**2.1 Trauma and Homelessness**

Homelessness is not primarily a housing problem but a human one. Studies produce consistent and well-documented evidence of high levels of Complex Trauma within individuals and families who are homeless.

Complex Trauma is a result of repeated, sustained trauma. Often this trauma begins in childhood and continues or repeats for months or years at a time.

Complex Trauma:

* disrupts healthy brain development.
* affects social development.
* compromises immune systems.
* leads to unhealthy coping behaviors.

Changes to the brain from trauma can cause:

* attention problems.
* poor memory.
* poor decision making.
* problems learning new things.
* problems recalling old information.
* problems with planning, organizing and sequencing information.
* anxiety.
* confusion.
* unexplained pain.
* problems being self-starting.

These changes may cause difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships, unstable work histories, and struggles with finances, family, jobs, and depression throughout life.

Three major traits of complex trauma are:

1. **Disassociation** - a lack of connection in a person’s thoughts, memory, physical actions, and sense of identity.
2. **Emotional dysregulation** - the inability to manage the intensity and duration of negative emotions.
3. **Substance abuse** - a maladaptive coping mechanism to dull the pain.

Greenwood Pathway House provides wholistic trauma-informed care to help people overcome homelessness permanently. Trauma-informed care is built on an understanding of the impact of trauma, emphasizes safety, and creates opportunities for clients to rebuild a sense of control.

Trauma-informed care focuses on WHAT HAPPENED to our clients not what is wrong with them.

The main themes in trauma-informed care are:

1. **Trauma Awareness** - understand how various symptoms and behaviors represent adaptations to traumatic experiences.
2. **Emphasis on safety** - build physical and emotional safety for clients and volunteers.
3. **Opportunities to rebuild control** - emphasizes the importance of choice for clients.
4. **Create predictable environments** - allows clients to rebuild a sense of personal control.
5. **Strengths-based approach** – focus on the future and allow clients to identify their own strengths and develop their own coping skills.

*“When we do more for people than we need to do, we don’t help them to stand on their own.”*

Things to remember when working with our clients.

* Speak clearly using a calm, reassuring tone.
* Be respectful.
* Build relationships.
* Avoid confrontation and arguing.
* Model calmness.
* Show, not tell, if at all possible.
* Be specific and limit instructions.
* Break down information into smaller parts.
* Provide tools to help the clients.
* Make sure your non-verbal and verbal messages agree.

*“Because trauma so often happens in the context of relationships, it is within relationships that healing occurs.”*

SAFETY + STABILITY + SUPPORT (over time) = HEALING

4.2 Mission Statement

Greenwood Pathway House exists to help homeless persons navigate a pathway to physical, financial, and social stability while sharing with them the love of God.

Accordingly,   
Clients will receive, in order of priority:

1. Shelter, access to housing and provision of basic physical needs.
2. Access to healthy personal relationships.
3. Tools and support to build social and emotional health.

4.4 Ministry Strategy

An effective ministry strategy must address the underlying brokenness in relationships with God, with self, with others and the rest of creation. We are “new creations” commissioned with a ministry of reconciliation, sent forth as Christ’s ambassadors to walk side-by-side as Jesus does His reconciling work on our clients and on us.

GPH utilizes Christ-centered, trauma-informed, services to address the root causes of homelessness and minister to the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of our clients. Our ministry is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for staff, volunteers and clients