



## POSITION ON CORE FUNDING

ACWS believes that shelters need to be adequately funded for their work. Funding uncertainties and limitations are the most prevalent issue facing women's shelters in Alberta. Funding constraints place stress on shelter management and staff and defray time and effort away from programs and services. In order to successfully implement the recommendations of the Premier's Roundtable on Family Violence, the province and the federal government need to ensure the financial health of women's and seniors' emergency shelters, who are fundamental partners in developing a community-based collaborative response.

### History

In 1985, a Core Staffing Model was established for provincially funded women's shelters. The definition of Core was based on the provision of the following basic emergency services:

- Protection
- Crisis intervention (but not crisis lines)
- Practical assistance and information
- Individual case planning and referral to community resources, including legal aid and advocacy support
- Child support program
- Food
- Shelter
- Personal incidentals
- Non-prescription drugs
- Referral and transportation to emergency medical and dental care
- Audit fees
- Legal fees
- Bank fees
- Office Supplies
- Telephone
- Travel
- Board and Staff Development

The following chart is used to calculate the number of staff the province is prepared to fund for women's emergency shelters based on a pre-determined number of beds (this may not reflect all of the beds in a shelter). ***It is still being used by the Province to determine contracts, 20 years later.***

**TABLE A****PRORATING STAFFING MODEL**

		<b>FUNDED BED SIZE</b>							
<b>POSITION</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>
Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Administrative Assistant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Child Care Worker	1	1	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2
Counsellor	5.5	5.8	6	6.5	7	8	10	10	11
Housekeeper/Cook/Maintenance				.5	.5	.5	1	1	2.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17.5</b>

The current definition of Core does **not** include:

- crisis lines
- follow-up
- parenting programs
- housing search programs
- children's groups
- fundraising campaign co-ordination
- volunteer co-ordination
- safe visitation programs
- transportation programs
- outreach programs
- court accompaniment programs
- public education
- professional development programs
- support groups
- building and ground maintenance equipment and supplies
- replacement reserve
- IT program

In addition, core funding programs do not recognize the specialized services required by seniors. The province has no funding formula, program standards or staffing model for seniors' shelters.

At one time the Province met with each shelter to determine the budget for the next year. This practice was discontinued in the late 1980's, and shelters no longer had the opportunity to discuss new and/or increasing costs related to shelter operation.

In 2001, ACWS commissioned a report that looked at salaries in women's and seniors' shelters. The report found that:

- Shelter employees earn 20% less on average than comparable positions in the government and the not-for-profit sector.

- Because of low wages and benefits, women's shelters face high levels of burnout, and turnover rates over the past two years are at an average of 59 percent.

Minister Evans accepted this report and initiated salary increases to those positions identified in the 1985 Core Staffing Model. This was followed by provincial funding of their own definition of Core shelter services based upon 2001 actual expenses. The Federal Government has only provided negligible increases to First Nations Shelters, who lag far behind their provincially funded colleagues. In 2005, Minister Heather Forsyth increased funded beds in the province by 55 and added one outreach and follow-up worker to each provincially funded shelter. This worker, however this is not included in a new shelter staffing model.

## **ISSUES:**

1. There needs to be an annual mechanism by which funding can be adjusted for new and/or increased costs of shelter operations, including salaries. Rising costs, in particular, energy and insurance, with the associated prudent risk management requirements create financial hardships for shelter.
2. The provincial definition of Core Services is extremely dated and needs to be brought in line with current shelter programs and services. Federally funded programs should align with provincially funded programs.
3. Provincially funded beds (based on the outdated core funding model) do not reflect the number of actual and licensed beds in each shelter. Therefore, many shelters have two options: to fundraise, or to not provide service. Because there is no allocated position for fundraising in the current Core Staffing Model, shelters rely on the volunteer efforts of their staff and board members to co-ordinate campaigns. Shelter staff already works at or beyond capacity and often cannot contribute to fundraising activities. The ultimate result of this process is twofold; a greater number of women and children being turned away because shelters are full, and a greater turnover in shelter staff due to unreasonable staff-client ratios and poor salaries.
4. Skyrocketing insurance costs and its availability presents a tremendous challenge for shelters. There is a serious lack of service providers willing to insure shelters, meaning there is not a competitive marketplace.
5. First Nation shelters lag significantly behind provincially funded shelters and require immediate parity, including comparable compensation for non-status women needing to use a First Nations shelter.
6. Shelters are aging and in need of ongoing maintenance, including preventative maintenance. In addition, funds need to be added to improve accessibility.

7. The administration component of core funding is seriously under-funded (telephone costs, paper, board and staff development) and does not recognize modern telecommunications and IT support.
8. Benefit programs need to match those provided by the provincial and federal government to their own employees.

## **SOLUTIONS:**

1. That government budget requests for the upcoming fiscal year be discussed with the ACWS membership in a one day workshop that fully examines needs and financial realities on an annual basis.
2. That the definition of Core be updated and funded accordingly by both the province and the federal government. The updated definition of Core needs to include:
  - Adequate staffing levels as identified in the ACWS recommended staffing model
  - Crisis lines
  - Building and ground maintenance equipment and supplies
  - A building replacement reserve
  - IT support
  - Membership fees
  - Transportation (including vehicle costs, taxis, bus fares, tickets, volunteer driver program)
  - Family violence prevention, safe visitation, court accompaniment, parenting, public education/professional development children's group programming, all of which are facilitated solely by or in partnership with Alberta's women's shelters
  - Funding for all beds in high need locations. Occupancy and turn-away rates need to be examined annually.
3. The province needs to address skyrocketing insurance rates and accessibility to insurance coverage.
4. The federal government needs to immediately address the parity issue for First Nations on reserve shelters, with a funding and staffing model to guide annual funding for First Nations shelters.
5. A fund should be established to assist women's shelters in making security upgrades, accessibility improvements, health and safety renovations, and undertake efficiency and cost-saving projects. Projects need to include energy saving initiatives, enhancing security systems, improving accessibility and small structural improvements.