



## Why are people homeless?

Everyone who is homeless has their own story. Each of the stories is usually linked to one or more of the following:

- They don't have **enough income**
- They can't find **affordable housing**
- They don't have access to health or social **support services**

Not having **enough income** means that person does not have enough money to pay for the basic necessities of life.

The 2005 Greater Vancouver homeless count found that less than half the people surveyed had a predictable source of income. Welfare payments and other government income assistance help some people pay for housing costs, but the maximum housing allowance available to a single person on welfare is \$375/month.

**Affordable housing** means housing that costs a reasonable amount compared to a person's income. In the Greater Vancouver area, the average rent for a one bedroom apartment is just over \$800 per month. This amounts to half of what a person working 40 hours a week at \$10/hr earns before any taxes or deductions.

A good measure of affordability is housing that costs no more than 30% of the pre-tax income of someone earning a modest income.

**Support services** are the health and social services that some people need in order to find and keep housing. Support services can include drug and alcohol treatment, mental health services, counseling, and assistance with daily living. Sometimes these support services are delivered as part of a housing service (e.g., a nurse on site) and sometimes they are in the community (e.g., community mental health services).

### Sarah's Story

*Sarah is 19 years old. She has a couple of part-time jobs and takes an evening class at a local college.*

*Sarah's looked hard for housing, but can't find anything she can afford to rent.*

*For the past month she's slept on a co-worker's sofa.*

*She's not sure what will happen next.*

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**[www.pledgetoendhomelessness.org](http://www.pledgetoendhomelessness.org)**