John Howard
THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

Just What Are "Halfway Houses"? (1)

Fact Sheet 2018

What does "Halfway House" mean?

At its core, a Halfway House is a community-based residential facility (CRF) that serves as a place of transition for offenders who are in the process of returning to live normal lives back within the community at large. These offenders are still under custodial care by Corrections Services Canada (CSC) or the Parole Board of Canada (PBC). It is therefore a conditional release, which allows some offenders to continue to serve the balance of their sentence outside of the institution.

How do CRF's differ from CCC's?

A Community Correctional Centre (CCC) is a minimum security facility operated by Corrections Services Canada. There are 16 CCC's in 2011. CRF's offer a more realistic residential setting that does not have an institutional feel.

How long have Halfway Houses been in Canada?

There have been various forms of residential facilities available in Canada for over a century for offenders recently released from incarceration. But having a facility available for offenders while still under sentence was an idea that development momentum in the US in the 1960s's and spread to Canada soon thereafter (See Harold L. Raush, ***Halfway House Movement: A Search for Sanity*** 1968).

Toronto saw the opening of Ingles House in 1947 for women released from the Mercer Reformatory and the Beverley Lodge for men ex-offenders in 1954. The first St Leonard's Halfway House for federal prisoners was opened in Windsor, ON in 1962 (modelled on the one opened in Chicago min 1954).

How many Halfway Houses are there in Canada and Alberta?

Although there are some 175 CRF's in Canada, only some 151 focus strictly on male and female offenders. In 2011, there are 11 Halfway Houses in Alberta (5 in Edmonton, 2 in Calgary and 1 each in Lethbridge and Red Deer) (http://prhha.net/).

How many residents are served by Halfway Houses in Alberta?

The most recent data (2011) indicates there are 584 beds available, the single largest amount to be found at Calgary's Centre of Hope (356 beds). John Howards Societies accommodate 114 clients.

I have a halfway House in my block. Should I be worried for my family?

NO! Residents in Halfway Houses are screened prior to acceptance for behaviourial profiles and appropriate supervision established and vigorously maintained. Halfway Houses probably offer the safest environment to communities.

Do Halfway Houses really work?

Yes.

Ultimately, the question citizens need to ask is whether it is "safer" to have offenders released into the community upon term completion without transition support or offer a supportive Halfway House residential experience.

John Howard
THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

Just What Are "Halfway Houses"? (2)

Fact Sheet 2018

Is there a general profile of halfway house clients?

The last comprehensive survey of halfway houses in Canada, focusing on their programs and client profiles, was undertaken in 2002/2003.i

Although this is now 10 years old, some basic aspects remain fairly similar. CRF residents can be characterized as male, Caucasian, single and with an average age of 36. 44% had less than a Grade 10 education (although this had actually decreased from 1997/98) and 64% were unemployed at the time of their arrest.

The mean sentence length for the offenders was 4.5 years and the principal offences were property and drug related (60%). Sexual assault offences were at 9%. In 2002/2003, 83% of CRF residents had had previous adult court convictions, but only 22% had served previous federal terms (i.e. not longer than 2 year sentences).

What kinds of programs do halfway houses offer? This can be answered on a number of levels. All Halfway Houses offer in-house caseworker support for each resident and life skills education (e.g. healthy eating, budgeting and anger management). Some offer stabilization programs from addictive behaviour, or assistance with resume preparation and employment searches. Depending on the client issues, some halfway houses operate on a gradual increase of freedoms as residents demonstrate their ability to cope with their challenges.ii

In addition to in-house programs, all halfway Houses make extensive use of community based services and programs. Some of these programs services are offered by the agency involved; others are offered by related organizations, perhaps at different locations. AA counselling, domestic violence therapy, psychiatric support, physical fitness and spiritual development are a few examples of services that can be accessed by residents.

How long do residents stay in a halfway house?

Length of stay varies from a few weeks to several months. Stays over a year are uncommon.

Residents are known to come back more than once if they breach their conditions and were returned to full custody for a while. With each one, their program continues from where it left off.

Are halfway houses effective?
Most Canadians don't realize that many offenders are released from custody under various conditional release programs into their communities. In 2008/2009, there were 10,063 such releases in Alberta.iii

The Parole Board states that evidence clearly shows that a gradual, controlled and supervised release is the most effective way of ensuring public safety.iv

Rather than merely releasing offenders into the community, the supportive and safe environment found in halfway houses can only enhance the successful re-integration of offenders into society.

i http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rsrch/reports/r157/r157- eng.shtml
ii http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs220/en/
iii http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002- x/2010003/article/11353/tbl/tbl03-eng.htm
iv http://www.pbc-clcc.gc.ca/infocntr/myths_reality- eng.shtml#mythnine