

Department of Community Services

Standing Committee - Talbot House

June 5, 2012

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What are Recovery Houses?

- In Nova Scotia, Department of Community Services (DCS) partially funds 5 Recovery Houses
- These Recovery Houses are one option that exists on the continuum of addiction services
- Recovery Houses provide long term, transitional housing for people who require a safe, supportive and healing environment to recovery from their addictions

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What are Recovery Houses? (continued)

- Recovery Houses are autonomous, incorporated, not for profit organizations run by a Board of Directors
- Recovery Houses are not licensed or regulated by DCS
- Organizational oversight is the responsibility of the Board of Directors

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Recovery Houses: Historical Context

- 2007/2008: DCS/Health completed a Recovery House Strategy which included the 5 funded Recovery Houses in Nova Scotia
- Review resulted in the following:
 - 1) defined services for funding
 - 2) established set of standards
 - 3) developed accountability frameworks with Recovery Houses for funding (service agreements that outline conditions for funding)
 - 4) Recovery Houses placed under the auspices of DCS

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Annual Funding for Recovery Houses

- Freedom Foundation: \$246,947 (Dartmouth)
- Alcare Place: \$265,260 (Halifax)
- Marguerite Centre: \$174,310 (Timberlea)
- Salvation Army Booth Centre: \$194,400 (Halifax)
- Talbot House: \$391,743 (Cape Breton)
- 4 of the 5 funded Recovery Houses are located in HRM
- Recovery Houses accept clients from all over Nova Scotia and from other provinces
- The remaining four Recovery Houses meet or exceed DCS standards for recovery houses

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Talbot House Organizational Review

- DCS received a letter from former resident of Talbot House Sept 2011 (letter forwarded from Health and Wellness)
- DCS met with the Talbot House Board Nov 2011; Board agreed to review and did not wish complaint to be part of review
- DCS agreed to keep Board apprised of any new findings gathered during course of the review
- Service agreements for funding allow DCS to conduct operational reviews
- Purpose of review was to evaluate the operations of Talbot House against the Recovery House Standards

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Organizational Review (continued)

- When F&YS conducts organizational reviews, the following components are included: Board, Executive Director, Staff, Program, Stakeholders and Finance
- Interviews were held with Talbot House residents, staff, Executive Director, Board and stakeholders (Addiction Services/ Detox) in January 2012
- As a result of the Board's request for DCS to bring any new information forward, DCS met with the Talbot House Board on Feb. 2, 2012 and provided a high level summary of new information gathered e.g. lack of compliance with Recovery House standards, lack of programming, concerns by stakeholders, etc

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Organizational Review (continued)

- 16 stakeholders were interviewed: 8 had received complaints/concerns from former residents about Talbot House. Some received more than one complaint/concern
- As a result, majority of stakeholders had concerns about making referrals to Talbot House
- On Feb 3rd, 2012 the Board Chair advised DCS that the Board had relieved the Executive Director of his duties on Feb. 2, 2012 and that the Board would be conducting their own investigation

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Organizational Review (continued)

- DCS was asked to assist the Board in their plan by accessing the original complainant and stakeholders from Addiction Services
- On Feb. 3, 2012, DCS contacted:
 - 1) Addiction Services to facilitate Talbot House Board contact with stakeholders
 - 2) Original complainant agreed to meet with Board, offering Feb. 17 as date to meet. Board declined meeting
- At this time DCS offered additional financial support to backfill positions at Talbot House to mitigate disruption/impact to residents

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Organizational Review (continued)

- Board issued a press release on Feb. 16, 2012 stating that the Board had initiated a process of investigation/review and that in the interim, the Executive Director was taking a leave of absence.
- On March 7th, 2012 the Board issued another press release stating they were closing Talbot House indefinitely
- Talbot House discharged residents and ceased operations as a Recovery House on March 9, 2012
- DCS assisted Talbot House residents in relocating to another recovery house, or in finding alternative supports
- The service agreement for funding with Talbot House expired March 31st, 2012

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Key Findings of Organizational Review

- Talbot House was not in compliance with majority of Standards for Recovery Houses
- Talbot House was not compliant in the following 11 areas: Administration, Operations, Code of Ethics, Residents' Files, Informed Consent, Public Communication, Client Service Standards, Recovery Program, Staff, Health/Safety, Safety/Emergency Measures
- Talbot House was compliant in following 3 areas: Insurance, Food, Facility/Spaces
- No evidence that Board was actively overseeing the operation of Talbot House

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Next Steps

- DCS always looks to enhance/improve services
- DCS is committed to having a recovery house in Cape Breton
- DCS in partnership with Health and Wellness will be issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a recovery house in Cape Breton
- We are committed to providing the best service possible for men who require these services

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