



Program Integration

Program Integration focuses completely on the **benefit to the client**. Rather than visit various locations for various services, and complete various intake procedures involving various forms asking the same types of questions, *Program Integration* creates opportunities for a single point of access or 'one-stop shopping' for District individuals and families.

The Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board (RRDSSAB) is the 'hub' for a variety of social and community health services. Families and individuals may require only one service or a combination of services provided by the DSSAB. *Program Integration* allows them to tell their story once, regardless of the number or types of services required.

For example, Sally enters the RRDSSAB office to apply for subsidized day care; she wishes to put two of her three children in day care so she can seek employment. Sally's husband recently abandoned the family, leaving her without any financial support. Through the RRDSSAB intake process, the Integrated Intake Worker also identifies the family's need for rent-g geared-to-income Housing and Ontario Works for social assistance and employment supports.

Not many years ago, Sally would have went to three different locations and spoken to three different workers to complete three completely separate intake processes. Each one of those Programs would have spent scarce program dollars on office accommodation expenses and overlapping administration.

Today, Sally can enter one door and speak with one Receptionist and one Integrated Intake Worker. She tells her story once and a decision is made as to Sally's eligibility for a variety of services which will assist her and her family through these very difficult times.

The Integration of Social Housing

History

On January 01, 2001, (*the Phase 1 Transfer*) the RRDSSAB accepted the transfer of responsibility for the administration of the entire public housing portfolio, which included the former Local Housing Authority (LHA) staff, real property, moveable assets, and all third party agreements. The RRDSSAB agreed to a full integration of the Local Housing Corporation (formerly known as LHA) with other DSSAB Programs and subsequently, the Local Housing Corporation was dissolved and all components integrated into the DSSAB service system.

In the *Joint Local Transfer Plan for Social Housing: Phase II* (May, 2001), the RRDSSAB agreed to a plan to devolve the provincial and federal Non-Profit Housing Programs to municipal control.

The Non-Profit Programs included:

- Atikokan Crisis Centre;
- Atikokan Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corp;
- Columbus Place for Seniors;
- Faith Non-Profit Housing Corp;
- Fort Frances Municipal NP Housing Corp;
- Golden Age Manor (Emo)- (2 programs);
- Morley Municipal Housing Corp;
- Flinders Park Senior Housing;
- various Rent Supplement agreements with private landlords; &
- two Section 95 Urban Native Housing Programs (one which devolved later).

In the *Transfer Plan*, the RRDSSAB committed to designing a coordinated access system and exploring options for integrating the income testing component for initial eligibility assessment with the Ontario Works and Child Care Programs. The coordinated access system began implementation on 01 April, 2002 - the integrated intake system has just recently been introduced.

In the *Plan*, the RRDSSAB also spoke to the need to look for and address overlaps between public and non-profit housing. Many similarities were identified including capital planning and technical support functions, administrative and governance policy, administration of standards, client access, staffing, IT management, operational review, tenant issues, legal supports, training, and so on. This list is certainly not exhaustive but does represent a range of areas where the two housing portfolios overlap.

The *Plan* also spoke to the evolving role of RRDSSAB in the day to day (hands-on) management of Non-Profit Housing Corporations.

Since the transfer, the RRDSSAB has identified gaps and duplication, and tangible areas for coordination and/or integration with the Non-Profit providers. Concurrently, many of the Non-Profit Housing Boards have struggled with the new regulations and stringent legislated requirements. Some NP Corporations have transferred governance and property management responsibilities to the DSSAB resulting in a significant increase in workload for Social Housing staff. (At the time of devolution, seven staff members for Housing were identified, excluding custodial staff. To this date, job descriptions have changed but we have maintained that complement of seven staff.)

Options

In exploring its options for the integration of Non-Profit Housing, the RRDSSAB considered:

- containment of public sector costs & efficient use of financial resources;
- recognition of the expertise of existing staff;
- human resources required/labour relations;
- corporate structure of the DSSAB in place;
- governance structure in place;
- in-house management capability;
- technology in place;
- compliance with legislation, guidelines & collective agreements;
- control/accountability and responsibility;
- service enhancements;
- monitoring & evaluation;
- ease of transition, and commitment to minimize or avoid disruption in service;
- risk management;
- existing working relationships; and
- duplication of services/functions.

How Have We Integrated Non-Profit Housing To Date?

- As of this date, RRDSSAB staff, including members of our Housing and Finance departments, are providing property management and custodial/maintenance services for Fort Frances Municipal Non-Profit which has retained its own Board of Directors. This is accomplished under a formal *Management Agreement*.
- Both Faith Non-Profit and Atikokan Urban Native Housing Corporations are governed by members of the RRDSSAB board and staff. The rest of our Non-Profits have retained separate Boards, as of this date.
- RRDSSAB staff are responsible for the property management and maintenance/custodial needs of Faith Housing and Atikokan Urban Native, under specific *Management Agreements*. Separate corporate structures remain intact.
- RRDSSAB is responsible for eligibility determination and coordinated access for all Non-Profit Providers, with the exception of the Fort Frances Urban Native Program.
- RRDSSAB staff are responsible for ensuring compliance of all Non-Profit Providers through regular financial reporting and formal, ongoing *Operational Reviews*.
- A formal Job Analysis was completed in our Social Housing Department in 2006 to identify specific job functions and duties related to both public and non-profit housing. As a result, all housing jobs were designed to integrate the Non-Profit Portfolio.
- A Non-Profit Housing Manager oversees all aspects of the Non-Profit Housing Portfolio, including property management, compliance, finance, capital requirements, and governance. The RRDSSAB Housing Manager is responsible for the public housing portfolio only and property management functions have been removed from the Maintenance department and transferred to the NP Housing Manager.
- Allegations of fraud and family support inquiries are investigated by the RRDSSAB Eligibility Review Officer/Family Support Worker.
- Following the completion of formal *Operational Reviews*, RRDSSAB staff work hand-in-hand with Non-Profit staff and/or Board to address deficiencies and improve service to meet legislated requirements. Presently, the Non-Profit Housing Manager and Manager of Finance are working diligently with two of our 'self-managed' Non-Profits to address significant financial and governance concerns. Ongoing monitoring is essential to the process.

Where Are We Going From Here?

Over the next few years, the RRDSSAB's goal is to continue to work closely with our Non-Profit Providers to identify and act upon ways to avoid unnecessary duplication and fill service gaps, while ensuring safe, affordable housing in our District communities.

We will continue to recognize the unique needs of each community and target group, while recognizing our responsibility and accountability to the taxpayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

/D. Dittaro