



You can be the reason someone gets a second chance at life

Do you believe in the power of personal transformation to a life reclaimed with dignity and hope?

At Place of Refuge, we know recovery doesn't happen in isolation. It begins with safety, connection, and hope. Perhaps you've witnessed the heartbreak of addiction in the life of a friend, family member, colleague, or maybe even your own. You understand how destructive—and isolating—addiction can be. And you also know that everyone deserves a second chance and a place to begin again.

That's why Place of Refuge exists. We walk alongside men in recovery from addiction, providing them with the tools, community, and stability to rebuild their lives with purpose and dignity. What began as a dream—safe homes, healing hearts, and renewed purpose have grown into a living, breathing story of hope. Every life changed here is proof that recovery is possible when people like you choose to care.

Unlike short-term programs, Place of Refuge is a faith-based society offering an abstinence-based long-term transitional housing program—up to three years—designed for men healing from addiction. The men who call Place of Refuge “home” rediscover what it means to belong, to contribute, and to thrive in their wellness from substance use.

Why Substance-Use Recovery Housing Matters — And Why You Can Make a Difference

Recovery is very challenging to accomplish without a safe and stable place to live. Addiction is relentless, and without housing, men lose their best chance to heal. Stable housing makes the conditions for recovery possible: it provides the time and space for men to focus on their wellness from substance use, develop life skills, build a future free from substances, and realize their hopes and dreams.

The Crisis in B.C. Addiction and Lack of Services

In mid-2016, the Province of BC declared that British Columbia was in the midst of an opioid epidemic, and the need for a significant increase in detox, support recovery, and treatment beds in Metro Vancouver was critical to saving lives. Additionally, there was (and still is) a need for abstinence-based treatment, support recovery and transitional housing options.

Access to mental health and residential addiction recovery support can be challenging for individuals with long wait times for services. Metro Vancouver has the most expensive rental housing in Canada, and finding affordable housing for the average citizen, who does not have substance use issues and is working, is difficult. Our marginalized population of citizens affected by substance use issues finds it next to impossible to find affordable housing and leave their unsafe and unhealthy environment. Place of Refuge is just as the name suggests – a refuge for men to leave their addiction behind and find safety and love in a home setting, with a staff who care and understand.

Place of Refuge Offers a Real Answer

For over 16 years, Place of Refuge has been a trusted, respected, and welcomed presence in South Vancouver—deeply integrated into the neighbourhood with genuine, inclusive relationships with neighbours. Our homes offer a safe environment for men in the second stage of their wellness from substance use.

We prepare our residents to move confidently toward healthy, independent living through a long-term housing program lasting up to three years. Because of our stable resident retention, men come to see Place of Refuge not as a stopover, but as “home”—a safe, welcoming place where they truly belong.

I'm eternally grateful to Place of Refuge for allowing me the time and space to grow into the man I knew I could be. It allowed me to build a solid foundation that I could stand on. It was a safe place to get my bearings and to dream of the life I always envisioned for myself. More than that it felt like home. It's a key component in my sobriety journey. With the support of the staff and other men I thrived in that environment. The momentum I gained there has continued and as a result I've had tremendous opportunities and success. It was truly a pleasure and an honor to have had my time there. Thank you, Place of Refuge. The fact you exist is inspiring and provides a beacon of hope for those that might feel hopeless.

— Dana, Resident



Our Mission at Place of Refuge:

To create safe, welcoming homes where men can rewrite their stories and build futures rooted in dignity, health, and purpose.

Partnering Congregations and Organizations:

Peace Church on 52nd, Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Mennonite Central Committee BC.

Professional Affiliations:

Province of BC-Assisted Living Registry, BC Health-registered, Canadian Addiction Certification Federation, BC Addiction Recovery Association, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

Community Collaboration and Recognition:

- In 2014, Place of Refuge became a community partner with Vancity.
- In 2014, Place of Refuge became a registered transitional housing program with the Province of BC – Assisted Living Registry.
- In 2023, Place of Refuge became a member of the British Columbia Addiction Recovery Association.
- In 2025, Place of Refuge was awarded a certificate of appreciation from Vancouver/Kensington MLA Mable Elmore.

Our Impact: Real Stories, Real Change, Real Results

At Place of Refuge, transformation is more than a concept—it's happening every day. From the moment a man walks through our doors, he's met with dignity, stability, and an opportunity to reclaim his life.

Below are two resident stories of dignity restored, families reunited, and hope rekindled:

300+ men supported since 2009

75% stay at least 1 year

60% stay 2 years

55% maintain successful recovery after 3 years

Strong partnerships with YMCA, Vancity, WorkBC, adult education programs, healthcare providers, and local churches

Peer mentor support led by program graduates

I've been in Place of Refuge for only three weeks at the time of this writing. This house has turned out to be just what I need. They quickly offer support when I need to locate resources and are sensitive to the times that I need space for myself. I finished my stabilization at a first-stage housing facility and came here less than a week after my interview with Jeff and Reive. I knew this was the right place for me.

— Leaf, Resident

Place of Refuge has been a really supportive environment for me in my recovery journey. I really appreciate how little stress or drama there's been since coming here. The house is clean, the residents get along, and the location is great for transit and lifestyle. Early recovery is an uncertain time for many reasons. It's been a big transition for me, and I am really grateful for the staff at Place of Refuge running such a smooth operation. Here, I've found a sense of stability and peace that was missing during previous stints of recovery, and that has made all the difference.

— Nathaniel, Resident

Because of donors like you, our residents are reclaiming their lives, one step & one story at a time.

The People Behind the Healing

Our success continues with a passionate, deeply caring staff who give their time, wisdom, and empathy to walk with men through one of the most difficult transitions of their lives.

Jeff Borden, MA, ICADC, ICCS – Executive Director

Jeff designed our program model and has been providing leadership for Place of Refuge Society since early 2012, serving as our Executive Director and clinical supervisor for the staff. He earned his master's degree in leadership from Royal Roads University and is internationally certified as a counsellor and clinical supervisor in Canada and the USA. Upon completing his master's degree, Jeff's thesis project was an action research inquiry on Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building for Place of Refuge.

With over thirty-three years of experience in the substance use field, Jeff has worked in various settings, including the Ministry of Children and Families, the Provincial Health Authority, Turning Point, Phoenix Society, Community Living of British Columbia, and private practice counselling, organizational consulting & program design. Since 2010, he has regularly provided ongoing workshops and training in Mexico. Jeff also sits on the advisory board of directors for City University of Canada's graduate counselling programs. Jeff's unwavering dedication to helping people overcome their substance use issues is evident in his work. He values co-creating a safe and supportive environment for our residents, ensuring they feel secure and cared for as they explore healthier options to improve their quality of life. As a lifelong learner, Jeff also believes the people he serves are invaluable teachers.

Reive Doig, AAC – Site Manager

Reive Doig joined Place of Refuge in 2020 and now serves as our Site Manager. He continues to advance his counselling education through Vancouver Community College and is in the final stages of completing his professional certification as an Addiction Counsellor.

Reive has a long history of community engagement. He served on the board of the PACE Society from 2011 to 2014 and facilitated weekly SMART Recovery meetings for five years at two local first-stage programs before stepping back to focus on his studies. Reive brings a calm, relational, person-centred approach to his work. He also contributes to the creation and delivery of programming within the residences. His commitment to supporting individuals on their recovery journey is reflected in his day-to-day work and the strong relationships he builds with the people he supports.

See here for further details about our team - <https://placeofrefuge.ca/about/our-team/>

Transformational Housing: Where Healing and Connection Feels Like Home

At Place of Refuge, we believe recovery and wellness aren't just about breaking addiction—it's about rebuilding a life. That takes more than treatment. It takes a value-based approach that sees the whole person, which identifies what is strong, not what is wrong.

Our Values in Practice

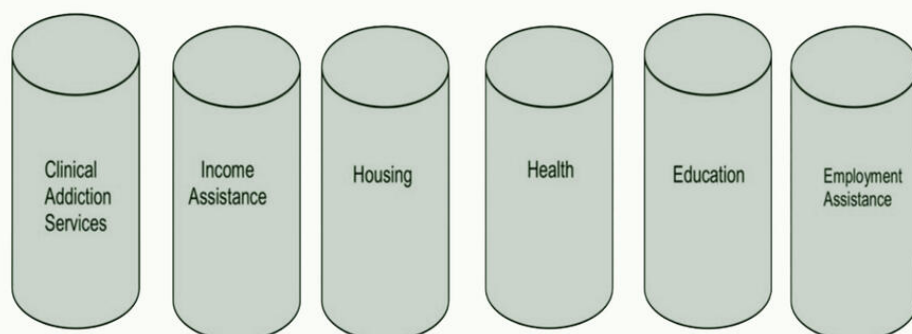
- ◆ Privileged listening over advice giving.
- ◆ We create low stakes opportunities – we do not push people; we build upon their capacity – it is all about the relationships.
- ◆ Place of Refuge delivers superior results as one of the lowest cost programs in British Columbia.
- ◆ Human transformation occurs not through intervention but through invitation into relationship into community and into possibility.
- ◆ Our twenty bed, three-year program is founded on the understanding that housing is healthcare.
- ◆ We do not just treat symptoms, we cultivate conditions for flourishing.

Sustainability Livelihood Framework and Values that inform our work:

Traditional housing models position staff as experts delivering services to passive recipients; we operate differently. Our program functions as a relational ecology. It is a living system in which residents, staff, community partners, and volunteers participate in a learning community and engage in reciprocal relationships.

- ◆ Encouraging equal access to knowledge and support inclusion for clients' own decision making.
- ◆ Creating a space that honours the person's own choice for their path to wellness.
- ◆ Accessibility to housing, employment and public services to support and facilitate sustainability.
- ◆ Providing a housing program that embraces a humanistic environment rather than a clinical space.

Place of Refuge Responds to Complex Interconnected Social Issues in our Communities:



Therapeutic Approach & Methodology:

Place of Refuge provides a therapeutic support model that draws from a narrative therapy methodology of engagement, focusing on helping individuals reframe their personal stories to create a more positive and empowering narrative. This approach emphasizes the idea that people are separate from their problems and can choose alternative, more constructive ways of viewing their lives and behavior.

- ◆ A person-centred and relational focused wellness model.
- ◆ Abstinence-based Model.
- ◆ Services delivered in a non-clinical home-like setting.
- ◆ Program philosophy based on the belief that every individual has a right to define their own path to wellness.
- ◆ Program philosophy that values gender equality, and non-sexist or racist identification of self and others.
- ◆ Focus on creating a healthy self-identification, grounded in the language used to describe experience with self and others.
- ◆ Weekly Spiritual Groups.
- ◆ Life Skills Coaching – Individual and group settings.
- ◆ Financial literacy & Credit Counselling support.
- ◆ Bridging support for advocacy.
- ◆ Weekly check in groups and ongoing therapeutic support – Individual and group settings.

Income Assistance / Financial

- ◆ A person-centred and relational focused wellness model.
- ◆ Services delivered in a non-clinical home-like setting.
- ◆ Program philosophy based on the belief that every individual has a right to define their own path to wellness.

Health, Life Skills & Education

- ◆ Healthy food program: residents plan menus and participate in weekly grocery shopping.
- ◆ Access to Langara YMCA memberships at a reduced rate for recreation and physical health.
- ◆ Community and spiritual support through partnerships with our local churches, offering meals, mentorship, and social inclusion.
- ◆ Peer connection and community living skills are reinforced through weekly check-in groups and in-house weekly Spiritual Groups.
- ◆ Vancity Community Bank- financial literacy and re-establishing their credit.
- ◆ Access to South Hill Education Centre to complete General Education Adult Dogwood Diploma (GED) studies.
- ◆ Support in pursuing post-secondary or vocational training opportunities.
- ◆ Support with vocational rehabilitation through WorkBC, including resume writing, computer training, and job-readiness skills.

When I came to Place of Refuge, I was thousands of dollars in debt. I had no vehicle, fines on my driver's licence, and a credit score of around 500. I had worked as an electrician for many years, but my addiction always held me back from finishing school and moving forward. My biggest goal was to get back to work and finish my schooling. What I got here was far more than I could have ever imagined.

As I write this, I have just obtained my Red Seal certificate as an electrician. I completed three terms of schooling at BCIT, I am debt-free, I am driving a brand-new vehicle, and my credit score is now in the 700s. I accomplished all of this in under three years, and I don't believe it would have been possible anywhere else.

— Adam, Resident

Our Ask: Help Us Maintain our Homes for Healing

You believe in the community's power and in honoring every individual's dignity. Now, you can turn that belief into lasting change. Although our registered homes receive government subsidies, these do not reach the amount of funds required to sustain us.

The Challenge: Place of Refuge currently carries mortgage payments for two homes—totalling nearly \$15,500 per month. These payments limit our ability to sustain the investment of expanding the transformative care that Place of Refuge provides, challenging our ability to remain affordable in rebuilding lives.

The Transformation of your gift: By reducing these mortgages, we can ensure our ongoing impact. This allows us to:

- ◆ Keep resident fees affordable and accessible.
- ◆ Ensures long-term stability.
- ◆ Fund transformational programs, including life-skills training.
- ◆ Strengthen our capacity to increase our community impact.

This isn't just a gift. It's a partnership in rewriting lives—one safe, healing home at a time.

Fundraising Initiative

Our fundraising initiative is to not only meet the financial obligations for our two houses, but to pay off the mortgages on our long-term transitional homes—freeing us to grow, expand our impact, and welcome more people in need. Built on the belief that community is formed through everyday acts of love, this initiative is about more than just paying down debt; it's about creating a stable foundation for the future. With secure housing and compassionate care, we're helping men rebuild their lives—and with your support, we can extend that hope even further.

With two active loans supporting House 2, including an interest-bearing mortgage and an unsecured interest-only loan, ongoing donor support is critical to maintaining operational stability. As both financing terms approach renewal in 2027, philanthropic investment will be key to securing the future of House 2 and the life-changing housing it provides.

House 1 - Mortgage Summary:

Lender	Principal Amount Remaining (as of June 2025)	Monthly Payment	Interest Rate	Term Length	Notes
MCAP	\$445,995	\$2,568	2.20%	25 years	10-year term. Renews Sept 2026.

House 2 - Mortgage Summary:

Lender	Principal Amount Remaining (as of June 2025)	Monthly Payment	Interest Rate	Term Length	Notes
Vancity	\$1,420,000	\$8,265	5.79%	3 years	Monthly payments include principal & interest. Term ends Sept. 2027. 25-year amortization.
MCCBC	\$1,200,000	\$4,650	4.65%	3 years	Interest-only payments. Unsecured loan.

Let's Move Forward—Together

You believe in fresh starts. In second chances. In the dignity of every person. Now, you have a chance to turn those values into something lasting—something life-changing. We'd be truly honoured to welcome you into our Place of Refuge community. You're invited to:

Meet our team—the passionate, dedicated people who make care personal and real.

Read powerful resident stories—of courage, of transformation, of hope reborn here:
<https://placeofrefuge.ca/about/our-residents/>

Schedule a conversation with our executive director and one of our board members—and experience the warmth of healing in action:

Jeff Borden, MA, ICADC, ICCS – Executive Director: jeff@placeofrefuge.ca

Garry Janzen – Board Chair: garry@placeofrefuge.ca

Office: 604-225-8553

Because housing is not optional—it's the firm ground beneath every recovery story. Longterm stable housing isn't a luxury, it's essential.

Your belief in transformation fuels everything we do. Together, we can help men not only survive—but truly rebuild their lives, their futures, and their place in our shared community.

To learn more about Place of Refuge please view our new website – www.placeofrefuge.ca

Thank you for being the kind of person who stands for hope, healing, and home.



Place of
Refuge