



“Take Steps”: An experiential journey through homelessness

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“Finding creative and meaningful ways to inform the greater community about the experience of homelessness, in order to reduce stigma & develop a community where no one person or group of people are on the outside looking in” LECoH (Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness), Journey Home

What is the “Take Steps” Homelessness Simulator experience?

- Homelessness is at crisis level in the Okanagan for many complex reasons. It can ONLY be addressed when we are ALL a part of the solution. Challenging misperceptions and understanding the realities of moving from homeless to housed is a big catalyst for finding solutions. This program will be a part of that catalyst.
- It is a 90 minute “Lunch & Learn” or “Business After Hours” experience for teams of employees, co-workers, or friends, opening your eyes to the challenge of moving from life on the streets, to your own roof over your head.
- You will have a 15 minute introduction to the issue of homelessness and a short briefing. You will then assume the persona of a person living without a permanent home, facing typical real life challenges on a daily basis. 60 minutes of interactive experience will represent a range of activities and challenges. During that time, you will need to navigate systems and services to help you move closer to finding a permanent home.
- At the end of the hour you will debrief for 15 minutes on what you learned and what you may do differently tomorrow.

Who should get involved?

We recognize that there is a much wider community of people who want to help. They are OUTSIDE the charities and social service agencies who interact and serve our homeless population on a regular basis. We also recognize that for most of us, “living an hour in their shoes” and going to actually live on the streets or in a shelter is not a practical way to learn more about the issue, and does not always challenge deeper thought.

The partners of **John Howard Society, United Way, Okanagan Boys & Girls Club and the City of Kelowna, with support from the Central Okanagan Foundation** have come together to design a business friendly, portable, scalable, experiential program which will help to dispel myths & challenge misperceptions. The goal is to open hearts and minds to change the conversations in our community. To help us all move forward together to find solutions and to find homes to end chronic homelessness.

OK I want to learn more. What do I need to do next?

- Gather a group of 8 – 15 people and find a date that works for your group, either lunchtime or early evening.
- Call our program coordinator at 250 860 2356 or email jude@unitedwaycso.com to schedule your date & venue
- Come with an open mind, as little judgement as possible, and a willingness to embrace the learning opportunity

Is there a cost to participate?



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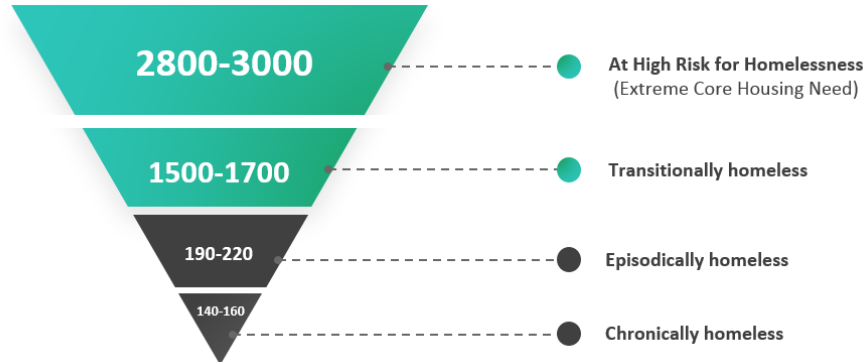
There will be a \$250 suggested corporate donation for a group to participate, to cover the expenses of Lived Experience individuals' involvement in the project. If you would like us to provide lunch for the group too, we can arrange that at an additional cost, or you may prefer to use your own caterer and make this a team builder exercise.

When will this program be available for my business?

Three pilots have run in Spring 2019, with the full program available for businesses & other groups from Summer 2019.

Why is homelessness such a big issue in the Okanagan now?

- Trends that have historically affected homelessness in Kelowna & the Okanagan Valley include peaks in population growth, limited housing supply, higher migration rates into Kelowna from other areas, tourism (less rentals for locals), ageing populations and growing income divides. All of these issues are not going away.
- To understand the extent of homelessness in our community, the diverse dynamics involved in the issue need to be understood. At any given time, the number of people experiencing homelessness in our community can ebb and flow, but there are ways we can determine the level of social supports needed. We need to focus on the numbers of people experiencing homelessness throughout the year, rather than only at a given point-in-time.



So what do all those definitions actually mean?

Extreme Core Housing Need: This number includes those in our community who may be at risk of losing their home as they are spending more than 50% of their household income on housing costs, and earn less than \$20,000/year. *This data comes from the 2016 Census, Statistics Canada.*

Transitionally Homeless: those who may experience homelessness short-term, generally less than a month.

Episodically Homeless: those who move in and out of homelessness.

Chronically Homeless: those in our community who have been on the streets for a long time, potentially years.