
FACT SHEET: Just What Are “Halfway Houses”? (2 of 2)

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 and 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