



BUILDING ASSETS PREVENTS HOMELESSNESS

Having a roof over your head and knowing where your next meal is coming from creates stability that gives you the tools to weather hard times. Without stable housing, you may face homelessness when confronting life crises, such as a job loss.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION IN BRIEF

In January 2008, Calgary Homeless Foundation implemented Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. The first of the Plan's five main strategies is to end homelessness before it begins with effective prevention. Research has shown that poverty is a key risk-factor for facing homelessness. As such, Momentum's work in poverty reduction is aligned with the 10 Year Plan in the area of prevention.

Through our programs, and with community partners, Momentum participants build on their five assets—Human, Personal, Social, Physical and Financial.

Financial Assets

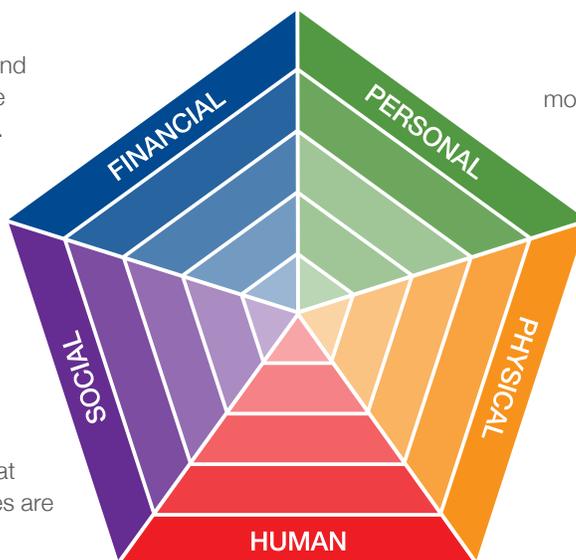
Your income to pay rent and your savings for a damage deposit or down payment.

Personal Assets

Your self-confidence and motivation that give you strength to persevere.

Social Assets

Your support networks that you can rely on when times are tough.



Physical Assets

A roof over your head in a safe place and access to transportation.

Human Assets

Your skills and abilities that help you contribute to your community.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION IS ABOUT MORE THAN PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSETS

Housing is a critical Physical asset needed for homelessness prevention and strong Financial assets are needed in order to obtain secure housing. Yet, Human, Personal and Social assets are as important as the tangible (Physical and Financial) assets for people to have in order to work through life's challenges. By increasing their assets in all five areas, participants build a comprehensive emergency cushion that allows them to sustain their lifestyle through periods of crisis, increasing their resiliency and decreasing their risk of facing homelessness. As participants achieve stability, they also have the opportunity to pursue homeownership through participation in a Momentum matched savings program.

Preventing homelessness not only saves renters from having to cover the cost of damage deposit and moving, it saves the landlord the costs of foregone rent and taxpayers the cost of social services for the evicted family. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), each eviction costs the tenant, the landlord and taxpayers over \$10,000 on average (CMHC, 2005).

PROOF OF IMPACT

Over the past ten years, Momentum has been helping prevent homelessness in Calgary by helping participants grow their assets. For example:

- The Money Matters program, in partnership with Calgary Alternative Support Services, prevents eviction by providing life skills training and financial management support to participants facing mental health and addictions challenges. Most participants of this program are living on an average of \$1,050 a month, yet have been able to build their money management skills, maintain their housing and even pay off debt.
- The Savings Circles program works to develop the money management skills of Calgarians living on very low incomes. Participants save money toward the purchase of an asset that can enhance their quality of life, including damage deposits and household goods, such as furniture. One graduate purchased a bed for his new apartment after moving out of The Mustard Seed.
- Fair Gains & Owen Hart Home Owners programs work to develop the money management skills of Calgarians living on low incomes. Participants in the Fair Gains and Owen Hart Home Owners programs purchased 14 homes with matched savings last year, resulting in a total of 75 homes purchased since the launch of the programs in 2001.

As of August 2010, 75 Fair Gains and Owen Hart Home Owners program participants cashed out their matched savings to put a down payment on a house.

LEARNING AND ADAPTING

For over five years, the Calgary Rent Bank provided loans for rental and utilities deposits and arrears with 70% of loan recipients maintaining stable housing. After assessing the Rent Bank program over the past two years, Momentum made the decision to close the program in 2010. This decision was made as demand for the Rent Bank loans by people with manageable debt levels—who could pay back the loan—was low. Momentum staff can now focus resources on preventing homelessness by helping participants build their assets through a new Money Coaching program.



From Homeless to Homeowner

Tasha Brown has experienced, firsthand, the instability of being homeless. Working two jobs, she still found herself living in a shelter with her three children—waking in a room full of strangers for weeks on end.

When Tasha and her children were finally accepted into affordable housing, the relief was short-lived for Tasha. She describes how her anxiety nagged at her, questioning, “What if I lost my job? What if my landlord decided to jack up my rent? What if I could never save enough to get ahead? What if my children damage the place—would I get evicted?”

Tasha knew that she never wanted to experience homelessness again, saying, “I decided I would work hard for my future.” She decided to start saving to buy a home for her family.

Through word of mouth, Tasha learned about Momentum and the Owen Hart Home Owners program. She learned that the program would match her savings 5:1 and in exchange she would have to attend evening workshops, peer group meetings and one-on-one consultations. She says, “It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that’s a good deal.”

Tasha graduated from Fair Gains in April 2009 and was accepted into the Owen Hart Home Owners program. Now she is saving towards the stability of owning her own home and, she says, “I know we will never be homeless again, because Momentum has given us hope where there was none before.”

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