

2017

Individualized Senior Support Program (ISSP) Evaluation Summary

How did the ISSP impact the lives of its participants?

- Before joining the ISSP, participants reported that they experienced a low quality of life. Many of the participants had a hard time doing simple tasks due to age, medical illness, disability and/or mental health issues.
- After joining the ISSP, the participants were able to hire a support worker and they spoke about this improved their physical, mental and social well-being.

What is the Individualized Senior Support Program (ISSP)?

The ISSP provides participants with funding which they use to independently hire a support worker to provide them with the support services they require. The ISSP has been running for nine years in partnership with Margaret Frazer House and the City of Toronto. Seniors who are residents of three subsidized housing locations - 138 Pears Ave, 180 Sudbury St. and 25 Leonard Ave - may be eligible to participate in the program. Not all residents of the buildings are part of the ISSP. Currently there are twenty-one clients in the program.

The ISSP's goal is to enable seniors with age related illness in addition to mental health and/or addiction issues to:

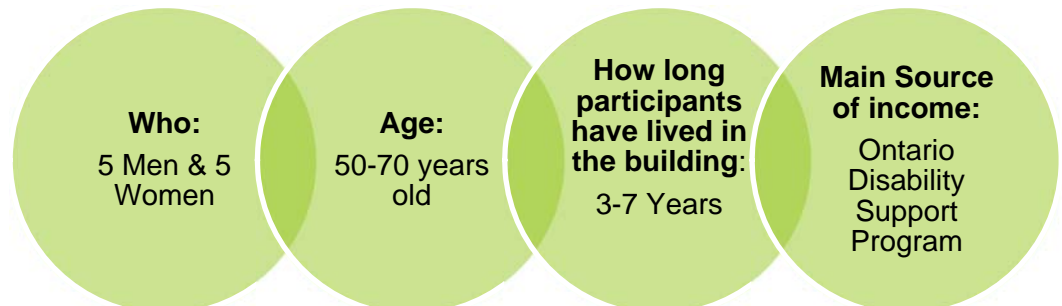
- Remain independently housed
- Have access to health related support from their home
- Avoid unnecessary emergency visits
- Avoid hospitalization/ long-term care.

Possible services:

- Homemaking Assistance
- Personal Care Assistance
- Medication Monitoring
- Socialization
- Meal Support/Preparation



The evaluation included 10 participants currently using the ISSP services:



Life before ISSP

Health issues and housing problems were the two main concerns participants spoke about.

Health Issues

Disability, illness, injury and/or other health problems were impacting the participants' quality of life and ability to work and care for themselves. In some cases, everyday tasks became so difficult that their entire day was focused on doing only one task.

Housing Issues

Most of the participants came from unaffordable and/or inaccessible housing. The cause of their housing problems was often due to an illness and/or injury that made it difficult or impossible to continue working. This meant the participants were earning less money, which led them to be unable to afford their already unaffordable housing. In some cases, participants had to choose between purchasing medication or groceries.

Life with ISSP

The participants were happy overall with the services available through the ISSP funding. The participants mentioned that the ISSP has supported them and improved their social well-being and their physical and psychological health.



Practical Support

Participants often felt overwhelmed with everyday tasks due to their age, ability or both. Having a support worker present to help them with more difficult tasks such as laundry and grocery shopping meant these tasks actually got done and also gave participants the confidence that they could continue living at home and avoid moving to a long-term care facility. The overall impact was a reduced participants' stress levels.

Social Support

Many participants spoke about the importance of the social interactions with their support workers, who would often go above and beyond their duties to provide company and do random acts of kindness. Something as simple as small talk or having a trusted person accompany them to their doctor reduced anxiety and increased their sense of social connection.

Improved Mental Health and Feelings of Independence

As already noted, participants expressed how the program improved their mental health by decreasing their stress and anxiety levels. Because of the support services they now have access to, participants no longer spent time stressing or feeling anxious over tasks.

Participants spoke about being more independent and in control of their lives with the support of the program, and have having more time to spend on activities they enjoy rather than stressing about the tasks they needed to do.

"I actually have a life now, not just an existence. Begging people to do my laundry and it wouldn't get done in over a month. I'm a person again. I'm not this sad sack. I'm a person and my needs are being met."

- ISSP Participant

"I would say that I'm very happy that I'm part of the program. I guess it changes my outlook, knowing that these little things are taken care of for me."

- ISSP Participant