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VICOT Annual Report 2008



March 2009

The Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team officially commenced operations on 01 January 2007. This team was established through the cooperation of senior managers from the Vancouver Island Health Authority, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (now Ministry of Housing and Social Development), Community Corrections Branch of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the Victoria Police Department.

VICOT's mandate is to:

- Provide integrated service delivery to mentally disordered/concurrent disordered individuals in the downtown Victoria area who are not accessing service on a consistent basis;
- Enhance protection of the public through the provision of supervision services to mutual clients;
- Integrate case management focusing on needs related to: addictions, physical and mental health; access and retention in mental health services; housing access/retention; access to financial supports; offending and incarceration; providing the mechanisms of service deliver directly and not broker services through other parties.

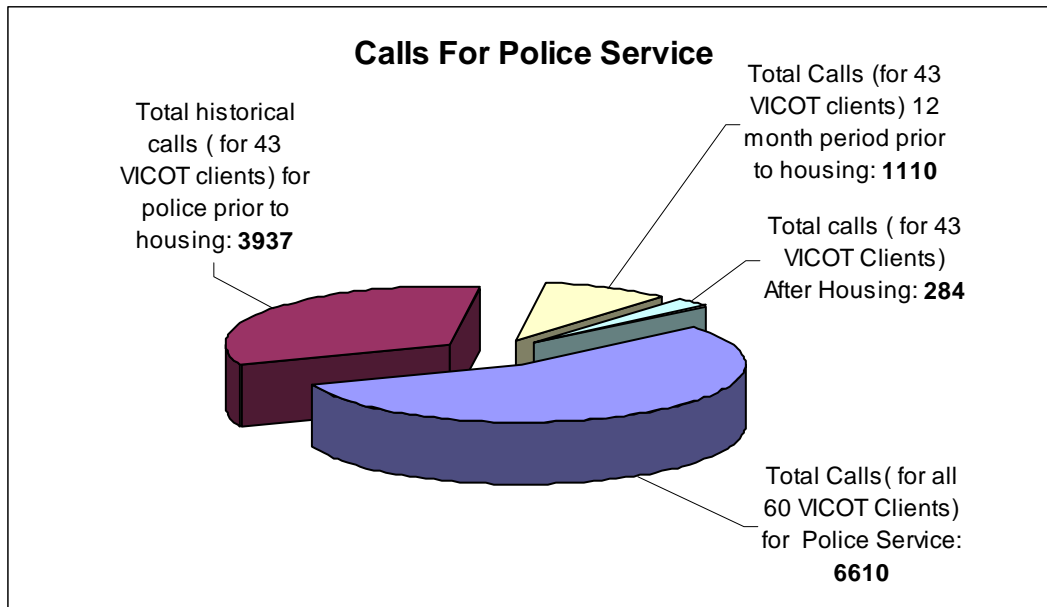
VICOT consists of: Employment and Assistance Worker; Probation Officer; Police Officer (2); Mental Health Support Worker; VIHA Outreach – worker; Admin Support; Psychiatric Nurse and; Doctor of Psychiatry.

There are a number of factors which lead to client engagement by this team but in general terms the basis for client acceptance is homelessness, high user of medical and emergency medical services and high incidents of police interaction usually around public order offences.

VICOT employs a “housing first strategy” combined with an intensive case management approach. This method is an alternative to the current system of emergency shelter/transitional housing, which tends to prolong the length of time that persons remain homeless. The methodology is premised on the belief that vulnerable and at-risk homeless persons are more responsive to interventions and social services support *after they are in their own housing*, rather than while living in temporary/transitional facilities or housing programs.

At the end of 2008 a total of 60 individuals were identified by the VICOT team as meeting the inclusion criteria. To date these 60 people alone accounted for 6610 calls for police service. These 6610 calls are both current and historical and go back as far as 1998.

Total Calls for Service all Clients

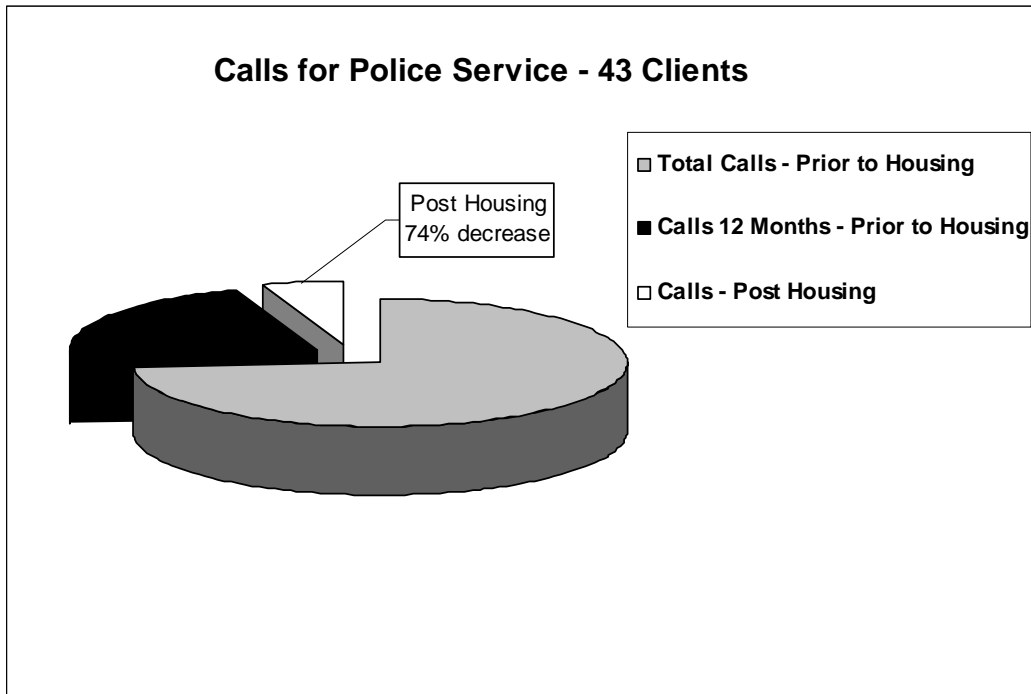


By 2008 the VICOT team was servicing and successfully housing 43 of the 60 clients. The data indicates the importance of a “housing first” strategy and its mitigating effect upon police service call loads. Based on these analyses, persons in the target client group who were serviced by VICOT decreased the demand for traditional police interventions and/or responses by 74%.

Facts re: 43 Housed Clients

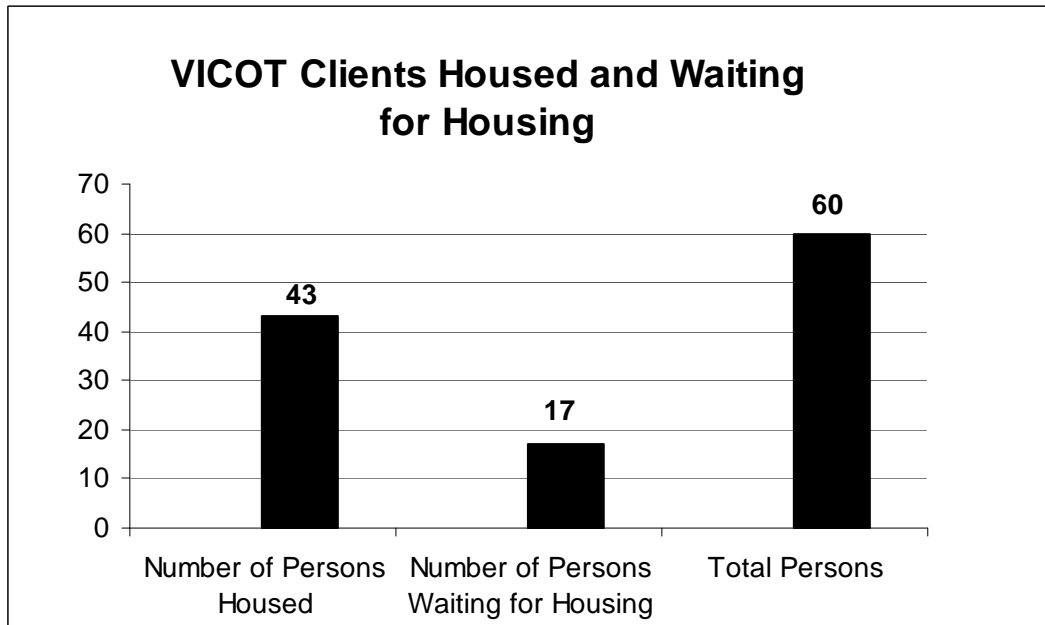
- These clients accounted for 3937 of the historical calls (**60%** of the total call load)
- These clients accounted for 1110 calls in the 12 months prior to housing (**17%** of the total call load)
- After being managed by VICOT and housed, the call load to date from these clients has dropped **74%** to 284 calls (it is important to note that with some clients, housing has been in place for only a few months)

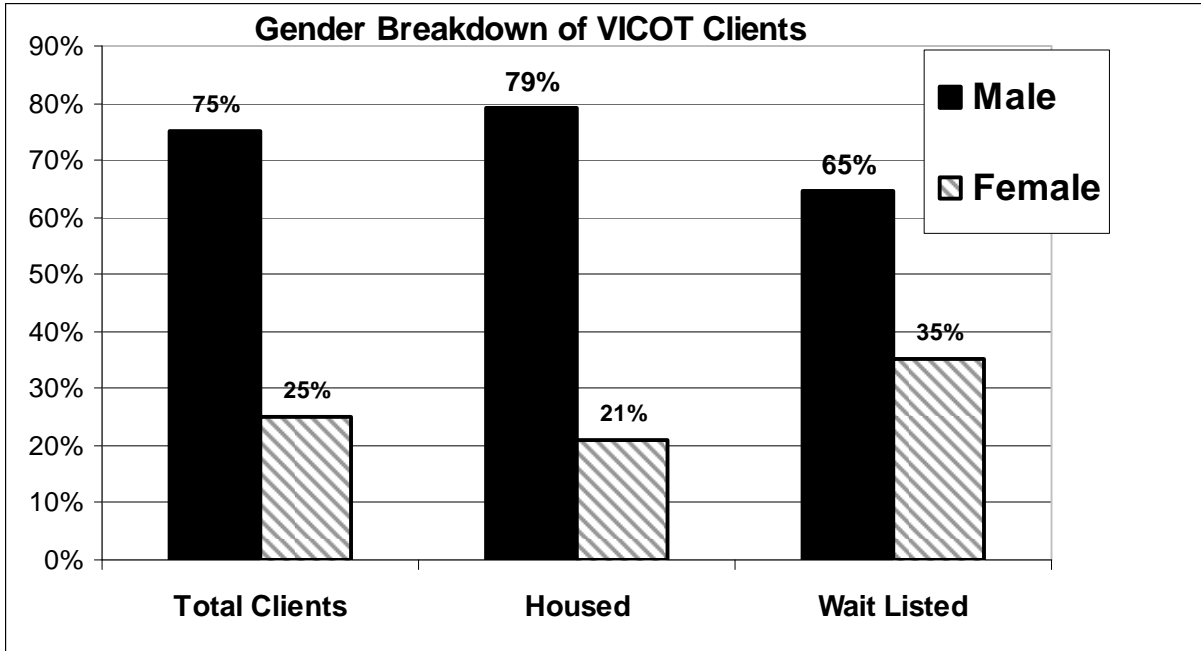
Total Calls for Service – Pre and Post Housing



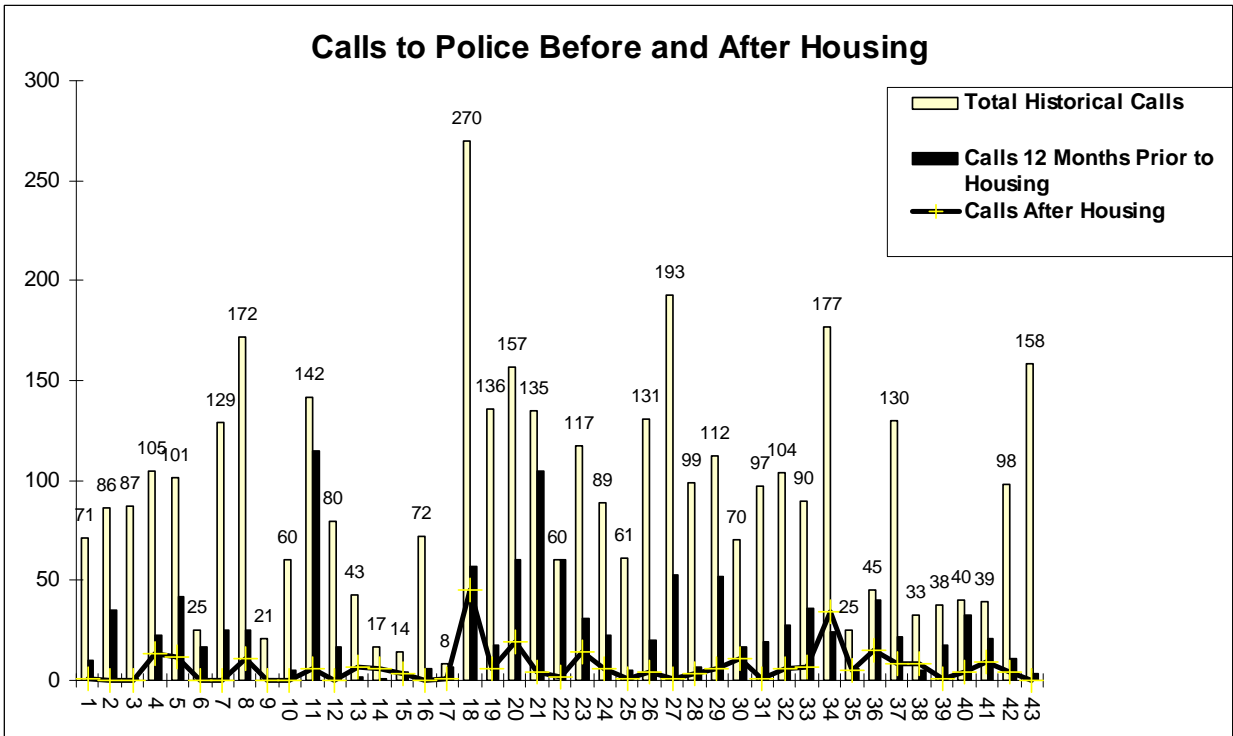
Gender Analysis

Overall 75% of clients are male and 25% are female. Clients range in age from 20 to 56 years, with an average age of 40 years.





The following chart below shows the portion of calls generated by the actions of the 43 clients (historical calls are the light bars), and the calls generated in the 12 months prior to housing (dark bars) – **before and after housing**. The solid line shows calls generated by the same 43 clients after intervention by VICOT. This chart demonstrates the significant impact that intervention by the VICOT team, combined with stable housing, has on reducing resource demands placed on the police by the clients.



Case Study #1:

Client #22 is a 25 year old female. Her history on PRIME goes back to 2001 and is comprised of 248 total interactions with police (this includes other police jurisdictions, not just VicPD), 39 criminal charges 12 addresses listed since 2003 of which 5 are for “no fixed address” (NFA) in Victoria and Saanich, as well as 15 different “aliases”. Her interactions with police range from significant criminal activity such as robbery, possession stolen property, break and enter, possession of weapon, possession of break and enter instruments, theft from motor vehicle, assault, assault police, obstruct police officer, theft under, breach of various court orders and finally, multiple calls for “unwanted person”.

In April of 2008 Client #22 was successfully referred to VICOT. By the end of that month housing was secured for her. An examination of calls for service reveals that from April to December 2007, this client generated 62 calls for police service. The calls ranged from break and enter of a motor vehicle, theft, possession of stolen property, to breach of conditions. During the same period in 2008 (April to December) she was the subject of a complaint in 23 instances and most of those were for suspicious activity or by-law infractions.

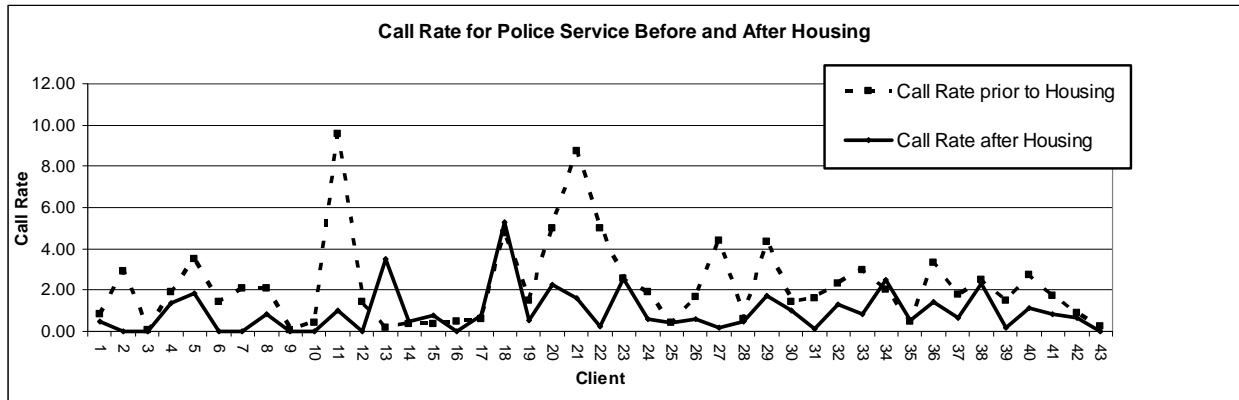
Prior to receiving sustained services from VICOT in April 2008, the pattern of frequent interactions with police continued and she accumulated 14 calls. After that point, a dramatic reduction in calls for police service was observed in relation to this client. Immediately, during the month of April 2008 her actions generated only 3 calls; in July of 2008 there was one call. Since July 2008, this client has generated only one call. This occurred in 2009 and she was in fact the one who called police because of the activity of another individual.

Case Study #2:

Client #12 is a 47 year old male. Since 1998 he has had 80 interactions with police, 9 of which resulted in criminal charges. His interactions range from assault, fraud, mischief, theft, breach of conditions, possession of drugs, to shoplifting and unwanted person. He has one alias and 13 addresses since 2004, of which 5 were “NFA” and one additional address of Streetlink. In the 12 months prior to being successfully referred to the VICOT team, he had 17 interactions, most of which were for unwanted person, by-law offences and trespassing. Since being housed in February of 2008 there have been zero calls for service generated by his actions.

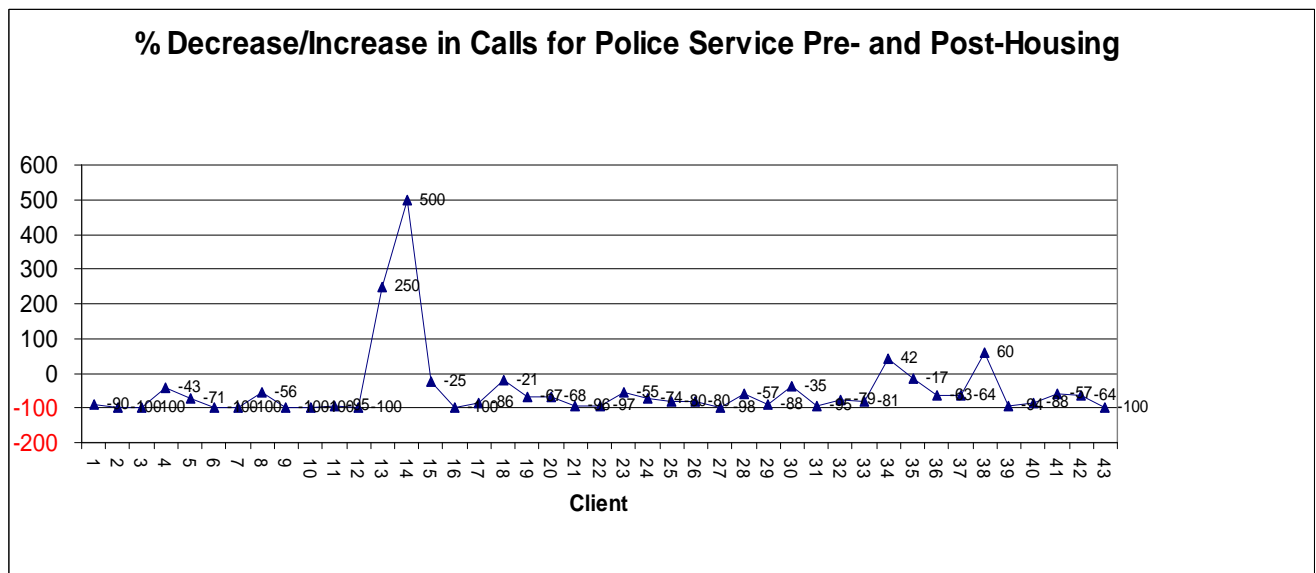
Calls for Service by Client, Pre and Post Housing

This pattern of reduced calls is consistent as the chart below shows. The dashed line (or line closest to the top of the graph) is the call rate or the number of calls in a 12 month period **prior to housing**. The solid line (closest to the bottom of the graph) is the number of calls for police service received per month **since housing**. It is interesting to note that only 7 of the 43 clients (16%) generated an increase in calls. This chart also clearly demonstrates the significant and positive impact around intensive case management and a housing first strategy.



The pattern is repeated with most of the clients. The chart below shows the percentage decrease in calls for service between 12 months prior to housing, and after housing. The median decrease is 80%.

Percentage Decrease (based on 100%) in calls for Service from 12 Months Prior to Housing to Post Housing



In the preceding graph, the spikes showing a 250, 500, 42 and 60 percent increase in calls arise from only a small number of calls for each individual. For example, the 500% increase generated by client #14 represents a jump from one call for service in the 12 months prior to 5 in the year since the client was housed. The last call to police for assistance was in June of 2008.

The spike of 42% is generated by client #34, a 48 year old chronic alcoholic. His history of interactions with police totals 210 calls for service (all police agencies and interactions) and goes back to 1995. The interactions and charges range from assault, fraud, cause disturbance, theft under, intoxication in a public place to unwanted guest. In the 12 month period prior to housing (January 2007 to January 2008) there were 24 calls for service. The bulk of these calls were for intoxication in a public place. Between January 2008 and January 2009, 34 calls were generated due to his actions. Again the majority of these police calls were for being intoxicated in a public place.

Conclusion:

Preliminary data indicate that within the first full year of operation, the VICOT methodology of employing a housing first strategy coupled with an ongoing intensive case management approach creates significant reductions in this client group's interaction with police. The reduction is currently 74% (year-over-year). However, we are currently comparing 5 to 8 years of historical police interactions against only one year of VICOT intervention. This approach requires longer term analysis in order to ensure clients who remain in sustained periods of care are able to maintain reduced levels of police interaction.

The implications for police service, particularly to the downtown core where most of these clients live, are enormous in terms of cost savings, time made available for officers to perform other proactive duties and reduction of negative interactions with persons on city streets.

Unfortunately, the benefits of VICOT's intensive case management approach to client service are self-limiting. Currently only 60 clients are being serviced and a low client ratio is one of the keys to success. There is an expectation that the Team should be able to accommodate a maximum of 75 to 80 clients, or an increase of only 15 to 20 more persons. Based on the Mayor's Task Force, there are approximately 1500 high-risk clients in need of similar attention on our area streets. Based upon anecdotal police observations, that number has probably increased since the time of the MTF Report.

The preliminary success of VICOT warrants continued support for this team and suggests more resources should be applied to this aspect of our homelessness and policing strategies within the downtown core.