

Unwanted guests:

Understanding and addressing home takeovers in Ottawa



A home takeover happens when someone enters a home and refuses to leave.

In a home takeover, guests behave in ways that make victims feel uncomfortable or threatened in their home, and often involve illegal activity.

Home takeovers are not new to Ottawa, but until recently, the problem didn't have a name, let alone a consistent approach to dealing with it. The Home Takeovers Steering Committee has made great progress in uncovering and addressing the issue.

Home takeovers can impact people with:

mental health issues • problematic substance use • advanced age • developmental or physical disabilities • involvement with gangs or illegal drugs • isolation • recent homelessness

EVERY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT

How Ottawa addressed home takeovers



Named the problem

First, we researched, then we gave the problem a name. Our work on home takeovers has increased awareness and understanding of the issues among Ottawa tenants, landlords and service providers.



Engaged city-wide partners

The Home Takeovers Steering Committee includes 16 organizations that come together to discuss their experiences and problem-solve individual situations.



Offered tools, resources and training

There's now a range of home takeovers training available in Ottawa. Print, digital, video and social media resources offer information on preventing and addressing home takeovers.

Home takeovers: Achievements by the numbers

16

PARTNERS

5,486

VIEWS OF THE HOME TAKEOVERS TRAINING VIDEOS

157

TRAINING SESSIONS

23,761

PRINT RESOURCE MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED

3,473

PEOPLE DIRECTLY BENEFITED

35,754

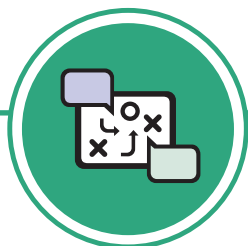
PEOPLE INDIRECTLY BENEFITED

Key outcomes

- **Collective awareness** – Partners and stakeholders now have a shared understanding of home takeovers and a common vocabulary to discuss the problem together.
- **Compassionate solutions** – Partners have developed an approach that considers each victim's circumstances, needs and strengths.
- **Institutional change** – The Ottawa Police Service and other municipal and social services now recognize home takeovers and have implemented resources to help staff identify and address the problem.
- **Buy-in from cities across Canada** – Other cities across Canada have used Ottawa's groundbreaking research and materials to launch similar initiatives.

What we've learned

These best practices are key to the success of any home takeovers initiative:



Define and name the problem

When staff and residents have a shared name for the problem, they can begin to develop strategies to prevent and resolve it.



Work together

Home takeovers usually take a long time to resolve and solutions can involve multiple partners.



Pay attention to quality of life

Home takeovers require a comprehensive, compassionate approach that considers the victim's socio-economic reality, strengths and support systems.