately reflects their answer.

There were 25 individual respondents for this question with 32% (n= 8) of respondents indicating landlord's concerns are very significant to their work whereas 0% (n=0) of respondents indicated landlord concerns are not significant to their work. Without providing a

label for values two, three, and four, 24% (n=6), 20% (n=5), and 24% (n=6) of respondents said landlord's concerns were significant to their work based on values two, three, and four respectively. These results indicate the respondents and their organizations view the landlord's concerns as significant to their work, just to different degrees in regards of significance.

What innovative approaches to mitigating landlord risk exist in other communities?

This research question was answered through research done via the literature review and email communication. For the purposes of this project, an innovative approach is more than just a new or advanced method that has been created to solve a problem but is also one that is able to make a realistic difference and change in the housing community.

RentSmart Ontario

RentSmart Ontario is part of the RentSmart Education Program which is a pan-Canadian initiative which is aimed at educating both tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities, and how to foster healthy relationships between those parties (14,15). The program offers a multitude of different education programs including a 3-hour basic course and a 12-hour certificate course for tenants and a 4-hour landlord training session, and a 4-day community educator piece (15).

By completing these courses, specifically the certificate course, tenants can prove to landlords that they are educated when it comes to housing and are ready to be a fit and reliable tenant (14,15). After communicating with representatives of RentSmart Ontario, I was made aware this program was developed to help people in society who are marginalized as it can provide those individuals who a way to show landlords that they are not as high of a risk to rent to as previously perceived as they are knowledgeable about rental housing and all of its

associated aspects (15). The RentSmart program can be made even more accessible to marginalized individuals as the organizations who work in housing can train and become Community Educators, so they can deliver and provide the RentSmart education courses themselves (14,15).

Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity Eviction Prevention Approach

The Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity (OCHE) has a highly established approach for eviction prevention with successful results (16). Their mandate is assisting seniors and vulnerable tenants within Toronto Community Housing (TCH) and apply strategies to resolve rent arrears. Using their strategies, the OCHE has seen a success rate of over 95% in the past several years regarding engaging tenants to work with them (16). After communicating to representatives from the OCHE, it is believed all housing providers and organizations can use their approach to eviction prevention to help mitigate the concerns landlords have when renting to marginalized individuals (16).

The OCHE becomes involved with a tenant after receiving a referral from the TCH due to issues with a tenant (16). The OCHE then uses their 10-step method, called the OCHE Approach to work with the tenant, should they accept the OCHE's help, to resolve the problems and sustain their housing (16). The OCHE Approach is as follows (16):

1. Use Positive Messaging
2. Engage and Empower Tenants
3. Employ Intensive and Focused Attention
4. Address Underlying Issues
5. Address External Funds
6. Use Creative and Flexible Plans

7. Provide Information to Tenants
8. Involve Families for Assistance
9. Increase Financial Literacy
10. Select Reasonable Repayment Amounts

The steps listed above may seem basic and not innovative but have proven to be successful (16). Through these steps, the OCHE is able to empower the tenant by involving them throughout the decision-making process (16). This is done by meeting with the tenant regularly where and whenever is suitable for them, frequently communicating with the tenant, helping resolve the tenant's underlying issues for not being able to pay rent, creating and identifying unique strategies to successfully resolve their problems, and much more (16).

Landlord Engagement Toolkit

Toolkits are effective ways of communicating and providing information about a method or strategy to a wide audience. The Landlord Engagement Toolkit was released in early 2018 and created by Dr. Jennifer Rae and Dr. Tim Aubry, with the help of a wide range of individuals and organizations (17). The work different organizations and individuals provide in relation to the different aspects of housing across the country are all culminated in this toolkit to create a resource that can be used to help housing organizations work and sustain successful working relationships with landlords (17).

This specific toolkit is focused on landlord engagement based on different Housing First programs and initiatives (17). It provides different ideas, strategies, and methods to work with landlords and foster a successful, working relationship with them which individual organizations can choose from to incorporate into their own mandate or practices (17).

The Landlord Engagement Toolkit addresses several different components of landlord engagement such as recruiting landlords, maintaining relationships, and ways to work together (17). Overall, it will be an essential tool soon for all housing organizations who are wanting to or already are working with landlords as it encompasses all of the vital components of working with landlords by using the information from successful and notable organizations in the housing community (17). Most importantly, this toolkit relays all that information in a clear, concise, and effective way which makes it usable for anyone (17).

What is the current best practice in mitigating landlord risk and insuring a supply of housing for populations who present with complex needs?

This research question was answered through research done via the literature review and email communication.

Housing First

Housing First has been generally accepted in the housing community as the current best practice in mitigating landlord risk due to the core principles that it follows (18). With the structure of Housing First and how it provides support, it is also able to act as a reliable way to supply housing for individuals who are marginalized as landlords are more likely to rent to those individuals because of the support provided to the tenant (18).

Housing First works by providing people who are experiencing homelessness permanent homes first and foremost with support following soon after (18). One of the main principles of Housing First is that housing is a core requirement for people to be able to effectively better themselves and recover from any problems they may be experiencing (18). Extensive studies have been done on this program, with one of the most notable being the ‘Canadian At

Home/Chez Soi' study conducted in 2008 (18). This study showed that the Housing First model is an effective way to sustain housing for all marginalized populations compared to traditional treatment first approaches as over 80% of participants stayed housed after one year using Housing First (18).

Brandon Housing First

Housing First has been adopted by numerous housing organizations around the world, with one of the most highly regarded ones being the Brandon Housing First program in Brandon, Manitoba. It started with their approach to engage landlords as they realized early on that the success of a Housing First program relies on the ability to enter the private housing market (19). By hosting meet and greet luncheons, providing informative documents, and having one on one meetings with landlords, the Brandon Housing First program was able to recruit landlords (19). Through their continued efforts, the Brandon Housing First program is able to provide consistent and reliable support to their clients and their landlords which help makes the program stand out in the Housing First community (19). The program covers damages and repairs (up to \$3500) of the property, has weekly home visits for the tenants, provides a 24/7 contact number in case of emergencies or immediate concerns, being able to ensure rent is paid on time, and having a constant supply of tenants for the landlords (19). The program also continues to improve by currently working on a proactive response for individuals who are post-incarcerated and require housing assistance (19).

Tiny Homes

Tiny Homes is a growing trend in the housing community and is able to offer a sustainable supply of housing for marginalized populations (20). Tiny Homes adopts the Housing First ideology of providing homeless people a permanent place to live and has been

adopted in cities across North America (20,21). The program is a more affordable option when compared to traditional housing methods while being more environmentally friendly and sustainable as they offer only the essentials of a normal house but just in a condensed area (20). On average, tiny homes can be priced anywhere from \$30,000 to \$100,000 which is substantially cheaper than it would be to build full sized houses or an apartment building to house the same number of people (20). There have been cities in the United States such as Seattle who have adopted this approach as well as Canadian cities such as Hamilton and areas in north-central British Columbia (21,22,23). Although there has not been extensive research conducted yet on tiny homes, it can be easily perceived as a way to also mitigate landlord concerns as any rent associated with them would be cheaper making it more affordable for marginalized populations, as well as there being less property to potentially damage which would reduce concern for landlords as well (20). The only concern which might not be able to be mitigated and could potentially be elevated is neighborhood disturbances as with more homes closely located to one another, there are more neighbours which tenants may accidentally or purposely disturb.

What direct research should be done with landlords?

This research question was answered through research done via the literature review. Research was conducted via online web searches to see if any housing organizations or initiatives had identified areas or topics themselves which should be done with landlords. One resource found was a Landlord Survey conducted in St. John's Newfoundland in 2016 (24). The goal of the survey was to learn more about their landlord demographic and to obtain feedback (24). From this resource, some suggestions were brought forward that are applicable to this research question as well (24).

The major area where direct research should be done with landlords is how the government can help landlords, and more specifically how smaller scale landlords can get more assistance (24,25). The help from the government can be done on a municipal, provincial, or even federal level to ensure landlords are getting some form of compensation when they are willing to take risks by renting to high-risk tenants (24,25). This compensation could be in the form of lowered property tax as it can be costly to be a good landlord (24,25). Knowing the Canadian government has put forward different programs to end homelessness, it would make sense that providing compensation of this form to landlords who are renting to marginalized and potentially homeless individuals would help in their goal of ending homelessness. This idea has benefits for both the landlords, the marginalized individuals, and the government as all three parties prosper from the outcome. More assistance for smaller scale landlords, who may be new to the housing community could also be considered so they are able to grow too (24).

Discussion

There are many different organizations throughout the HKPR region that work in housing. The level in which they are directly involved varies, as some are simply helping their clients find housing while addressing the client's other life problems whereas some organizations are more devoted by helping people find housing, working with landlords and creating more housing opportunities within the region.

From the results it is shown these organizations face several different challenges when trying to find rental accommodation for their clients as landlords have a variety of concerns which make them hesitant to rent to the organization's clients. These concerns consist of non-payment of rent, damaged property, and neighborhood disturbances and even include less prevalent concerns such as hoarding, domestic abuse and problems with pets. Highlighted was damage to property, as over 95% of the respondents for that question indicated landlords have concerns about damaged property. This is significant as the most commonly regarded concern with these different marginalized populations, non-payment of rent, was the third lowest concern at 72%. This is further emphasized as out of 25 respondents, over half indicated landlords request compensation from the organization for the damages caused to the landlord's property by the organization's clients. Damaged property is a major concern for organizations involved in housing in the HKPR region.

How the organizations resolve the issue of damaged property is interesting to note considering the significance of the concern to landlords. Results indicate that out of all the available options, none were heavily favoured or used compared to the other options. Organizations use a wide variety of different methods to mitigate damaged property concerns

such as monitoring their clients, immediately responding themselves to the landlord's concerns, paying for the damaged property themselves, and directly arranging the repairs. These solutions were all deemed to be feasible methods to mitigating landlords concerns as the organizations attributed their methods to the success of their work in the survey. It is just interesting to note there is not one of the methods which stands out as a clear strategy towards mitigating landlord concerns when it comes to damaged property.

However, when considering all of the different concerns landlords have with renting to marginalized populations, there is one resolution method which stands out above the rest within the HKPR region. Rent supplements were used by 50% of the respondents for this question, with the next highest standard method being directly arranging repairs at 36%. Despite rent supplements being a method to mitigate non-payment of rent concerns, the fact it is used by 50% of respondents shows how favoured it is when compared to other methods to mitigate the same concern¹. The other important thing to note even though some methods are favoured compared to others within the region, there is still a wide variety of methods being used among the organizations. Organizations use additional methods to mitigate landlord concerns such as landlord referral agreements, direct payment of rent monthly, having clients have a trustee to ensure rent is paid for on time, and rental agreements that include different assessments, care plan development, daily supports for the client, damage funds, availability to meet regularly to address any concerns, and unit inspections based on needs of each individual being supported. This is an important aspect to consider as it is key to recognize each individual who is marginalized will have different challenges and needs that the organization will have to work

¹ Rent supplements are a method to increase housing accessibility by making unaffordable housing affordable and ensure landlords are getting fair market rent. Therefore, they are a useful tool for housing professionals in finding accommodation for clients, but they are not intended to directly mitigate landlord concerns, rather to make property more affordable. In some cases, this will however mitigate landlord concerns about non-payment of rent.

with to resolve. By having these different methods available, it shows the organizations are not trying to help all of their cliental by using one specific method and hoping it works, but the organizations are adaptable and able to adjust their methods to fit the needs of the client to ensure the client as high of a chance as possible to obtain rental accommodation.

However, despite the amount of early research dedicated to this project in the early stages of it, one mitigation method was learned about after the online survey was created and sent to recipients. This mitigation method is called ‘Risk Mitigation Funds’ and is another fund of money created by individual organizations and funded by municipalities which landlords can access if faced with problems (5,26). For example, it can be used to pay for damages to the property of the cost of the damages exceed the amount of the security deposit or are not covered by it (5,26). The risk mitigation fund can be can also be used to cover non-payment of rent as well if needed (26). It is a method used by many different programs and organizations within the United States (26). Overall, this helps lower the chance the landlord is exposed to financial losses and can help mitigate any concerns they have renting to a high-risk tenant as they are ensured compensation for any potential issues the tenant may cause them (5,26). Unfortunately, it is unknown if any of the organizations within the HKPR region use this as a method, however they would have had the chance to indicate they use this method in the survey under the ‘Other’ option for the question, “What does your organization do to mitigate and address the concerns that landlords have when renting to marginalized individuals?”.

The importance of having these different ways to mitigate landlord concerns is also highlighted through the perceived significance that landlord concerns has on the work of the organizations. Despite the answers being subjective, the organizations indicated landlord concerns are a concern for them. From Figure 9 above, if chosen values of 3 or above are to be

considered to signify that landlord concern is of some significance to their work, then over 76% of the respondents for that question indicate landlord concern is significant to their work.

As a majority of respondents indicated landlord concern is significant to them and their work, it is possible to infer they will continue to put effort towards improving their existing strategies, but it is also possible that they adopt new methods which are appearing in other communities as well. As discussed in the Results section, there are a few innovative methods available within the housing community which are able to make an effective difference by providing higher levels of engagement with landlords and effective ways to mitigate landlord's concerns (14,15,16,17). Those methods are ones such as the Landlord Engagement Toolkit, the OCHE Approach to eviction prevention and the RentSmart Ontario education program (14,15,16,17).

The approach the OCHE uses for eviction prevention is one that could be adopted by local organizations who are involved in housing as it is not limited to who and what it can be applied to and who can benefit from it (16). In Toronto it has been shown to be a simple, yet successful method to prevent tenants from being evicted due to rent arrears and be able to sustain housing for vulnerable people (16). By applying this method locally, landlords could know there is a strategy in place to help them and their tenants when different problems arise such as non-payment of rent or damaged property (16).

One way to help mitigate landlord concern is to provide both tenants and landlords education about their different rights and responsibilities as a way to avoid any potential issues in the future (12). This is what RentSmart Ontario is aimed towards and is able to provide this education in an official capacity not only to tenants and landlords, but to housing organizations as well so they can continue the education chain (14,15).

This education program allows tenants to become educated about tenant and landlord rights, their responsibilities, and how to foster healthy relationships between those parties (14,15). By completing the program, specifically the certificate course, tenants can prove to landlords that they are educated when it comes to housing and are ready to be a fit and reliable tenant (14,15). Marginalized individuals can use this education program as a way to show landlords that they have the knowledge and information on how to be a responsible and reliable tenant which lowers the risk landlords take when renting to the marginalized individuals (14,15).

Most importantly for housing organizations, the RentSmart program and the information it provides is accessible to organizations as they can train to become Community Educators, so they can deliver and provide the RentSmart education courses themselves (15). This would allow these local organizations to be able to educate their clients in-house which would help them when finding rental accommodation (15). By becoming community educators, it would allow the organizations to help fund the education programs for their clients and make it accessible to a wider range of people as it would all be taught locally.

Another way to make housing more accessible to people is by adopting newer approaches to Housing First models. Housing First is an established housing initiative which has been adopted worldwide, however one of the newer approaches to this is called Tiny Homes (20,21). Tiny Homes are simply smaller versions of full sized houses, which offer the essentials so an individual can sustain themselves and live within the space (20). They are a much more affordable option when compared to traditional housing methods while being more environmentally friendly and sustainable (20). Tiny Homes can cost anywhere from from \$30,000 to \$100,000 to build which is substantially cheaper than it would be to build full sized houses or an apartment building to house the same number of people (20). Although this is a

newer initiative, many cities across North America have embraced this idea by adopting it themselves and building tiny homes to house the homeless (21,22,23). There is the potential tiny homes can mitigate landlord concerns as any rent associated with the smaller home would be cheaper making it more affordable for marginalized populations (20). There would also be less property to potentially damage which would reduce concern for landlords as well (20). The only limitation to this method is the compact nature of the homes, which would allow more homes to be placed together in a community and would consequently increase the chance for neighborhood disturbances. However, if the concept of tiny homes is able to be adopted by housing organizations, in combination with the Housing First ideology and support systems, then it could be able to grow and become a sustainable and reliable way to house not only the homeless but other marginalized individuals as well (20).

Even though there are new initiatives taking place across the country, there is still more research to be done. At this point in time after having conducted an extensive literature review, there is one area yet to be addressed in the housing community which is incorporating the government in the housing community and having them help landlords who rent to marginalized individuals (24). By providing benefits to landlords who rent to individuals who are marginalized, it would encourage landlords and also help the government with their goals to end homelessness (24). Through assisting landlords who take risks on these high-risk tenants, both the landlords and government benefit which is ideal.

Through all this research, the organizations who are involved in housing within the HKPR region, including those who work with individuals that have been marginalized, have been identified. The concerns landlords have when renting to individuals who have been marginalized, that are also clients of the organizations have been established as well as the

different mitigation methods the organizations use towards mitigating the concerns landlords have with their clients. Finally, innovative methods used in other communities and best practice methods within the housing community have been established. It is with all this information that it is possible social service providers in the HKPR region will now have more effective methods for mitigating landlord concerns and by doing so, marginalized groups who experience homelessness will have a better chance of finding rental accommodation.

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Appendix A: Copy of Survey

Participant Consent Form

Promising practices for landlord engagement and retention and mitigating tenancy risk in the mental health and addictions sector.

| Student Researcher | Research Advisor | Research Advisor |
|---|---|---|
| Name: Craig Rutherford | Name: Sharon Beaucage-Johnson | Name: John Marris |
| Email: craigrutherford@trentu.ca | Email: sharonbeaucage@trentu.ca | Email: johnmarris@trentcentre.ca |

This survey is part of a research project that is looking at ways of mitigating landlord concerns in renting to individuals with mental health conditions, addiction issues, or coming out of homelessness. This research is being conducted by Trent University's Forensic Science department in conjunction with the Trent Community Research Centre on behalf of the Regional Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee (HSJCC).

With the historically low vacancy rates currently being experienced across the region and the need to follow a Housing First approach, the HSJCC wants to understand the challenges faced by service providers in finding housing and draw on best practices in mitigating the concerns of landlords in renting to individuals who have faced marginalization.

Please complete the following survey to the best of your ability. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer and stop answering the survey at any time. Your contact information, if given, will be kept separate from your survey results and pseudo-anonymized to maintain confidentiality. In order to maximize the benefit of this research, we would like to include the names of organizations in the final report. Please indicate your consent to including your organization's name in the report by ticking the box below. After completing the survey, you will have access to the full report once it is finished and invited to attend the Celebration of Community Research in March 2018.

By continuing with the survey, you are giving informed consent for your results to be used towards the research project as listed above. Personal information will be omitted from any publications.

Do you consent to the following (Check all that apply):

- I accept the terms and condition as described above.
- I accept having the organization's name being used in the final report.

For the purposes of this survey; "marginalized people/groups/individuals, etc." refers to those who have experienced homelessness, drug addiction, mental health conditions, and incarceration.

1. Name of Organization: *Written Response*
2. Is your organization involved in finding and/or supporting housing for clients?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. If yes, what type of clients does your organization work with to find housing accommodation? Check all that apply.
 - a. Post-Incarceration (Ex Offender)

- b. Mental Health Conditions
 - c. Drug Addiction
 - d. Homeless
 - e. Other: *Written Response*
4. Does your organization rent properties that it either owns or directly manages to clients?
- a. Own Properties
 - b. Sublet Properties (Head Lease or Referral Agreement)
 - c. No
 - d. Other: *Written Response*
5. Does your organization have established agreements with landlords to facilitate the renting of accommodation?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Comments: *Written Response*
6. If yes, please provide details as to how your organization carries out this work.
- *Written Response*
7. Does your organization support clients in finding housing accommodation in the private sector?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Comments: *Written Response*
8. How long (on average) after finding a client housing does your organization stay in contact with the client?
- a. < 1 Month
 - b. 1 – 3 Months
 - c. 3 – 6 Months
 - d. 6 – 12 Months
 - e. 1 – 2 Years
 - f. 2+ Years
 - g. Don't contact them at all
 - h. Comments: *Written Response*
9. What types of issues/concerns do landlords have with tenants that are also your clients? Check all that apply.
- a. Damaged Property
 - b. Non-payment of Rent
 - c. Neighborhood Disturbances
 - d. None
 - e. Other: *Written Response*
10. Do landlords request compensation for repair costs and/or loss of rent to your organization?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Is landlord litigation a concern for your organization?
- a. Yes

- b. No
12. On a scale of 1-5 how significant are landlord concerns to your work? (1 = Not Significant - 5 = Very Significant)
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
13. What does your organization do to mitigate and address the concerns that landlords have when renting to marginalized individuals? Check all that apply.
- Rent Supplements
 - Pay for Damaged Property
 - Directly Arrange Repairs
 - Be Responsible for Lease
 - Nothing
 - Other: *Written Response*
14. How successful is/are the methods that your organization uses towards mitigating landlord concern? (Provide any statistics, reports, etc. if possible)
- *Written Response*
15. Are you aware of any other successful/innovative methods that exist in other organizations/communities that help find housing for marginalized individuals?
- *Written Response*
16. General Comments
- *Written Response*
17. If you would be interested in taking part in an interview to further this research project, please include the following details:
- Name of Participant: *Written Response*
 - Organization: *Written Response*
 - Contact Email: *Written Response*

Thank you for completing this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

Participant Feedback Sheet

Promising practices for landlord engagement and retention and mitigating tenancy risk in the mental health and addictions sector.

| Student Researcher | Research Advisor | Research Advisor |
|---|---|---|
| Name: Craig Rutherford | Name: Sharon Beaucage-Johnson | Name: John Marris |
| Email: craigrutherford@trentu.ca | Email: sharonbeaucage@trentu.ca | Email: johnmarris@trentcentre.ca |

The questions in the survey aim to ask about the concerns that landlords have when renting to marginalized individuals and how social service providers currently mitigate them. Best and/or innovative methods to mitigate landlord concerns were sought after while also trying to identify any specific characteristics as to why landlords had concerns (Certain recurring problems, traits about the possible tenants, etc.).

To answer these questions, a survey was created and sent out to social service providers that work in housing across the Peterborough, Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton and Northumberland region. These providers are ones that work with finding marginalized individuals housing and would most likely be ones to be in contact with landlords, trying to mitigate their concerns. The data from the surveys was then used to identify successful and possibly innovative methods towards mitigating landlord concern.

Appendix B: List of Programs and Initiatives

| |
|---|
| <p>RentSmart Ontario</p> <p>Contact Info: admin@rentsmartontario.ca</p> <p>Web Address: http://www.rentsmartontario.ca/</p> <p>Description: An education program aimed at educating both tenants and landlords about different life skills associated with housing.</p> |
| <p>Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity Eviction Prevention Approach</p> <p>Contact Info: info@oche.ca</p> <p>Web Address: http://www.oche.ca/index.html</p> <p>Description: Assisting seniors and vulnerable tenants within Toronto Community Housing (TCH) and apply strategies to resolve rent arrears.</p> |
| <p>Landlord Engagement Toolkit</p> <p>Contact Info: N/A</p> <p>Web Address: http://homelesshub.ca/resource/landlord-engagement-toolkit-guide-working-landlords-housing-first-programs</p> <p>Description: A guide designed for program providers to help them build effective and successful relationships with landlords in the context of a Housing First program.</p> |
| <p>Brandon Housing First</p> <p>Contact Info: info@brandonhousingfirst.ca</p> <p>Web Address: http://brandonhousingfirst.ca/</p> <p>Description: One of the most highly regarded Housing First programs within the housing community out in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada.</p> |
| <p>Tiny Homes</p> <p>* No Official Contact Info or Web Address *</p> <p>Description: Innovative approach to Housing First which builds and uses smaller scale houses to provide cheaper, more affordable housing for the homeless.</p> |