

Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study

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Prepared for the Vancouver Youth Funders Table

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To: Report Readers

From: Vancouver Youth Funders Committee

Re: The Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study

You are about to read the Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study. The Vancouver Youth Funders Committee, a committee comprised of senior managers from three levels of government as well as major non-profit funders, commissioned the report to obtain information about the status of youth housing in Vancouver. Preparation of the report was facilitated by a subcommittee of the Youth Funders, which also included representatives of B.C Housing and the City of Vancouver Housing Centre. The report provides 'promising practices' options to address any gaps that may be identified through the study.

This study is a planning tool. It does not provide recommendations. It provides a context in which funders and service providers can assess their current housing services and begin to plan for the future.

To this end, the Vancouver Youth Funders have established a subcommittee that will be working with the content of this report with the intent of identifying opportunities to improve current services, as well as identifying priorities for action. For service providers, we hope the report will provide ideas regarding avenues to pursue in delivering services. While the funders cannot commit new funding to youth housing at this time, planning from this study will allow funders to focus their priorities and the models for service they would like to pursue should new resources become available.

The funders would like to thank the subcommittee and the numerous young people and youth-serving agencies who contributed to this document.

Sincerely,

Mary-Clare Zak
Co-Chair,
Vancouver Youth Funders Committee

Beverly Dicks
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Acknowledgements

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We would also like to thank the Vancouver agencies that provided their insights into issues and opportunities for youth housing in Vancouver, and the “best practice” agencies that participated in an interview with us.

Finally, we acknowledge the work of the youth interviewers who worked diligently to find and interview homeless and at risk youth for this project. Teya Greenberg was instrumental in coordinating this component of the work.

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Executive Summary

The Vancouver Youth Funders Committee, Youth Housing Subcommittee commissioned Eberle Planning and Research to provide strategic information and options regarding a continuum of youth housing services in Vancouver to 2010. Specific objectives were to:

- Estimate the number of youth who are homeless/at risk of being homeless
- Identify issues affecting youth housing
- Identify best practices in youth housing that are applicable to Vancouver
- Present options for a “Youth Housing Continuum”
- Identify gaps, overlaps and duplication in youth housing
- Engage youth and youth service providers in the process.

Three methods were employed to conduct this study: a review of published literature on the effectiveness of youth housing options and best practices in youth housing; interviews with local youth and youth serving agencies for their views on a youth housing continuum, and interviews with agencies identified as operating “best practice” youth housing initiatives.

THE YOUTH

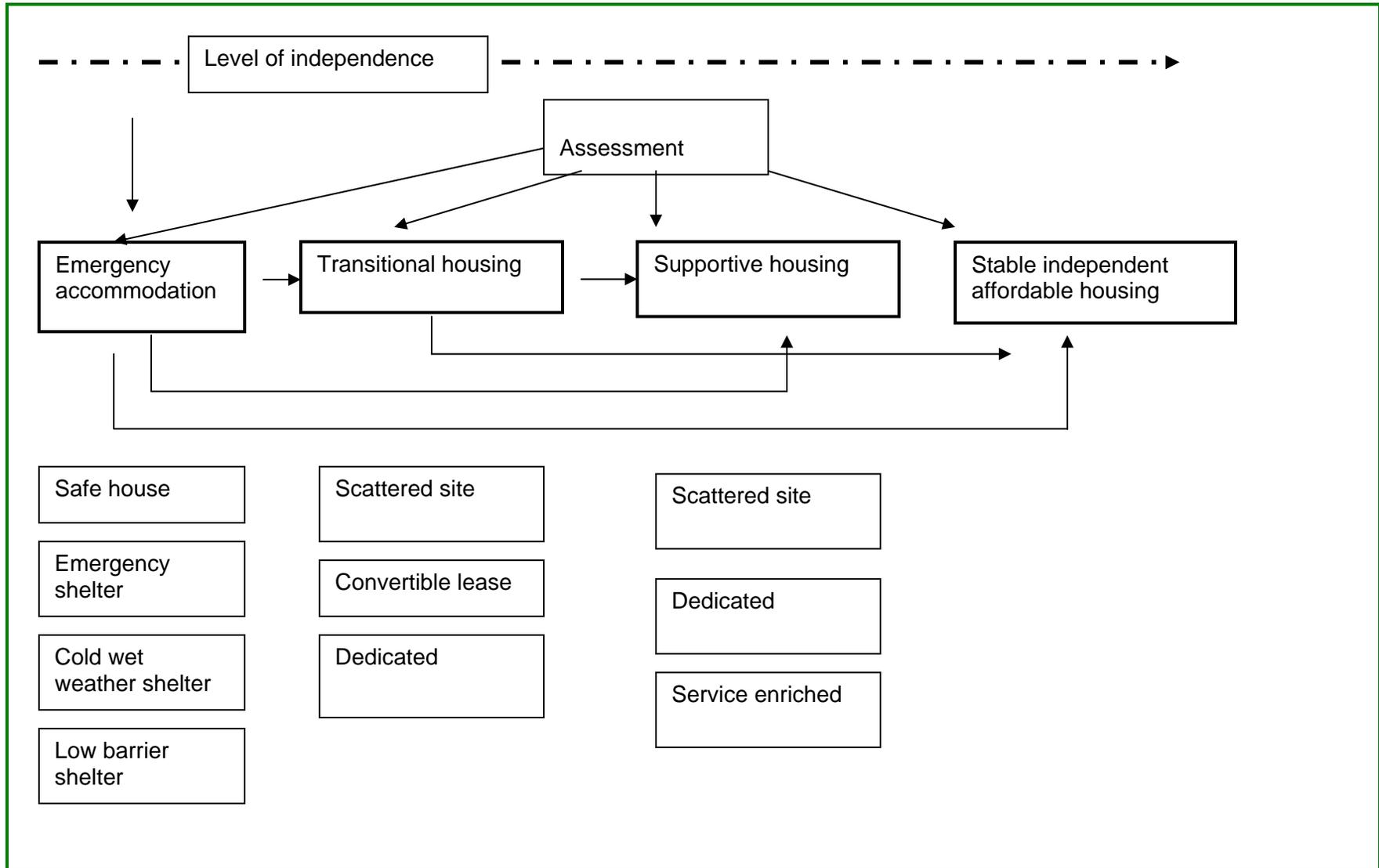
The number of homeless and at risk youth in Vancouver is estimated to range between 300 and 700 on any one day, and includes young people living in a wide range of circumstances, such as on the street, in shelters, sofa surfing, and in unstable home situations where they spend a lot of time on the street.

Like any population, Vancouver youth who are homeless or at risk are a diverse group, although they are likely to be male, Caucasian, dealing with issues of sexuality, have histories in government care, come from outside Vancouver, had/ve troubled home lives including histories of physical abuse, and are living with significant addiction/mental health issues. They face several challenges ranging from the dangerous street environment, child welfare involvement, drug use and mental illness, sexual identity, sex trade involvement, and transience. In addition, they tend to mistrust adults and institutions and to be hidden. Aboriginal youth and young women face additional issues related to discrimination and physical safety.

Barriers affecting young people’s ability to obtain adequate affordable housing include: low income and high housing costs, discrimination, drug and alcohol use, lack of life skills, complex eligibility rules, and the fact that they generally mistrust adults and are alienated.

THE CONTINUUM

A youth housing continuum is proposed as follows:



RESOURCE ANALYSIS

At present, there are 169 dedicated beds/units or funded spaces in Vancouver for young people who are at risk or homeless. These consist of safe houses, emergency shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing. Vancouver possesses housing within each key element of the youth housing framework with the exception of independent affordable housing specifically allocated for youth. However, there are gaps in terms of specific types of emergency shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing.

There are between 300 and 700 at risk and homeless youth in Vancouver and almost 170 dedicated youth housing units, pointing to a significant undersupply of suitable shelter and housing in the range of 130 to 530 beds/units at the present time.

GAPS

The following gaps and needs were identified based on the resource analysis and interviews with youth and stakeholders. They are not listed in order of priority, but according to the proposed youth housing framework. Given the limited housing options available for Vancouver youth, we found no duplication in the provision of housing or housing services.

Housing

- Low barrier emergency shelter. This would permit separation of youth who are intoxicated or high, from those who are eligible for the higher barrier programs currently in operation.
- Emergency accommodation for youth age 16-24 with children who should not be sharing facilities with adults and need very specific supports. This could be a very small facility e.g. Vi Fineday.
- Cold wet weather beds. These may or may not be low barrier.
- Scattered site transitional housing units with leases that convert to stable affordable housing, if appropriate. This approach could be implemented relatively quickly in the existing private or social housing stock. Units clustered in a building could facilitate specialized services to sub-populations such as youth who are LGBTQ, pregnant youth and young parents. Service-enriched housing could be developed for those with fewer support needs.
- Dedicated and scattered site supportive housing for young persons including persons with HIV/AIDS and those with FASD. This might involve designating youth as a "vulnerable group" so they are eligible for provincial independent living programs or other supportive housing programs.
- Stable, independent, affordable housing. Specific measures could involve allowing youth to use rent supplements, giving youth priority access to existing social housing units, and providing incentives/guarantees to encourage landlords to rent to youth.
- Encourage placement of youth housing resources throughout the Greater Vancouver to ensure that young people can have their needs met in their home communities.

Housing assistance services

- Enhanced house finding services/outreach workers to help youth access the full range of housing options.
- More follow-up by workers to help young people maintain independent housing.

- Implement a pilot initiative to permit dogs in a youth shelter and a transitional housing project, based upon the model policies developed by the National Canine Defence League in the UK.
- Better/more staff/training/supervision to ensure that youth shelters and safe houses can meet the special needs of different sub-populations.

BEST PRACTICES

The literature described numerous best practices in the provision of youth shelter, housing and support. Profiles of nine housing initiatives in Canada and the U.S. were prepared focusing on how the best practice(s) are implemented.¹ They are as follows:

Initiative	Best practice
Comprehensive	
Larkin Street Youth Services	Integrated services and housing
Pape Adolescent Resource Centre	Partnerships with existing service providers
Emergency Shelter	
Eva's Satellite	Meeting basic needs first
Richter St. Youth Centre	Meeting basic needs first
Transitional Housing	
Bill Wilson Center	Integrated services and housing; case management and mentoring
Chelsea Youth Foyer	Integrated housing with employment and training
Lighthouse Transitional and Supportive Housing	Scattered site apartments; convertible lease
Green Chimneys	Target services to unique needs of sub-populations
Supportive Housing	
Supporting Our Youth	Partnership between service agency and housing providers; mentorship

¹ While providing culturally appropriate services is a best practice, we were unable to profile a youth initiative utilizing this approach.

Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study

Introduction

Purpose/objectives

The Vancouver Youth Funders Committee, Housing Subcommittee commissioned Eberle Planning and Research to provide strategic information and options regarding the continuum of youth housing services in Vancouver to 2010. Specific objectives were to:

- Estimate the number of youth who are homeless/at risk of being homeless
- Identify issues affecting youth housing
- Identify best practices in youth housing that are applicable to Vancouver
- Present options for a “Youth Housing Continuum”
- Identify gaps, overlaps and duplication in youth housing

As part of the project, the Vancouver Youth Funders Committee directed the consultants to engage youth and youth service providers in the process.

Definitions

The population of interest is Vancouver youth aged 16 to 24 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Within that age grouping, we have examined separately, where possible, the distinct issues and needs of two main sub-groups by age, being youth age 16-18 years and 19 to 24 years. This breakdown reflects the actual age of majority in British Columbia, which is 19 years old.²

There are also many different definitions of homelessness and persons who are ‘at risk’. In using these terms, we mean youth who do not have a permanent place of their own and are living on the street or are involved in street life to a significant extent, while sofa surfing, for example. This term encompasses a continuum of street involvement – from curbsiders who circulate between home and the street, to runaway youth, who have

² In British Columbia the *Child, Family and Community Services Act* defines ‘youth’ as an individual aged 16 to 19 years. However, the same act provides for transitional services up to age 24.

voluntarily left home. Also included are 'throwaway youth', who have been asked by their family to leave home. Street entrenched youth form the far end of the continuum.

Scope

As described above, at risk and homeless youth living in the City of Vancouver are the focus of this study. This may include youth with child welfare status, but it is not restricted to this population. Additionally, while youth age 13 to 15 years are of interest, and issues affecting this sub-population are noted where possible, the focus is on youth age 16 to 24 years. Youth aged 13 to 15 years clearly fall within the mandate of the child protection system. Youth age 16 to 18 years lie within a grey area where they are still legally covered by the child protection system, but may, in practice, tend to avoid it.

Context

The context for this project is one of an increasing tenuousness within the housing market in Vancouver, as rents and house prices continue to rise at a record pace. Consequently, we see a large and growing number of people of all ages and stages who are at increased risk of homelessness and indeed homeless. The number of absolute homeless persons in the region doubled between 2002 and 2005, and there were over 55,000 households at risk of economic homelessness in 2001.

A recent GVRD study looking at affordable housing issues and options noted that Greater Vancouver has the highest housing costs in Canada, affordability is an issue for owners as well as renters, and the incidence and severity of affordability for renters continues to increase. The study points out that "affordability is acute for particular target populations and that the loss of existing rental housing and the lack of new rental construction combine to create a major housing gap in the region."³ The current waiting list for social housing totals over 10,000 households.

Youth are a particularly vulnerable population with less financial and emotional resources and life skills with which to navigate this perilous road. In addition, many street youth possess troubled family histories and have limited ties with their family of origin.

³ GVRD. 2006. *Regional Affordable Housing Strategy Workshop: Issues and Options*. (Also called Affordable Housing Issues Paper.)

In this context, there is a concerted effort in the region to address homelessness from a policy and planning perspective, as demonstrated by the following work:

- City of Vancouver *Homeless Action Plan 2005*;
- Regional homeless plan “3 Ways to Home” 2003 endorsed by the GVRD Board, and 19 GVRD member municipalities;
- *From shelters to home...: Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy 2006 – 2015*; and.
- A Regional Affordable Housing Strategy being developed by the GVRD.

There were approximately 71,000 youth aged 15 to 24 years living in the City of Vancouver in 2001. Most of these young people are able to transition from their family home to independent living successfully. Only a small percentage has difficulty, owing to a troubled family background, mental illness or substance use, limited incomes or a combination of factors.

Method

Three methods were employed to conduct this study: a review of published literature on the effectiveness of youth housing options and best practices in youth housing, interviews with youth and youth serving agencies for their views on a youth housing continuum, and interviews with agencies in Canada and the U.S. operating youth housing initiatives that demonstrate the use of best practices.

This report consists of several elements, as follows.

- a. Review and estimate of homeless and at risk youth in Vancouver.
- b. Inventory of youth housing.
- c. Consultation with youth and service providers. Interviews with youth and service providers were carried out to learn about their perspectives on the issues, barriers, needs and gaps in youth housing resources in Vancouver. The consultation process included interviews with 41 youth and a youth focus group. Interviews were also completed with 19 service providers. Results of the youth and service providers interviews are contained in Appendix A and B.
- d. Youth housing framework. A proposed Vancouver youth housing framework was developed based on the literature and interviews.

- e. Gap analysis. The consultants compared existing youth housing resources in Vancouver with the proposed continuum to identify gaps.
- f. Best practices. This work was carried out in two parts. First a review of literature identifying best practices in youth housing was completed. The second part involved profiling ten housing resources for youth that illustrate the use of best practices.

Number of youth at risk and homeless

The number of homeless and at risk youth living in Vancouver is extremely difficult to pinpoint with any degree of accuracy. It is difficult to count homeless and at risk youth using conventional service based enumeration methods because youth tend to avoid services and are essentially invisible or hidden. One of the major reasons for this is to avoid apprehension by child welfare authorities or the police.

It is also challenging to interpret the results of the counts or estimates that are made because they can employ different age ranges to define youth. Some studies/estimates refer to youth as being individuals under 19 years, while others use a broader definition including young people up to age 24 or 25 years. And, some look at homeless youth, while others measure street youth (which generally encompasses both homeless youth and those at risk). The time period over which the count or estimate is produced also affects the number found. Estimates using a shorter time frame, such as a day, find smaller numbers of homeless and at risk youth than those employing a longer time period.

Chand et al. produced one of the earliest estimates of the size of the homeless youth population in Vancouver using service provider records. They estimated there were 300 to 500 homeless street youth *in the peak summer months* in Vancouver in 1997.⁴

Using several different approaches, the Verdant Group estimated the number of homeless youth in Downtown South during May 2000.⁵ It found an average of 205 youth under 25 experienced some homelessness *over the course of the month*, an average of

⁴ Chand Manjit and Lisa Thompson. 1997. *You Have Heard This Before. Street Involved Youth and the Service Gaps*. Commissioned for the Interministerial Street Children's Committee.

⁵ Verdant Group. 2000. *Homeless Street Youth in Downtown South: A Snapshot Study*. A report prepared for City of Vancouver, Social Planning Department.

25 youth slept on the street, and an additional 25 youth stayed in shelter/crisis beds for a total of 50 “chronically homeless” youth on one night.

There were 179 homeless youth counted in Vancouver *on one day* in March 2005 as part of the Regional Homeless Count.⁶ This represents 60% of all homeless youth counted in Greater Vancouver. Of these, 100 youth or 56% were living on the street or couch surfing and 79 (44%) stayed in shelters, safe houses or transition houses for women fleeing violence on count night.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development estimates that between .75% and 1% of the youth population age 15 to 19 years are at high risk of homelessness independent of their families. In Vancouver, it is assumed the figure would be at the high end of this range.⁷ Applying this percentage to the 2001 Vancouver census population of 70,170 youth results in an estimate of 702 at risk youth *on census day*.

Similarly, a measure of economic risk of homelessness, called INALHM,⁸ suggests that there were over 1,200 youth headed households in Vancouver paying more than 50% of their income for rent *on census day* in 2001 and experiencing some other risk factors.

Table 1 summarizes the various counts, estimates and surveys of street youth or homeless youth described above. They have taken place roughly within the last 10 years and are presented chronologically. For each, the table notes the specific age grouping that was used, the geography covered, definition (i.e. whether street youth, homeless, at risk or hidden homeless), and the period of time the count or estimate covers.

⁶ Goldberg, Michael, Eberle Planning and Research, Jim Woodward and Assoc., Deborah Kraus Consulting, Judy Graves, Infocus Consulting and John Talbot and Assoc. 2005. *On our Streets and in our Shelters... Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count*. Social Planning and Research Council.

⁷ Woodward, Jim and Associate Inc. Eberle Planning and Research, Deborah Kraus Consulting, Judy Graves and May Communications. 2002. *Research Project on Homelessness in Greater Vancouver*. Prepared for GVRD. p 45.

⁸ GVRD. J3018 Table 1: INALHM Households Showing Household/Dwelling Characteristics and Household Maintainer Characteristics for GVRD and Non-Reserve CSDs, 2001 Census, 20% Sample Data

Table 1
Estimates of number of homeless and at risk youth in Vancouver

Source	Age	Geography	Definition	Time period		
				Month	24 hrs	Other
Chand et al 1997 Service provider estimates	12-19 yrs	Urban core Vancouver	Street youth			300-500 (several mos)
Verdant 2000 – count and estimates	Under 25	Downtown South Van	Homeless	205	50	
MCFD 2001 Census	15-24 yrs	City of Van	High risk youth		702	
2001 census – at economic risk of homelessness. GVRD	15-24 yrs	City of Van	At risk		1,255 youth househol ds	
Greater Vancouver Homeless Count 2005	16-24 yrs	City of Van	Homeless		179	

Based on the above, the number of homeless and at risk youth in Vancouver *on any one day* ranges from an absolute minimum of 179 persons to a high of 1,255 young people. The actual range is probably closer to between 300 and 700 on any one day, and includes young people living in a wide range of circumstances, such as on the street, in shelters, sofa surfing, and in unstable home situations where they spend a lot of time on the street.⁹

Youth serving agencies provide some youth with housing and support and agency records provide another indicator of the size of the at risk youth population in Vancouver. For the fiscal year 2005/06, Directions Youth Services Centre, Housing and Life Skills Program served 663 clients. Of the 663 youth who received housing support, 215 received housing. Similarly, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre completed housing support intake for 138 youth over the same time period, in addition to serving youth in care. The Covenant House youth shelter served 404 separate youth in 2005. The majority were male and 24% were of Aboriginal status. Their transitional housing program, Rights of Passage, served 68 individual youth in 2005, and most were male and Caucasian. The Urban Native Youth Association served 369 young people in its

⁹ Note that at risk youth who are currently living in some form of transitional or supportive housing (of which there are 84 units in Vancouver) are not included in the homeless figures, but would be included in the at risk figures.

safe house in 2005. They were mostly male and Caucasian (although the share of Aboriginal youth served was higher at 37%.)

Region wide homeless and at risk figures are summarized in Table 2 to provide an overall context for the Vancouver figures. The 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count conducted in 24 hours in March of 2005 found 296 unaccompanied homeless youth under age 25. The majority, 189 (or 65%) stayed outside or were couch surfing that night while 100 or 35% stayed in an emergency shelter.¹⁰ Again this is likely an undercount. The 2005 figures represented a 9% increase in the number of homeless youth counted region-wide compared to 2002 (272 youth). The March 2005 count also noted a decline in the number of homeless youth under 19 years since the last count, from 124 in 2002 to 76 in 2005.

Table 2
Regional figures

Source	Age	Geography	Defn	Month	24hrs	Other
Homeless Count 2002 - GVRD	Under 25	GVRD	Homeless		272	
MCF 2002 estimate	10-19 yrs	GVRD	At risk and homeless		2,400	
Regional Homeless Count 2005 - SPARC	Under 25	GVRD	Homeless		296	
2001 census – INALHM – GVRD	16-24	GVRD requested	At economic risk of hl		2,720	
Hidden Homeless Study 2005 – Boyes et al.	Under 26	6 Six GVRD municipalities	Hidden homeless	147		

¹⁰ Goldberg, Michael, Eberle Planning and Research, Jim Woodward and Assoc., Deborah Kraus Consulting, Judy Graves, Infocus Consulting and John Talbot and Assoc. 2005. *On our Streets and in our Shelters... Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count*. Social Planning and Research Council.

Who are homeless and at risk youth?

Understanding the unique characteristics of homeless and at risk youth allows better planning and policy making to address their needs. Like any age group, youth are a heterogeneous population. Swets identified a variety of sub-populations among at risk youth including runaway, street entrenched, sexually exploited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning (LGBTQ), Aboriginal, substance using, mentally ill, and youth in care.¹¹ We might also add that age appears to be a factor in distinguishing among youth at risk, with older youth exhibiting quite different characteristics than those under 19 years. And besides these labels, youth are unique individuals struggling to find their way in a very challenging world.

The Verdant Group, using a combination of service provider records and a street survey, found that most of the homeless youth they enumerated in Downtown South in May 2000 were aged 19 to 24 years (64 to 74%), approximately 70% were male, and they were predominantly Caucasian (80%). Only 15% were Aboriginal. They noted that young Quebecois make up a significant portion of the Caucasian youth - up to 25%. In terms of home community, 25% were from the Lower Mainland, another quarter were from elsewhere in BC, and 40% were from Quebec, Ontario and Alberta.

The McCreary Centre Society surveyed 145 homeless and street involved youth age 12 to 19 years in Vancouver in 2001, then complemented that research with 180 interviews with older youth aged 19 to 24 years. Together these studies provide the most complete picture of at risk youth in Vancouver, at least until 2001.¹² The authors caution that the youth who participated in the two surveys were not selected randomly, and may not include the highest risk youth who are not connected to or receiving any help from youth serving agencies.

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the findings from these studies for the two age groups both in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and housing history. Figures in Table 3 confirm the findings from other jurisdictions and the homeless literature generally that these youth are more likely to be male, Caucasian, dealing with issues of sexuality, have

¹¹ Swets, Robin. 2000. *A Roof is Not Enough: A Strategy for Housing Youth in BC*. Review of the Literature. Draft.

¹² McCreary Centre Society. 2001. *No Place to Call Home. A profile of street youth in British Columbia*. McCreary Centre Society. 2002. *Between the Cracks: Homeless Youth in Vancouver*.

histories in government care, come from outside Vancouver, had/ve troubled home lives including histories of physical abuse, and are living with significant addiction/mental health issues. What the figures mostly show, however, is a subset of the population who face a number of fairly significant challenges, traumas and barriers as they transition from youth to adulthood.

Table 3
Profile of homeless and at risk youth

Characteristics	Verdant 2000 Under 25	McCreary 2001 Under 19	McCreary 2002 19-24 yrs	2005 Count 16-24 yrs
	%	%	%	%
Male	70	57	67	57
Female	30	43	32	41
Other				1
13-15 yrs				1
16-19 yrs		16	-	15
19-24 yrs	67-74	-	-	84
Aboriginal	15	38	35	35
LGTBQ		51	36	-
Ever in government care		44	52	-
Aged out of care		-	28	-
Have child/children		14	26	-
From this area	25	24	24	37
Have pet(s)		-	13	-
Ever kicked out of home		69	61	-
Ever runaway from home		82	63	-
Physically abused		71	71	-
Addiction problem		47	44	-
Fetal alcohol syndrome		11	12	-
Serious mental illness		31	27	-

It is apparent that the two age groups differ in some respects. The younger group was less likely to be male (57%) compared to the older group (67%) although the share reporting Aboriginal identity was similar.

Both age groups had very high incidences of “ever being in government care”, although the older group had a higher rate, and almost 1/3 of older youth had aged out of care. In this study, 44% of all Vancouver street youth under 19 said that they had been in some type of government care at some time in their lives, while 52% of older youth aged 19-24 had been in care.

In terms of home community, only 24% of all youth were originally from Vancouver. As many as 61% of younger youth said they were from elsewhere in Canada, and 13% were from elsewhere in BC.

A significant component (51%) of youth aged 16-19 years identified their sexual orientation as LGBTQ while older youth had a lower rate (36%). These figures are much higher than those reported in McCreary's school based survey where 15% of youth identified as LGBTQ.

These street youth were dealing with a number of traumatic and challenging issues including being in government care and/or being kicked out of their family home (61 & 69%). The majority of those who had run away or had been kicked out had been away for more than a year, and virtually all had very little connection with their family. Youth reported very high rates of physical abuse (71%) as well as addictions problems (44 - 47%). Fetal alcohol syndrome was a factor in about 11-12% of youth surveyed. Clearly these are youth with multiple issues who will need a wide range of support to become stabilized in a housing situation.

The primary reasons for being on the street ranged from: "feel accepted here", "don't get along with parents", "travelling", "friends hang out on streets" and "kicked out of home".

The 2005 Homeless Count results were comparable showing that of the 179 youth age 16- 24 years counted in Vancouver, 57% were male, 84% were older youth between the ages of 19 and 24 years, and 35% self-identified as Aboriginal. On a regional basis, the 2005 Count found that homeless youth in the GVRD also had high self reported rates of addiction (56%) and mental illness (26%).

Although not the subject of this report, it should be noted that these findings are in contrast to McCreary's findings for at risk youth in the suburban areas of Vancouver and small towns around BC. At risk youth in these communities tend to be relatively "better off".

Table 4 presents a portrait of the housing situation and housing histories of youth who participated in the two McCreary studies. In terms of their current housing situation at the time, only 10 and 11% lived in a shelter or safe house. The largest share of younger youth lived on the street, while older youth were most likely to stay in a hotel. In the year prior to the study, the younger youth were most likely to report living on the street or in a squat, while older youth reported staying in an apartment. Two thirds of youth age 19 to 24 reported difficulty finding a place to live, and they felt this was due to a lack of adequate funds, discrimination and/or alcohol or drug problems. Only 6 to 9% reported staying in a foster home in the previous year, even though almost half had a care history.

Table 4
Housing history

McCreary (2001, 2002)	Under 19 yrs %	19-24 yrs %
<i>Current live in</i>		
House or apt	30	29
Hotel	7	37
Shelter or safe house	10	11
Nowhere/all over	29	10
Squat	14	10
On the street	34	20
<i>Current housing is</i>		
Permanent	27	24
Temporary	70	71
<i>In past year lived*</i>		
Parents/relatives home	35	29
Foster/group home	9	6
Apartment	42	49
Hotel	21	34
Shelter or safe house	23	21
Street or squat	56	41
Custody centre	14	4
<i>Have had difficulty finding place to live</i>	N/a	66
<i>Why?</i>		
Not enough money	-	46
Landlord won't rent to me	-	22
Alcohol or drug problems	-	13

* more than one answer possible

In a survey of hidden homelessness, youth (under age 25) living in six Greater Vancouver communities showed the following housing patterns:

- 84% had stayed with family or friends on an emergency basis in the last 12 months;
- only 21% had stayed in an emergency shelter in the last 12 months compared to older hidden homeless (29% for 26 to 39 years and 33% for 40 years or older);
- 83% had moved two or more times in the last 12 months;
- they were likely to perceive their current living arrangements as temporary (57%);
- they were more likely to share accommodation (55%) than older hidden homeless;
- they had a higher satisfaction with their current housing situation;
- they had difficulty paying rent (71%);
- they reported a history of staying with others, at least twice in past year (86%);
- they felt they could rely on someone in an emergency (79%); and
- they felt optimistic about their economic future (63%) and ability to solve their problems (68%).¹³

Service providers see a certain subset of the at risk youth population depending upon their mandate (in terms of age and other variables) and the types of service they provide and thus may see youth with different characteristics than those of at risk and homeless youth generally. For example, a 2002 Vancouver Police Department study was restricted to youth under age 19 (their mandate) whom their 'youth cars' served. It reported that 62% of young individuals they dealt with and who were included in their study were female. The predominance of young women in this sample contrasts with the McCreary findings above, and could be the result of the selection process. Police officers may feel that young females on the street are more vulnerable than males and thus may be more likely to approach them. These youth had an average age of 15.6 years, and a mode age (most common) of 17 years. Fifty-five percent were First Nations and 28% were Caucasian. Sixty-two percent reported that they use drugs. They were living with family (57%), in a group home (16%), foster care (9%), on the street (8%), on

¹³ Boyes, Kathleen, Jason Copas and George Lawrie. 2005. *Hidden Homelessness: Lessons from Experience*. Prepared for BC Yukon Homelessness Research Committee. HRSDC.

their own (5%), and 'other' (5%). None reported staying in a shelter. Many of the youth in the police study were involved with MCFD (66%), on probation (32%), or in addictions treatment (6%).

The BC safe house study¹⁴ provides another, more recent perspective on at risk youth, this time focusing on youth who stayed at BC safe houses or emergency shelters in 2003/04. It reported that the average age of youth served was 19.5 years, and 36% were 17 or 18 years old. In terms of ethnicity, Aboriginal youth represented between 10 and 70% of youth clients, depending on the facility. Forty-one percent of youth staying in BC safe houses and emergency shelters identified themselves as LGBTQ while the provider estimate was in the range of 20 to 30%. It also reported that the number of safe house admissions for children in care with MCFD was relatively low, about 10-15% (although statistics on legal status were not available from most agencies). Seven percent of youth reported sexual exploitation and 14% reported being approached by someone who made them uncomfortable. Providers estimated that 10-15% of youth staying in safe houses were involved in the sex trade.

Many at risk youth stay in rooms in Single Room Occupancy hotels in downtown Vancouver. The Downtown Core Housing Project: A Community Self-Portrait¹⁵ interviewed 90 youth age 15 to 24 years staying in Vancouver SROs in 2000. The youth represented 6% of all residents, they tended to be First Nations, and have the lowest income at \$601/month. Sixty percent were receiving BC Benefits, 3% disability benefits, and only 6% were earning employment income. Their average rent was \$343/month and they had lived in the downtown core for 1.5 years compared to 6.3 years average. Most youth (59%) had previously lived in Vancouver while 39% had moved from outside of Vancouver. Almost three quarters of youth living in SROs (72%) had no access to cooking facilities compared to 53% of all residents.

¹⁴ Olive Branch Consulting. 2005. *Review of Safe Houses and Emergency Shelters in BC*. Prepared for Ministry of Children and Family Development.

¹⁵ Main and Hastings Community Development Society and Tenants Rights Action Coalition. 2000. *The Downtown Core Housing Project: A Community Self Portrait*.

Issues and trends

The documents, statistics, and interviews with youth and agencies point to several issues or trends that particularly affect the ability of at risk youth in Vancouver to obtain and maintain housing. The consultants have not reviewed the housing affordability issue in depth, as that is well documented elsewhere, particularly the recent GVRD study,¹⁶ but wish to emphasize that it is an underlying factor affecting the ability of youth to gain stability in their living situations. Other factors that need to be considered are:

- Dangerous street environment
- Child welfare involvement
- Drug use and mental illness
- Sexual orientation
- Sex trade involvement
- Violence and young women
- Aboriginal youth
- Youth from other provinces
- Hidden homelessness

Dangerous streets

McCreary identified parts of Vancouver as a particularly dangerous for young people to “hang out” compared to suburban municipalities and smaller towns. The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is unique with its active drug trade and high HIV infection rate. It is a grim picture with high rates of drug use and addiction, violence and victimization. Furthermore, they point out that young people living on the street here tend to be older than those in the suburbs and have few remaining connections to family or school.

There are three specific areas where youth congregate in Vancouver. These are Downtown South – the main strip for homeless youth – also the entertainment district on Granville St. Many social services for homeless youth are located there. Boystown, a specific area within Yaletown that is home to Vancouver’s male sex trade, is another

¹⁶ GVRD. 2006.

area where youth congregate. The Downtown Eastside is home to yet another population of street youth. The 2005 homeless count found the majority of Vancouver youth in the West End, followed by the Downtown Eastside, and Downtown South.

Child welfare involvement

Having previously been in the care of the child welfare system is a known risk factor for homelessness among youth and adults. A Canadian study examining this relationship noted that:

Numerous studies in the UK and US but also in Europe, demonstrate a relationship between child welfare and homelessness - people with a child welfare background are over-represented among homeless adults and/or youth, four times more according to one study.¹⁷

There are likely many reasons for this apparent connection, one of which is the difficulty many youth in care have in overcoming their extremely troubled family histories and its implications for their mental, emotional and physical health as well as economic resources. Further is the likelihood that the child welfare system is not adequately helping youth successfully transition to adulthood, and that many youth have literally fallen between the cracks. In some cases youth try to avoid further contact with the child welfare system prior to reaching adulthood. Sixteen to 18 year olds who believe they are independent enough do not want to live in foster care, and may run away if placed in such a residential setting. It appears that MCFD is thus reluctant to place 16 to 18 year olds in foster care, leaving them with very few options in the private market and without adequate resources. One option has been the Youth Agreement (described in Section 9).

Most of the street youth profiled by McCreary in 2001 were age 19 and older and formerly involved with child welfare. This suggests that perhaps more housing and supports are necessary beyond age 18.

¹⁷ CHRA. Luba Serge, Margaret Eberle, Michael Goldberg, Susan Sullivan, and Peter Dudding. 2002. *Pilot Study: The Child Welfare System and Homelessness among Canadian Youth*. Ottawa: HRDC. NHI. Mangine, Steven J, David Royse, Vernon R. Wiehe, and Michael T. Nietzel. (1990) "Homelessness Among Adults Raised as Foster Children: A Survey of Drop-In Center Users." *Psychological Reports*. 67: 739-745.

Another element of this entanglement with the child welfare system is that many homeless or at risk young people themselves have children in care. The McCreary study suggests that between 14 and 26% of street youth they profiled have children themselves, although we do not know if they are in care.

The CHRA study also reported that there are no Canadian data on how many youth formerly involved with the child welfare system become homeless, but one U.S. study found that 12% of youth were living on the street or in a shelter within 12 to 18 months of their discharge from public care.¹⁸

According to BC Ministry of Child and Family Development figures in Table 5, between 500 and 700 BC youth will reach the age of majority (19 years) and leave the foster care system each year in the next several years, with the number reaching a peak in 2008, then declining. This information is based only on youth in care as of June 2005, not youth who may become wards in the intervening period. It also does not consider younger youth age 16 to 18 years who have not reached the age of majority but are for all intents and purposes “aging out” of the child welfare system.

Table 5
BC Youth Aging Out of Care

Year age out	Number of youth aging out	Estimate of homeless risk	
		8%	12%
2006	678	54	81
2007	691	55	83
2008	720	58	86
2009	717	57	86
2010	672	54	81
2011	613	49	74
2012	573	46	69

Source: BC Ministry of Child and Family Development. Paul Mulholland. June 21, 2005.

¹⁸ Mangine, Steven J, David Royse, Vernon R. Wiehe, and Michael T. Nietzel. (1990) " Homelessness Among Adults Raised as Foster Children: A Survey of Drop-In Center Users" *Psychological Reports*. 67: 739-745.

If we assume that youth age out of care and become homeless at a rate similar to that found in the American study cited above, 12% over 12 to 18 months (an annual rate ranging from 8% - 12%), then the results are as shown in the third and fourth column of Table 5. Between 55 and 83 BC youth leaving care could become homeless in 2007.¹⁹

Aside from the lack of family ties, these youth have few economic resources. MCFD statistics show that 39% of children in care who age out immediately apply for income assistance.²⁰

Lack of significant long-term adult relationships

Along with troubled family histories and child welfare involvement, comes a lack of caring adult relationships. The best practices profiled in this study that provide mentoring and case management programs for youth living in transitional housing report that their programs were developed because it was recognized that many youth have not had supportive relationships with adults. Many youth leave the foster care system without having had positive adult role models and therefore have not acquired the skills necessary to fend for themselves. In addition, they do not have supportive adults to call upon in a crisis.

Drug use and mental illness

Homeless and at risk youth in Vancouver possess high rates of diagnosed mental illness (31% -27%) and substance abuse (47%-44%). This was confirmed in the 2005 Homeless Count where homeless youth in Greater Vancouver self-reported high rates of addiction (56%) and mental illness (26%). Whether this is a result of life on the street or a cause of it is unknown. As well, many faced additional issues within their family of origin. Mental illness and drug use among youth at risk is a serious issue for housing and shelter providers. Inadequate treatment options mean that youth who desire assistance may not be able to obtain it and thus would be less likely to be able to obtain

¹⁹ Jim Woodward and Associates, Eberle Planning and Research, Michael Goldberg SPARC BC,) Deborah Kraus Consulting. 2005. *Shelter Needs Assessment for Greater Vancouver Shelter Planning Project*.

²⁰ Website http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/statistics.html

and maintain housing, including emergency shelter. Most shelters and safe houses will not admit a young person who is high or intoxicated, out of concern for their other clients. There are no facilities available for youth who are using substances. Intoxicated youth must stay elsewhere, in places that may be dangerous such as in squats, outside or with others.

Sexual orientation

Many homeless and at risk youth report that they are facing issues of sexual identity and in fact self identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning (LGBTQ), a higher share than in the high school population in general. So, they are facing both adolescent and 'coming out' issues. A lack of acceptance at home may be a factor in gay and lesbian youth leaving their family home. Once on the street, these youth are marginalized both by their street lifestyle and by their sexual orientation. One study noted that young lesbian women are at extreme risk of violence, rape and homophobia.²¹ This presents several issues in terms of shelter and housing provision. A study of youth safe houses in BC noted that there is literature indicating that this population may avoid using safe houses due to negative experiences within the safe house system.²²

One young person who participated in this study also pointed out that members of the LGBTQ community are afraid to access other services, such as detox or treatment because of sexual orientation-related harassment. This person identified a need for addictions services targeted specifically to the LGBTQ community.

"...On January 1st, 2007 I will be celebrating two and a half years successful recovery from crystal meth, and every day I see my friends and those I have come to know and love suffering from the pain of homelessness that is a result of their struggle with addictions. Many of these individuals are members of the GLBTTQQ+ community, and are afraid to attend detox or treatment because of sexual orientation-related harassment. I have concluded that another gap in services is the accessibility of addictions services (specifically, detox and treatment programs) and programs exclusive to the GLBTTQQ+ community. I would propose that supporting a program or programs that provide GLBTTQQ+ exclusive addictions services would positively impact homelessness statistics in this community, and suggest that you collaborate with organizations such as The Centre/GAB Youth Services (Vancouver) to establish a program that would satisfy this need."

Sex trade

²¹ Canadian Housing and Renewal Association et al. 2001. *On Her Own: Young Women and Homelessness in Canada*. CHRA.

²² Olive Branch Consulting 2005 p. 14.

Both young males and females are working in the sex trade on Vancouver streets. The CHRA study noted that changing drug use patterns and heightened recruitment practices are responsible for more young homeless women becoming involved in prostitution. Many youth report that they became sex trade workers to survive. Addiction to alcohol and drugs is a major feature of the lives of many sexually exploited youth. They require access to safe and secure accommodation when they leave the sex trade.

Young women

As a sub-set of the youth population, young women face unique issues and barriers. A study on young women and homelessness²³ that included interviews with more than 20 Vancouver service providers who work with at risk youth, noted only two services specifically for young women (not necessarily housing). It found that young women often use alternate forms of accommodation such as sleeping in drop in centres, daytime sleeping patterns for women in the sex trade, paying guest fees in SROs, couch surfing, and staying in squats. It noted that survival sex, the exchange of sex for overnight accommodation, food or money, is prevalent.

From a housing perspective, few young women frequent gender mixed services or stay long, in part due to fear of intimidation. They are also less likely to use adult women services, as their needs differ.

The young people who participated in this study identified a lack of services for young women who are pregnant or have young children. Concerns were expressed about their lack of options and about their children being taken away.

“cause as soon as I have my baby I can't go home and I have nowhere to go and I don't want to lose her or have a social worker and I'm too young to live at Sheway.”

²³ CHRA. 2001 p 53.

Aboriginal youth

Very little documentation addressing the specific housing issues and barriers facing Aboriginal youth who are homeless or at risk was found, despite the fact that they comprise a significant share of the Vancouver street youth population, with estimates ranging from 15% to 38%. There is an Aboriginal safe house in Vancouver that was established in response to the growing number of native youths who were migrating to Vancouver from reserves across BC. It served 137 young Aboriginal persons in 2005. The aim is to meet the specific cultural and spiritual needs of this population while providing a safe and healthy environment and assisting them to work towards independence. A study looking specifically at homeless young women noted that Aboriginal youth are the most institutionalized population, and that fetal alcohol syndrome is a significant problem among Vancouver street youth. The GVRD Aboriginal Homelessness Study²⁴ identified homeless youth as a top priority.

Transience

Several reports over the years have noted the high proportion of youth from outside the city living on Vancouver streets. Verdant reported that youth are extremely transient and that many youth stay in the city for a few months, then move on.²⁵ Summer months tend to see the highest number of youth on the street. Vancouver appears to be a magnet for youth from smaller BC communities, reserves and elsewhere in Canada, particularly Quebec. It also noted that the Downtown South area attracts transient youth, while the Downtown Eastside is more stable. Sex trade workers may also follow a 'circuit', which includes major cities in Canada and the U.S. The question is can these youth be better served in their home communities, to prevent the move to Vancouver and the attendant dangers of street life here?

²⁴ Dbappleton. 2003. *GVRD Aboriginal Homelessness Study*. For the Aboriginal Homelessness Committee.

²⁵ Chand 1997.

Youth are hidden

Youth are commonly cited as one of the at risk groups that is hidden or invisible. They do not access services for people who are homeless or at risk preferring to sofa surf or stay outside. Many of the Vancouver youth in the 2005 Homeless Count sofa surfed on count night and 147 youth under age 25 were surveyed in the Hidden Homeless Study.²⁶ As a result of this, the hidden homeless are often overlooked in discussions, research, counts and planning for the homeless/at risk population. Practically, it also makes it more difficult to serve them.

Barriers facing youth

Homeless and at risk youth face numerous obstacles in their quest to achieve stable independent housing. They are moving through a life transition that all young people face but often with additional issues, challenges and barriers. This section describes the various barriers that young people face when trying to access housing. These have been identified in the literature and through interviews conducted with youth and agencies as part of this study. The situation that these youth find themselves in has been compared to a game of musical chairs. When the music stops, the participants with the most vulnerabilities or barriers are least likely to find a chair.

Low income/high housing costs

A lack of income or low incomes, combined with high housing costs is a significant barrier to finding adequate and affordable housing in Vancouver for anyone, regardless of age. For youth with limited education and work experience, low training and minimum wages, and difficulty accessing income assistance,²⁷ the

"It's a tough market and getting tougher."

Service provider

challenge is even greater. The young people who participated in this study pointed out that their jobs don't pay enough, they don't have a job, or welfare rates are too low to find housing they can afford. Some young people have roommates so they can afford

²⁶ Boyes, Kathleen, Jason Copas and George Lawrie. 2005. *Hidden Homelessness: Lessons from Experience*. Prepared for BC Yukon Homelessness Research Committee. HRSDC.

²⁷ Two- year "independence rule" requires IA recipients to have been supporting themselves for two years prior to applying for IA.

market rents, but noted, “It’s hard to find trustable and dependable roommates that pay their own rent” and that they can get along with.

There is a shortage of rental accommodation at the more affordable levels and the housing that is available within this price range is often in poor condition. In addition, this housing has poor facilities - 77% of youth living in Downtown Eastside SROs have no cooking facilities. One young person living in a hotel noted that the rent is \$350 for a “small cockroach-filled room”. He complained about the \$20 guest fee for his girlfriend, dirty bathrooms, and having to walk up 6 sets of stairs. It is clear that the existing supply of social housing is not keeping pace with growing need. The GVRD *Affordable Housing Issues Paper* describes the affordable housing situation in the region in great detail.

Discrimination

Aside from having limited resources to pay for rental accommodation, youth face discrimination from landlords who would rather rent to more mature tenants. The young people and service providers who participated in this study both reported that many landlords assume young tenants are irresponsible, won’t pay the rent, and that they will “party and do drugs”. Both service providers and youth noted racism as an issue. The young people also reported that “No one wants to rent to a child having a child.”

“most landlords take a look at a native youth (like me) and say sorry and close the door.”

Pets are also an obstacle for youth looking to stay in a shelter or rent an apartment. Yet, as one youth stated in an interview for the Greater Vancouver Shelter Plan... “my dog is everything to me”.

The young people and service providers who participated in this study suggested that landlords be offered incentives to rent to young people. Generally improved availability of rental housing would also help ameliorate the situation, as landlords would be more willing to rent to young people. However, current vacancy rates and market conditions do not appear to offer much hope of an increase in rental stock in the short term.

Drug and alcohol issues

Substance use is a dominant characteristic of street life. Many homeless and at risk youth in Vancouver report substance abuse issues. Youth with active drug and alcohol issues are in a catch-22 position with regard to housing. They cannot access most emergency shelters or safe houses while intoxicated or high, but at the same time cannot easily enter a detox or drug and alcohol treatment program due to waiting lists. New drugs such as crystal meth make life on the streets more dangerous and more deadly. If youth are successful in obtaining housing, continued drug and or alcohol use can jeopardize that housing, and result in eviction.

Life skills

In addition to other barriers, given their age and stage of life, many at risk youth possess few of the skills needed to obtain housing. The young people who participated in this study stated that not knowing where or how to look for housing is a serious barrier. They also pointed out that some young people lack reading and writing skills and may feel intimidated by signing a lease on their own. They don't want to look stupid in front of the landlord.

A lack of living skills (e.g. budgeting, grocery shopping, cooking, relationship skills etc.) can also make it difficult for young people to maintain housing on a long-term basis. And they have limited or no family support to help them.

"...And I never really had parents, well I did but they didn't teach me anything like how to communicate or save money or pay bills and if you can't do that s--t then you don't have a lot of luck."

Age and eligibility for service

There is a complex web of rules and eligibility requirements for youth services that are difficult to understand and navigate and likely affect the ability of youth to find and maintain shelter and housing. Youth are treated as minors for some purposes and as adults for others, resulting in confusion and an apparent double standard.

The age of majority is 19 years, when youth officially graduate to the adult system of services and transfer from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance for income assistance, and to the Ministry of Health for mental health services etc.

However, difficulties occur between the ages of 16 and 18 years when some youth in care perceive that they are independent and able to live on their own, particularly as an alternative to yet another foster home. There is a “virtual vacuum” in long-term housing services for youth aged 16 to 18 years, partly as a result of the perceived “silent drop” in the age of majority over recent years from age 19 to 16 years. This has significant implications because many providers are not permitted to serve youth under 19 years. Consequently, there are few residential options for this age group.

“Youth Agreements” are intended to address this gap, providing some youth age 16 to 18 years who agree to abide by an “agreement” with higher levels of income assistance and other support so that they may live independently. However, this support ends upon reaching age 19, and rent support can drop dramatically. Service providers who participated in this study felt that the housing assistance youth receive through youth agreements should not end when they turn 19.

Several young people who participated in this study identified the age issue as a serious barrier to accessing an emergency shelter – particularly if they have a child. As one young person said, “You can’t go if you have kids unless you are over 19. Even then, sometimes they call the Ministry of Children and Family Development or if you’re under 19 they call your parents and they have to say its OK for you to stay.”

One report identified jurisdictional issues between MCFD and MoH as a significant factor resulting in a lack of services, particularly for residential mental health care facilities.²⁸

²⁸ BC Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors. ND. *Best Practices for BCs Mental Health Reform. Housing.* p. 44.

Mistrust and alienation

Many at risk and homeless youth do not trust adults and institutions because of histories of abuse or neglect, some of which stems from the residential school system. They are alienated from their family and the community and tend to avoid using services. Youth opinions about social services are reported in the McCreary report and ranged from “outright belligerence to distrust to gratitude”. The result is that many young people remain “hidden”, often couch surfing or staying outside, making connecting with them extremely challenging. The 2002 Vancouver Police report noted that young people do not want to access services and will refuse assistance.

Other barriers

Other barriers identified by the young people and agencies that participated in this study were:

- Not having references – for example if they have never rented a unit before;
- Not having identification; and
- Lack of transportation/bus fare to go and look for apartments.

“Well my story is that I ran away from home when I was 16 years old and was fortunate enough to have people let me stay with them for a period of time and that helped out a lot. I am 21 years old now and I am still homeless. I haven’t been able to work since Dec/05 because I got into a car accident and I am still healing from my injuries. I am looking for work and trying to get back into school. I have been trying to find a place for a while now and it’s very hard because I look young (13-15 years old) and because I never rented before so it makes it really hard. I am on income assistance for a short time and my cousin has let me stay there till I get a place and we tried to get help from welfare but they can’t do anything about it. I am hoping to get a job and get back to school and hopefully get a place to call home.”

Proposed Vancouver youth housing framework

The *Greater Vancouver Homelessness Plan* and the City of Vancouver's *Homelessness Action Plan* both propose a continuum of housing, income and support as the “three ways to home” for people experiencing a housing crisis. More recently, there has been a move towards a “housing first” approach in policy and planning, which aims to re-house homeless individuals as quickly as possible while providing appropriate services.

This document proposes a range of youth housing options or a youth housing continuum for Vancouver that recognizes the special circumstances of youth due to their age, stage of development, and often, traumatic histories. This housing can take a number of forms including shared homes and scattered site apartments with or without roommates and with different degrees of permanence and support services.

Thus the goal of any housing model for youth should be placement in stable housing and the provision of support services, to help prepare the young people for future independent housing. And it should “...incorporate various housing solutions that appropriately respond to a broad range of needs of youth experiencing homelessness during their transition to adulthood.”²⁹

Some experts and organizations refer to a “continuum” of youth housing as simply consisting of three components: emergency or crisis accommodation, transitional housing and affordable or permanent housing. This continuum reflects generally increasing levels of independence along with reduced levels of support. Most significantly, the continuum of youth housing places emphasis on transitional housing as a legitimate and helpful interim step for youth. While this is a useful typology it suggests a graduated level of independence, which may or may not be appropriate for all youth, omits the concept of stable or ongoing *supportive* housing and does not recognize important variations within each type of housing. For example, there are many options within the transitional housing model, which can effectively serve youth at different ages and stages.

²⁹ National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2006. *Fundamental Issues to Prevent and End Homelessness*. Brief No. 1. NAEH, Washington. P3.

To date and in practice, the primary models for youth housing are emergency shelters and transitional housing, both of which aim to promote housing "readiness". There are very few examples of stable supportive or independent housing for youth.

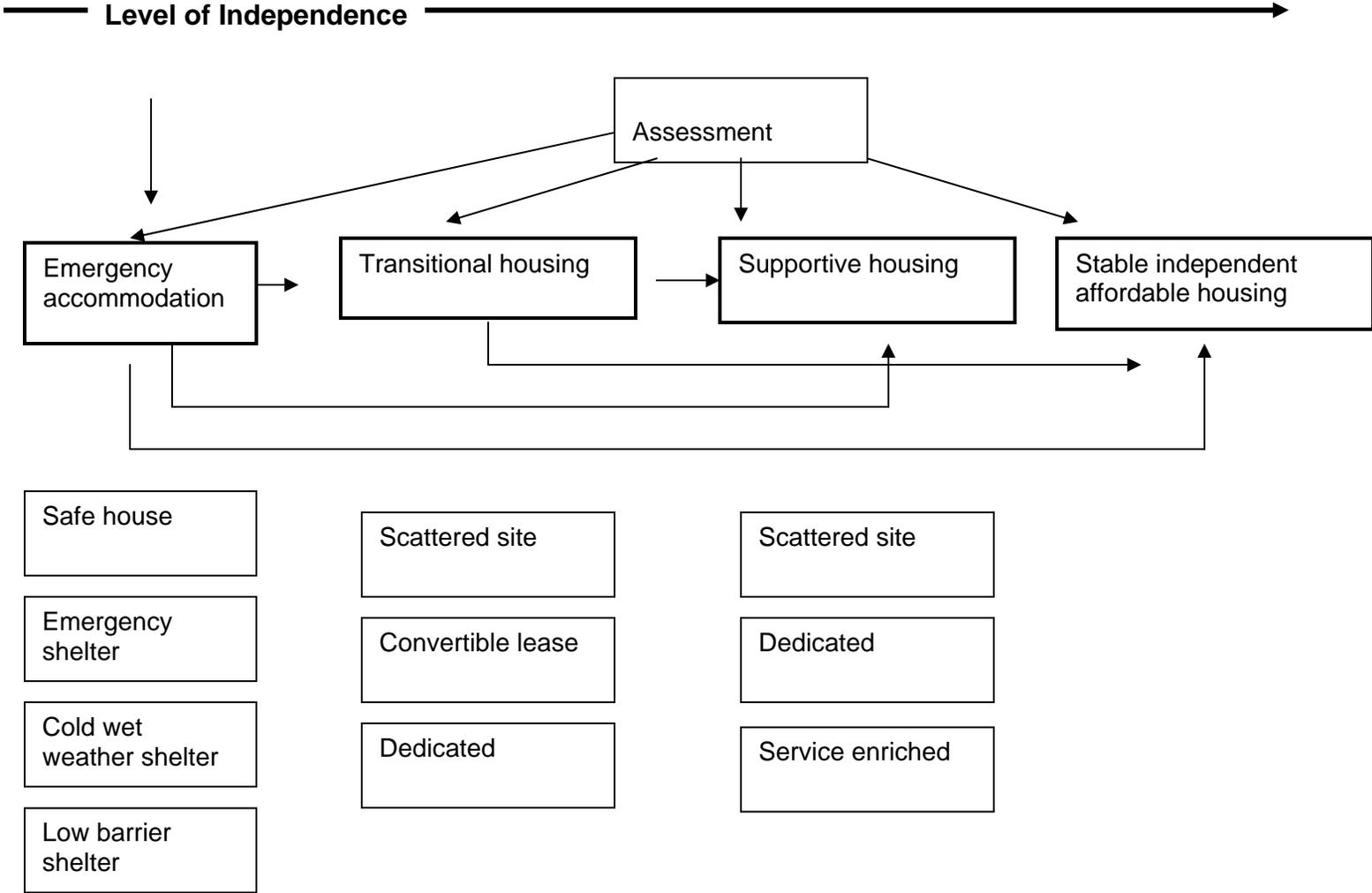
Figure 1 depicts the proposed Vancouver youth housing framework. It suggests that youth need a range of housing, consisting of emergency accommodation, transitional housing, supportive housing and stable, independent, affordable housing. It suggests that youth may enter the housing system via emergency accommodation, or through any other form of housing, having been assessed for the appropriate level of support and independence. It suggests that youth do not need to proceed through the continuum in a linear fashion i.e. from emergency to transitional to supportive to independent, but can access any type of housing, depending upon their readiness as determined through an assessment. And, changing support needs would best be accommodated through variations in support levels, not housing. Youth and youth serving agencies agree that a full range of housing options is important to accommodate the variety of housing needs and situations facing young people at risk.

The diagram also illustrates increasing levels of independence in living environments as one moves from left to right. In the downward direction, the diagram depicts variations within each type of housing. There are and should be a wide variety of support levels within each category of shelter and housing, and this is not easily reflected in the two dimensional diagram.

What Figure 1 does not depict, but what is implicit, are the potentially different or at least separate responses for different sub-populations of youth. Given that homeless and at risk youth are a heterogeneous population, the continuum must respond to a variety of needs.

Each component of the framework is described below. In each of the following sections, the relevant evaluation literature is synthesized to provide some insight about the known or demonstrated outcomes of each form of housing. In some cases, this is not available

Figure 1
Proposed Youth Housing Framework



because there is little housing for youth, or it has not been evaluated. In some cases where we have been unsuccessful in locating evaluation studies of youth housing, we have relied on studies of adult housing, recognizing the limitations. We have also incorporated perspectives from the youth and agencies interviewed.

Emergency accommodation

Description/purpose

In Vancouver, emergency or crisis accommodation for young people is provided in age specific emergency shelters and safe houses. Young people may also access facilities specifically geared to providing emergency or crisis accommodation during the cold wet weather. Emergency shelters and safe houses are places that young people can stay for a short period of time, generally from 7 to 30 days. This form of housing is intended to be “housing of last resort” for people with nowhere else to go. It provides for a youth’s basic needs – food, shelter and safety. Besides a safe place to spend the night, shelters and safe houses often serve as a site for special programs and interventions. However, the amount of support available varies from shelter to shelter.

What the literature has to say

The literature suggests that a stay in emergency or crisis accommodation is often the first step for homeless youth in achieving housing stability. A U.S. Housing and Urban Development report examining lessons learned on youth homelessness noted, “...in the short term, emergency and transitional services are needed for those who are currently homeless. Providers suggest that younger youth and those in their first period of homelessness are more likely to reconcile with their families if the homeless episode is responded to with early interventions.”³⁰ Emergency shelters are able to respond quickly, if space is available, and often provide connections to a variety of community support services. However, emergency accommodation may not be needed for all youth

³⁰ Robertson, Marjorie and Paul Toro. 1998. “Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention and Policy.” Eds. Fosberg and Dennis. Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research. p. 3-16.

who are 'at risk' and living in precarious, or unsafe situations. Safe and stable housing may be all that is required.

One of the problems with shelters is that they sometimes exclude those most in need of intervention i.e. with special needs, psychotic, suicidal, intoxicated and many youth complain there are too many demands on their behaviour. Many will choose to stay outdoors instead. Interviewees all confirmed this was occurring in Vancouver. The presence of many "street" homeless youth in Vancouver on count night in 2005 supports this notion. Having a pet is another barrier to youth obtaining accommodation in a shelter.

There is little published literature on the effectiveness of emergency housing for youth such as shelters or safe houses.³¹ However, before considering the effectiveness of shelters, the first question that needs to be asked is, what is the goal of emergency shelter? If it were to provide safe accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to move people off the streets or to help connect them with services, then they would be seen to be successful. They are not, however, successful in ending homelessness. Many experts have noted that shelters are not a solution to homelessness, but they are an important first step in connecting with homeless and at risk persons.

Covenant House commissioned an evaluation of its shelter program at sites in New York and California that showed some fairly positive outcomes for youth who attended one of their structured emergency shelters.³² It followed the progress of a random sample of young people for six months after discharge. The study found that six months after leaving Covenant House, 81 percent of youth were in favourable housing (living on their own, with family or in a transitional housing program). Six months after discharge, more than half the youth who participated in a job-training program had secured employment. Educational achievements were also positive. Participants agreed that this emergency shelter effectively provided for their basic needs and helped prepare them for independent living.

³¹ Ibid. p. 3-21

³² Covenant House Annual Report. 2001. Referencing Menninger Foundation study.

Another evaluation study, this time in Israel, looked at 345 Israeli youth who had been residents of two shelters for runaway and homeless youths, 6 to 12 weeks after their departure.³³ Telephone interviews were conducted with the youngsters, their parents, and social workers in the community. A majority of the youngsters had either returned to their family homes, or been placed out of home. Overall however, their residential stability was found to be low. Post-shelter place of residence was related to length of stay at the shelter, amount of contact with their family while at the shelter, and manner of departure.

What the young people had to say

Youth interviewed for this project thought there is a need for more emergency shelters and safe houses for young people in Vancouver. The young people noted that the shelters are always full – or they expect them to be full. They also explained why some young people tend not to stay in shelters, including:

- The “rules” including curfews
- Don’t like them (e.g. lack of privacy, overcrowding, noise, not clean, bed bugs, smell, don’t feel comfortable, not enough supportive workers, location, and homophobia-isms, etc.)
- Don’t feel safe
- Drug issues
- Lack of ID
- Having a child
- Afraid of being sent home
- Having a girl/boyfriend
- Having a pet
- Not knowing about shelters
- It’s a “hassle” and “easier to stay outside.”
- Feel embarrassed/concerned about stigma

³³ Dekel R, Peled E, Spiro SE. 2003 “Shelters for houseless youth: a follow-up evaluation.” *Journal of Adolescence*. Apr 26(2):201-12.

According to the young people, an ideal shelter would:

- Have 24/7 staffing with workers who can relate to the youth and show that they care about them
- Offer support to help connect youth to job and education opportunities and teach a variety of life skills
- Be safe
- Not have so many rules – or else have rules that make sense for today's times.
- Offer more privacy and less intrusion e.g. "don't ask a whole lot of personal questions about you and your parents and what your life is like and all that s--t."
- Be clean and comfortable

Because shelters require many people to live in fairly close quarters, and because some young people tend to avoid shelters, they were asked if, in general, they think it is better to have separate emergency shelters/safe houses for specific sub-groups of youth or shelters for all young people. Results were mixed. Some young people thought that there should be separate emergency shelters/safe houses for specific sub groups, particularly for older and younger youth, those who use drugs and those who don't and young people with children. They also noted that gender division is important (e.g. "13 year old girls and 18 year old boys should not have to stay under the same roof.")

Others thought that shelters should serve all young people, or that there should be both separate shelters as well as shelters that can accommodate all youth, "so people can choose what makes them most comfortable and safe." Another youth suggested that if youth "don't want to be labelled they can go to a shelter for all, but if they want specific services, there would be a shelter for them."

When the young people were asked about specific sub groups, they had the following responses.³⁴

Table 6

Opinions on need for separate facilities

Sub group	Need separate shelter	Accommodate in existing shelters	Separate shelters and ability to accommodate in existing shelters	Don't know/ answer unclear	Total
Young people with children	38	3	0	1	42
Young people who use alcohol and/or drugs	32	7	1	2	42
Young people who want an alcohol and drug free shelter	30	6	1	5	42
Young couples	27	13	0	2	42
Young people with pets	25	13	0	4	42
Males and females	23	15	4	0	42
Aboriginal young people*	22	18	0	2	42
For LGBTQ young people**	20	17	4	1	42

* 10 of the 12 young people who identified as Aboriginal thought there should be separate shelters for Aboriginal young people.

**This population was not asked to self-identify, so we do not know how many of the LGBTQ youth identified a need for a separate shelter.

NOTE: These figures are not necessarily representative.

What the agencies had to say

Most service providers stated that there should be additional youth specific shelter beds and/or safe house beds, and that they should not present too many barriers to youth. Many felt a minimum barrier, harm reduction shelter should be part of the youth shelter system in Vancouver. It was noted by some that new capacity should be located in “safe” neighbourhoods, i.e. out of the Downtown Eastside. Some stated that youth under 19 are inadequately served by the current shelter and safe house system.

With regard to having separate emergency shelters/safe houses for specific sub groups or to using an integrated approach where shelters/safe houses have the resources to accommodate the wide range of needs of the youth population and sub-populations, the service providers pointed out that there were advantages and disadvantages to

³⁴ For the purpose of the table, focus group members are treated as a group.

separation or integration. For example, it may be easier to serve sub-populations if they are in their own facility, and youth with similar issues can help one another. However, an integrated approach is more like the world the youth will inhabit, and youth have to learn to live harmoniously with others.

Specific sub-populations	Responses from service providers
Males and females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eight believed that separate facilities work best ▪ Five thought that co-ed facilities would be fine, while an additional three felt that the success of a co-ed facility depended on the number and skill levels of staff and the shelter's physical arrangement ▪ One noted that it is easier to integrate genders in safe houses which are typically small, than in larger shelters, but that if the safe house had a treatment component, it would be better to have separate housing.
LGBTQ youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two thought a separate facility might make some youth more comfortable ▪ Several thought segregating this population is not in their best interest, that they need to learn to integrate into the world and that a multi-faceted environment can be a place for positive learning ▪ Several mentioned that staff at any youth facility must be sensitive to this population and that there must be zero tolerance for violence or discrimination against any youth ▪ One stated that youth she spoke to thought there should be a separate shelter.
<p>An alcohol and drug free facility</p> <p>and/or</p> <p>A minimum barrier harm reduction facility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service providers were almost unanimous that both integrated and separate facilities are required. ▪ Other comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adults have more of an issue with separation than do youth. ○ Abstinent youth should be housed not sheltered. ○ If abstinence is more than two years, the youth can mix with those who are using. Abstinence for less than two years would cause problems for the youth in a harm reduction facility.
Youth with pets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several mentioned the importance of pets to street youth, that pets are both protection and companionship. "Recognizing the reality instead of punishing them for having pets is a simpler, more compassionate solution that will yield results." ▪ Several felt that accommodation should be found for pets in the shelter system, but that the youth must be made aware that the pet is their responsibility. For example, if the pet is at Directions for more than 12 hours staff will call the SPCA.) ▪ May need to have funding for vet treatment for the pet ▪ Could find people who would serve as foster care for pets for youth in shelters or treatment
Other groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young mothers and their babies, for when they leave hospital ▪ Other youth coming out of the structured institutional setting of a hospital ▪ Refugee youth ▪ Youth who do self-harm ▪ FASD youth

Transitional housing

Description/purpose

This report defines transitional housing as housing where young people can remain for a limited period of time, usually up to two or three years. Support services are generally provided on site to help young people transition to independent housing. For example, services might be offered to help young people with employment, life skills, and access to a variety of community services. Transitional housing occupies an intermediate position along the continuum of housing options and can range from high demand (with lots of services and expectations) to low demand (fewer services and expectations).³⁵ It is aimed at sub-populations thought to need special assistance to transition to permanent housing, including youth. Transitional housing is intended for “people who are not ready for or do not have access to permanent housing”.³⁶

What the literature has to say

Youth are one of the key target groups for transitional housing, owing to their age and stage of development. People who have benefited from transitional housing include emancipated youth or younger adults coming out of institutions, youth in need of education and job skills, people recovering from traumas such as violence or homelessness, people with no kinship network, and people with other challenges such as mental health and/or addictions.³⁷

There are many different types of transitional housing, and both the physical design and support component can vary significantly. The bricks and mortar typically falls into two main types: standalone/dedicated buildings (with services provided on site) and clustered/ scattered site apartments (dispersed throughout the community with services provided off-site). Both major physical types have advantages and disadvantages, and a youth housing continuum should ideally contain both options.

³⁵ Barrow, Susan and Rita Zimmer. 1998. “Transitional Housing and Services: A Synthesis.” Eds. Fosberg and Dennis. *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research*.

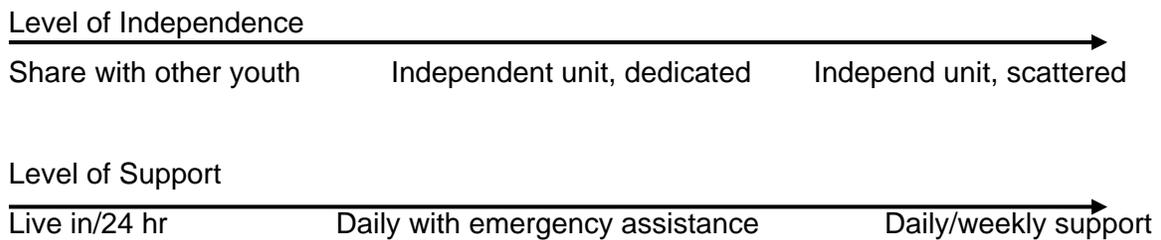
³⁶ Novac, Sylvia, Joyce Brown and Carmen Bourbonnais. 2004. *Transitional Housing: Objectives, Indicators of Success and Outcomes*. CMHC. p4 quote by Burt.

³⁷ Ibid.

Standalone or dedicated facilities are conducive to building community among staff and peers, may be designed for the unique needs of the population, and can facilitate service provision. Units may be self-contained or may have private (or shared) bedrooms with shared bathroom and/or kitchen facilities. Scattered site housing feels less like a “program” and it mixes youth with adults and others in a “normal” environment and is suitable for youth with lower support needs. Long-term tenancy is a potential option not possible with dedicated transitional housing.³⁸ Clustered units are a variation of scattered site housing, and typically consist of several units situated on one or two floors of an apartment building, which are rented to a target population.

Dedicated youth housing appears to benefit those youth who are less independent, need help with social interaction, and who can benefit from more support. The scattered site approach is beneficial for those with more skills at living independently and who can function with less support. Both are necessary in order to meet a diverse range of needs.

Figure 2
Continuums of independence and support



The range of transitional housing options can vary according to the amount and type of support services available or provided, as well as the amount of privacy or independence offered. Some types of transitional housing described in the literature include:

- Supervised apartments clustered in an apartment building with 24/7 supervision or with daily supervision;
- Network of scattered site semi-supervised apartments with daily supervision;
- Shared homes – houses with several youth with little supervision;

³⁸ Durham, Kate DPM Consulting, with the Corporation for Supportive Housing. 2003. *Housing Youth: Key Issues in Supportive Housing*. CSH. P. 9

- Live-in adult/peer;
- Host homes, not foster homes, that rent rooms to youth they like; and
- Boarding homes – provide rooms to youth living individually with minimal supervision.³⁹

A convertible lease is a hybrid option that offers a way to link transitional and permanent housing. In this model, the terms of tenancy are converted from temporary or transitional to “permanent” after a certain period of time thus removing the requirement to “move on” after successful transition. This approach has been demonstrated to be effective for families with low support needs. It has also been used for people with addictions. For example, the Addiction Recovery Program, funded by Vancouver Coast Health and BC Housing, provides transitional housing scattered throughout BC Housing’s portfolio. The goal is to help participants maintain recovery after initial addictions treatment services through the provision of safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing linked with ongoing treatment, rehabilitation and other support services. While the services and transitional housing is provided for 18 months, graduates of the program that meet BC Housing’s eligibility criteria for housing may become permanent tenants of the units they have been occupying.⁴⁰ This approach has also been used to address the housing needs of young people in France where it is called a sliding lease,⁴¹ and in Queensland, Australia where it is called the Youth Head Lease Transfer Scheme.⁴²

Transitional housing is not widely embraced as a solution to homelessness and has been controversial, at least for adults. As a concept or stage in the continuum of housing, it has been criticized for two reasons, namely:

- 1) Transitional programs reward those who do well by requiring them to move; and
- 2) They can only be effective if affordable independent housing is available to move to afterwards.

³⁹ Collaborative Community Health Research Centre. University of Victoria. 2002. *Research Review of Best Practices for Provision of Youth Services*. For Youth Services, BC MCFD.

⁴⁰ Kraus, Deborah, Luba Serge, Michael Goldberg and SPARC BC. 2005. *Homelessness, Housing, and Harm Reduction: Stable Housing for Homeless People with Substance Use Issues*. Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

⁴¹ Serge, Luba. 2002. *Innovative Housing for Homeless Youth*. CMHC Research Highlight.

⁴² <http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/programs/ch/support/same.htm>

Additionally, the concept of transitional housing runs counter to the currently popular “housing first” philosophy where clients have direct access to permanent housing as well as to support services. These are valid concerns, and as such have limited the use of transitional housing, particularly in an adult context.

However, youth are good candidates for transitional housing given their developmental stage. It is argued that youth need the transitional phase in which to learn skills they have perhaps not learned in a family setting. In addition, some of the limits of transitional housing can be overcome through program design, with a convertible/sliding lease, and ensuring there is a full range of affordable housing options available.

Transitional housing has been shown to achieve positive outcomes for youth, namely, stable residency once permanent housing is achieved, greater reliance on employment rather than income assistance, and/or increased income from employment or welfare programs.⁴³ However, since studies rarely follow youth for more than 3 to 12 months, it has been difficult to establish if long-term stability is achieved. Some Canadian researchers concluded that while there are many transitional housing projects in Canada, including those for youth, the knowledge base for transitional housing practice and research “is too limited to ascertain which practices and program models are most effective in helping formerly homeless people stay adequately housed.”

In the U.S., transitional housing has been focused on youth aging out of the foster care system. A recent independent evaluation of U.S. transitional housing found that former foster care youth using transitional living programs were better off six months after leaving the program in terms of hourly wage, housing situation, employment and money saved. Youth who also participated in an employment training program had significantly higher wages. It concluded that transitional housing and employment training programs might be effective interventions for former foster care youth with limited resources.⁴⁴

⁴³ Novac et al. p.3.

⁴⁴ Rashid, Sonja. 2004. “Evaluating a Transitional Living Program for Homeless, Former Foster Care Youth.” *Research on Social Work Practice*. Vol. 14, No. 4. 240-248.

Eva's Phoenix, a well-known transitional housing facility for youth in Toronto that has received several awards, has been able to demonstrate positive outcomes.⁴⁵ It provides transitional housing with training for up to 50 youth age 16 to 24 years for one year. Youth live in shared townhouse style units and develop the skills to live independently through engagement in a training or employment program. An evaluation found that while 4% of clients lived in their own or shared accommodation prior to living at Eva's, 35% did at move out.⁴⁶ There was a similar increase in the percentage living with their families after Eva's – 15% after compared to only 2% before. Overall 71% of youth perceived an improvement in their housing conditions after living at Eva's and 86% felt that one year was enough time to address their issues. Employment outcomes were also positive, in that 51 to 59% were employed or in school at 3, 6, and 9 months following discharge respectively. When asked about the role of Phoenix in their lives, 97% said they would recommend the program to their friends.

Foyers are a form of transitional housing for youth popular in Europe and the U.K. They aim to provide accommodation, vocational training and welfare counselling services for young single people age 16-25 years. An evaluation of foyers which compared them with other schemes with similar clients and aims found mixed results noting that foyers have had some success in increasing client's self-reliance both in the labour market and the housing market.⁴⁷ Another English study of foyers followed 126 foyer leavers for between one and 2 years to ascertain the effectiveness of the program.⁴⁸ They recruited ex residents of ten foyers in England and conducted three interviews – just after they left, then each six months for between one and two years. The aim was to report outcomes for ex-residents of foyers with respect to accommodation, employment, education training, income, personal relationships, self-esteem and confidence. The

⁴⁵ 2004 Best Practices in Affordable Housing Award from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the 2005 Promising Approach, National Secretariat on Homelessness, based on sustainable partnerships, effectiveness and replicability.

⁴⁶ Zizys, Tom, Mitchell Kosny, Jennifer Jarosz and Michelle Quintal. 2003. *Eva's Phoenix Pathways to Housing and Jobs. An Evaluation.* P. 12.

⁴⁷ Maginn, Andrew, Robert Frew, Siobhan O'Regan and Jenny Kodz. 2000. *Stepping Stones: An Evaluation of Foyers and other Schemes serving the Housing and labour market needs of Young people.* Housing Research Summary. UK Dept of Environment, Transportation and Regions website.

⁴⁸ Smith, Joan and Oonaghe Brown. What Happened Next? A report on ex-residents of foyers. Draft final report. 2006. A research project in association with the Foyer Federation. Centre for Housing and Community Research. Cities Institute. London Metropolitan University.

length of time in the foyer varied, but the general length of stay for ex-residents was between 8 and 12 months. Some young people who left home at 16 or 17 years stayed longer. Findings included:

- Over half (57%) of ex-residents were living in social housing at the time of the second interview;
- The majority of young people living in private rented accommodation had moved because of problems with their landlord or non-renewal of their lease;
- 51% were working full or part time or in a training program at the second interview. At the third interview, 31% were still in the same job;
- Incomes were low – whether working or not;
- Support needs of half of ex-residents were high in terms of mental health;
- Some ex-residents returned to the foyer they had previously left because they had difficulties in their attempt to return home, go to school etc.;
- 66% report developing a friendship at the foyer and 52% found a best friend; and
- Relationships with foyer staff were important for some young people – a majority of young men in the third interview reported that staying in a foyer had made a difference in their lives and direction, and usually identified their ‘key worker’ or their resettlement worker as a significant influence.

What the young people had to say

When asked if they thought there is a need for more transitional housing for young people in Vancouver, most of the young people who participated in this study agreed. They noted that it is hard to get into existing transitional housing because of long waiting lists. Those who supported transitional housing thought this form of housing would help them “get their act together” and “help them find a job and settle whatever problems they have.” One young person explained that two years is enough time for people to move on.

One young person who did not support transitional housing said, “Transitional housing wouldn’t be necessary if there was more affordable housing. No one needs their life dictated by the agenda of a government or other organization.”

What the agencies had to say

Agencies consulted for this project noted there is limited transitional housing available in Vancouver. They suggested there should be several degrees or stages of transitional housing as a desirable way of best meeting the unique needs of a heterogeneous population. The transitional housing options would vary in the amount of support services provided, and would depend upon an effective assessment of each youth's age and stage of development. They could consist of different physical configurations as well. One service provider cited an example of harm reduction transitional youth housing operating in Holland. It provides small apartments, with minimalist interiors, small kitchens and bathrooms, security rules, 24/7 staffing and standards for tolerable and intolerable behaviour, and is deliberately spread throughout a city to enable youth to learn to live independently in the community. Service providers specifically noted a gap in transitional housing for youth coming out of detox or other addiction treatment facilities.

Supportive housing

Description/purpose

Supportive housing is permanent or stable housing that is linked to voluntary support services. On site staff may provide support or residents may be linked to an organization that provides them with support. There is no time limit on length of stay. Some supportive housing is provided in buildings dedicated to a specific population. Other times, rent subsidies are provided so youth can live in non-profit or private rental buildings that serve a mix of tenants (scattered sites), and support is provided from outside agencies. Again, different approaches are used to serve a diverse population. Like transitional housing, the level of support can vary, from very intensive to quite limited. One variant, sometimes called service-enriched housing, refers primarily to permanent, rental housing for the low-income population in which social services are available either by referral or on-site, usually by means of a service coordinator. Housing can be non-profit or private.

What the literature has to say

Some literature is beginning to recognize the role of supportive housing for youth. The Corporation for Supportive Housing notes that it is a relatively new model for youth and there are only a few providers that have ventured to develop dedicated supportive housing for youth and youth with special needs.⁴⁹

The rationale is that some youth with special needs may need more time in transitional housing than the limit allows. Other youth who may prefer greater autonomy but still benefit from support services would thrive in a more independent environment like scattered site housing with enriched services. Supportive housing is suitable for youth with mental illness, addictions, dual diagnosis, and HIV/AIDS and others with continuing support needs, particularly as they bridge the youth and adult years.

In the continuum of needed housing and services for youth and young adults, ongoing supportive housing offers a more independent option without funding-imposed time limits. Like transitional housing, supportive housing recognizes the value of combined housing and services, but affords its residents the rights and responsibilities of tenancy. Supportive housing provides young people with the chance to experience independence without taking away their safety net completely. It allows them to determine what kinds of service and what level of engagement is best for them.⁵⁰

While supportive housing usually involves a direct lease between a landlord and tenant, another option is “agency leases”. These have been used in situations where landlords have been asked to make units available to a population in need of support. Rather than having a direct relationship with the tenant, the landlord enters into a lease with the support agency that assumes responsibility for the tenancy and compliance with the terms of the lease (e.g. rent payment, taking care of the unit, and not interfering with the other tenants). The City of Ottawa Non-Profit Housing Corporation has used this type of arrangement. The housing corporation entered into partnerships with several non-profit organizations whereby the housing corporation made units available to a number of different agencies serving a variety of population groups who needed support – including

⁴⁹ Durham, Kate DPM Consulting, with the Corporation for Supportive Housing. 2003. *Housing Youth: Key Issues in Supportive Housing*. P. 21

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

teen mothers. The program made it possible for agencies to provide housing in both mixed and dedicated buildings. For example, an agency could pay market rent for one unit in a building and use it to house one of its clients, lease a series of units in one or more buildings, or lease an entire building for a particular client group.

There have been numerous evaluations of the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of supportive housing from the point of view of the tenants and funders, although because it is a relatively new housing form for youth, there is little direct evidence of its effectiveness for youth. All studies of adult supportive housing show success in stabilizing formerly homeless or at risk clients and reduced public costs compared to homelessness, particularly for those with mental illness or addictions.

While there are few evaluations of Canadian supportive housing projects (we could find none for youth supportive housing), one researcher found that many residents of Toronto supportive housing projects report satisfaction with their living environment. Another study that looked at supportive housing from the perspective of women also found a high level of satisfaction. Most respondents said they had developed social and organizational skills, improved their social network, and acquired life skills.⁵¹

A Canadian study of supportive housing for homeless people with substance use issues that used a harm reduction approach reported increased housing stability among tenants, and improved physical and mental health. Other benefits included receipt of employment income, improved social networks, and a sense of belonging and control over their lives. Although not an explicit goal, substance use was also reduced or minimized.⁵²

Supportive housing has been found to be less costly than homelessness. In a very important study on the cost effectiveness of supportive housing, Culhane et. al. found that homeless people with mental illness placed in supportive housing experience marked reductions in shelter use, hospitalizations, length of stay per hospitalization and time incarcerated and require less costly interventions. Prior to placement in supportive housing, homeless people with severe mental illness used an average of \$40,449 per

⁵¹ Novac et al.

⁵² Kraus et al. 2005

person per year in services. Placement in [supportive] NY, NY housing was associated with a \$12,145 net reduction in service use per person.⁵³

Based on the positive impact that supportive housing has had for adults with similar needs and histories, the Corporation for Supportive Housing in the U.S. recognizes its value as an effective model for the needs of older youth/young adults.

What the young people had to say

When asked if they thought there is a need for more supportive housing for young people in Vancouver, almost all of the young people who participated in this study said yes. They noted that supportive housing is a good idea especially for young people who are

"I would want to live in a place like that. Where they would teach me things 'cause I don't really know how to live on my own and I'm going to have a new baby I'm going to have to take care of and I'm so scared I won't know how to do anything and I won't have any support."

on their own for the first time, as they "need help to get started". It was noted that "a lot of kids just need a little more help in life skills than other kids" and that "sometimes youth just need someone to talk to and advocate for them." However, another pointed out that some youth may require longer term or more intensive support: "a lot of street youth have issues or are hard to house." One young person said, "You need to be patient with youth that are 'hard to house'. They need to have a solid place they can't get evicted from."

The young people were asked if they would prefer supportive housing in a dedicated building or supported housing in mixed buildings. Most who were interviewed expressed a preference for dedicated buildings "because everyone in the building is on the same page that you are. So there's more support." They thought it would be easier for residents to succeed, make friends, and "have a community". It was suggested that buildings could be dedicated to serve specific sub populations such as pregnant youth and young moms, young people in recovery and HIV+ youth.

⁵³ Culhane, Dennis P., Stephen Metraux and Trevor Hadley. 2001 "The Impact of Supportive Housing for Homeless People with Severe Mental Illness on the Utilization of the Public Health, Corrections and Emergency Shelter Systems: The New York, New York Initiative." *Housing Policy Debate*.

“Last year, I was diagnosed HIV+ and have found that there are little to no resources for young people that have been diagnosed with a terminal condition but are still able to choose to continue to work and therefore not eligible for Persons With Disabilities Assistance (Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance).

I have personally experienced very significant barriers to maintaining my employment, and as a result, have been forced to neglect my health because I am not able to balance employment with self-care in the other areas of my life, such as sustaining the cleanliness of my home, fitness and the planning and preparation of healthy nutrition, and emotional welfare.

In my opinion, one of the largest gaps in services is affordable or supportive housing for young people with significant health concerns (not related to addictions or mental health) that are able to maintain employment and independence but need some level of additional support.”

“I’m living with my mom and her stupid boyfriend. But I have to leave in 4 weeks when I have my baby because he doesn’t want me there and she listens to him. Because I’ll be an embarrassment to them, and I’m supposed to be an adult mother, but really I’m just a kid.”

Others expressed a preference for mixed buildings, “To allow influence for independence from other people that are self-supporting and established/stable” and because it “allows you to meet people of different ages and different support people.” Still other youth and focus group participants thought that both dedicated and mixed buildings had their advantages.

What the agencies had to say

Almost all service providers recommended a complete continuum of housing options, giving youth the time, tools and supports necessary to achieve their goals, including both transitional and supportive housing. Service providers also pointed out that other communities in the Lower Mainland and in the province must provide supported facilities so that youth are not forced to come to Vancouver for services and Vancouver is not forced to provide the services. When asked to prioritize housing needs for youth, a substantial majority of service providers selected supported housing, with some responses specifying a client sub-population including women under 19 and especially young mothers, youth with the most difficult behaviours and youth with mental health issues, addictions or both. As well, service providers noted supportive housing as a key

component of housing for youth who might never be able to live independently, or at least not after the time permitted in transitional housing.

Stable independent affordable housing

Description/purpose

In this report, stable affordable housing is defined as inexpensive housing for young people who can live independently with no limit on their length of stay, i.e. it is permanent for as long as the youth wishes.

While transitional housing programs are effective for many young people, there are reports that successful outcomes may be impeded by the lack of safe, decent, affordable housing for youth to transition to. This is a particular issue in Vancouver's expensive and tight rental housing market. Without exception, evaluations of transitional housing point to the absolute necessity for graduates to be able to access affordable housing to achieve a successful outcome. This is often a key gap in available housing resources for youth (and for others). Youth face two major issues with respect to obtaining a place to live: affordability and discrimination, as described in an earlier section. Overcoming these barriers is key to facilitating young people's access to affordable housing.

What the literature has to say

There is little, if any, literature addressing the appropriateness of independent affordable housing for high needs youth. In contrast, most efforts to address adult homelessness rely heavily on independent, affordable housing as a key element in the solution. One such study notes that stable housing is often the first step that allows people to address other issues in their lives, and that "once stable in their housing, people recognize other needs and seek support for them." The Canadian Mental Health Association in Ottawa developed its Housing Outreach Program based on the belief that the best place for clients to learn to live in permanent housing is in such a setting.⁵⁴ This has not clearly been demonstrated for high needs youth, although the current environment of high

⁵⁴ Kraus et al 2005.

housing costs and low availability suggests that many youth are experiencing difficulty finding and maintaining affordable housing in the city of Vancouver.

What the young people had to say

When asked if they thought there is a need for more permanent affordable housing for young people in Vancouver, all the young people who participated in this study said yes. The young people noted that it is a significant challenge for youth in Vancouver to find housing and, as one young person observed, “youth need a solid foundation to work and live in”. Another young person noted that a lot of kids who don’t have their own place are no different from other kids who do – it’s just that they can’t find anything they can afford. The young people identified a need for more housing of every kind where kids can go for help - and “something affordable where you don’t have to room with 6 other people you don’t know.”

The young people provided some comments as to why they need help with affordable housing:

- “More youth are getting kicked out of the house at an early stage due to fighting with parents. Not getting along or their parents can’t financially take care of them anymore.”
- “Because young people don’t usually get high paying jobs”
- “Government doesn’t give you enough money for rent”

What the agencies had to say

Service providers participating in this study generally serve youth who are homeless and live with challenges that make it difficult or impossible for them to live independently without appropriate support services. They believe that all forms of housing for youth need supports attached. Therefore, most service providers recommended various forms of supportive housing tailored to the specific needs of the youth rather than completely independent housing.

Inventory of youth housing

An inventory of housing resources and housing assistance services for youth aged 16 to 24 years in Vancouver was prepared for this project. It does not include housing options only available to youth in care i.e. foster homes. At present, there are 169 dedicated beds/units or funded spaces in Vancouver for young people who are at risk or homeless comprised of safe houses, emergency shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing.

Youth safe houses are defined as a voluntary youth centred service intended to provide short-term (usually 7 days) protective accommodation on an emergency, crisis intervention basis to high-risk youth, generally under age 19. For the most part, these are open referrals, so that youth can access these facilities through self-referral or referral from an agency. Youth seeking shelter at the under-age youth safe house serving youth 13-15 years must be referred by MCFD. Each program reflects the values and adopts practices and policies of the agency operating it and the target group of youth served. The primary reason youth cite for using a safe house is *“nowhere to stay (52%), “to escape an abusive family relationship” (25%), and “leaving the sex trade” (21%).*⁵⁵ There is one dedicated youth emergency shelter in Vancouver serving youth age 16 to 23 years. It operates a fairly structured program, and requires youth to follow certain rules, including curfew and requires sobriety. It also offers 22 mats in extreme weather situations.

Housing with support refers to both transitional housing and stable supportive housing. There are two dedicated transitional housing projects for Vancouver youth offering time limited housing with supports, usually for two to three years. One focuses on serving the Aboriginal population. There is also a rent supplement program available on a time-limited basis for youth with addictions issues that is funded by Vancouver Coastal Health, and managed by a non-profit agency.

Supportive housing is available through the Supported Independent Living Program (SILP), which makes units available to youth aged 16 to 21 with severe and persistent

⁵⁵ Olive Branch Consulting 2005.

mental illness. The mental health program is permanent in the sense that youth can stay for potentially five years, however, upon graduation, they may or may not be eligible for a rent subsidy through adult SIL funding. They may however, stay in their unit.

Youth age 16 to 18 years, who are homeless, can no longer live with their family and for whom Ministry care is not an appropriate option can access apartments in the private rental stock with funds provided by a “youth agreement”. The Youth Agreement Program (YAP) is a program of MCFD initiated in 1999, which supports high-risk youth, to live independently through a contracting process, providing rent and financial assistance for food and other necessities. There are 44 Vancouver youth on youth agreements. The housing allowance rate for a single youth is \$325.00 per month, however with manager approval this rate can be increased to \$550.00 if the youth finds accommodation in Vancouver (although it appears at this time no youth are approved for the increased rate).⁵⁶ Youth who are "aging out" (turning 19) have their allowance adjusted to \$325.00 three months before their 19th birthday to reflect the rates that they would receive if they were to apply for income assistance. This practice may be waived under exceptional circumstances where the youth can demonstrate that they will be able to maintain the \$550.00 after their 19th birthday.

Table 7 below contains the inventory of youth housing and shelter options in Vancouver. It provides information on the agency operating the facility, the program and services offered, the number of beds/units, the target group and location within Vancouver.

Table 7
Inventory of youth housing/shelter options

Name of Agency	Program/Services	# Units/ Beds	Target Group	Location
Emergency shelters/safe houses		# Beds		
Covenant House	Shelter for homeless youth. No predetermined length of stay as long as youth sign and adhere to agreement. Adherence to a fairly structured routine, including a 10:00 p.m. curfew, no drugs, alcohol or weapons and no illegal activity or sex trade involvement allowed.	22	Youth 16-23	Downtown South
Family Services of Greater Vancouver - Walden Youth Safe House	A voluntary, residential program for youth ages 16 to 18 who need a safe place to stay in Vancouver. Provides 7 days of safety, during which youth can evaluate their	9	Youth 16-18	Vancouver

⁵⁶ Personal communication. Randy Anderson, Youth Justice Supervisor, MCFD. Vancouver South Integrated Office. Jan 17, 2007.

	situation, make plans, and connect with further services. Allows youth to establish emotional and behavioural stability and prepare for re-entry into the community or reunification with family. Intake is 24 hours a day, year round. No fees for service.			
Urban Native Youth Association - Aboriginal Youth Safe House	7 day stay. Street workers and MCFD refer youth. Youth must be clean for 72 hours before entering safe house	7	Aboriginal Youth ages 16-18. 13-15 yrs on case by case basis	Vancouver
Marc's Place	Marc's Place opened in 2004 as an emergency shelter for youth aged 13-15. Using a family care model, the program has three beds where youth may stay a maximum of 7 days. The program is located in South Vancouver. All referrals come from MCFD.	3	Youth 13-15 yrs	South Vancouver
Cold wet weather beds (Nov – Apr)	Operated and funded on a seasonal basis during the winter months, generally from October/November to March/April. May include beds and mats on the floor. There are no youth only beds in Vancouver.	0		
Extreme cold wet weather beds - Covenant House	Provides extra spaces for homeless youth during periods of extreme winter weather. Provides mats, an evening hot meal and breakfast.	*22	Youth 16-24 yrs	
Sub-total beds		41		
Transitional Housing				
Bantleman Court Housing Society	6 months to 2 year transition housing. Life skills and counselling. Must be in a program or working to stay.	15	Principally aboriginal Youth 18-25 years	Strathcona
Covenant House Rights of Passage	Housing for youth. 6-24 months of supported housing. Life Skills Training (Learning for Immediate and Future Enrichment (LIFE)).	44	Youth 18-23	Downtown
Addictions Youth SIL Watari	Not alcohol and drug free. Began Apr 06. Program capacity is 20 units - 10 for clients still using substances, and 10 for graduates of the Portage program, who will be expected to remain abstinent. (The Portage program has not yet had any Vancouver graduates, so the 10 A&D-free units have not yet started.) 12 to 18 months expected length	20	Youth age 16-21 with an addiction	Vancouver
Youth Agreement Program (YAP)	Rent supplement and other financial and social support for youth age 16 –18 years old and formerly in care, who are capable of living independently. Requires youth to abide to the terms of an agreement, and be in school or work. Phased out when youth reaches age 19 yrs.	44	High risk youth age 16 – 18	Vancouver
Sub-total units		123		
Supportive Housing				
		# Units		
Mental Health Youth SIL Mental Patients Association	Housing assistance for youth with mental illness. Clients must have diagnosis of major mental illness, and must be in treatment with either a mental health team or a private psychiatrist. Youth can stay until age 21, as long as referred before 19 yrs for a total stay of potentially 5 yrs. May apply for adult SIL upon reaching age 21. ⁵⁷	5	Youth age 16 - 19 yrs with mental illness	Vancouver
Sub-total units		5		
Total beds/units		169		

*Not included in total count since only occasionally available.

⁵⁷ This program while not offering permanent housing as such, allows participants to exceed the typical 2-year period for transitional housing depending upon when they are referred. If they are referred at 16 years, they may stay until age 21.

These are not the only beds/units available to Vancouver youth; rather they are the only *dedicated* units for youth. Youth 19 or older can access housing built through the Low Income Urban Singles program (LIUS), such as at Glynn Manor, which is for people age 19 to 40 yrs, as well as adult shelters. Youth in government care also have additional residential options including foster care and group homes.

Many youth require assistance in finding suitable housing, because of their age and inexperience and particularly in a tough rental market like Vancouver. This may include assistance locating a unit, calling the landlord, visiting the unit, and filling out applications. Many agencies offer housing assistance in the form of help with finding, renting and maintaining rental accommodation. An inventory of such services follows in Table 8.

Table 8
Housing assistance services

Name of agency	Services	Location
Broadway Youth Resource Centre HUB	<p>City wide housing registry. One housing worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiles list of landlords who will rent to youth. Sends to four HUBS weekly • Administers emergency fund to help youth with first month's rent, damage deposit etc. • Runs monthly housing (peer) support group for youth looking for housing or having problems in their current housing. <p>½ time housing support worker to actively help youth find housing. Outreach based.</p> <p>Transition workers also assist youth with housing issues.</p>	Central Vancouver
Directions HUB	<p>The Housing Support program is primarily available to youth aged 18 and under, although additional support is offered to youth aged 19 – 24. Staff include:</p> <p>1 full-time housing worker assists youth aged 18 years and under in securing safe and affordable housing. This includes teaching how to search for housing, support with search, relationship building with friendly landlords, meeting landlords with youth, move-in/move-out and connecting youth to IA workers. Directions HUB sees 300 youth under 19 per month so the housing worker position is under resourced.</p> <p>3 Transition workers support youth on youth agreements. They teach life skills necessary to maintain housing and refer youth to housing worker.</p>	Downtown Vancouver

	Note that funding for two housing workers for older youth was has been cancelled by MEIA.	
South Vancouver Youth Centre HUB	Four Transition youth workers who accept referrals from MCFD assist youth with their housing needs including search techniques, directing to vacancy postings and teaching about tenant rights and responsibilities, and setting up and maintaining their home They also visit youth in their homes to see how they are doing and go to arbitration with youth. The workers spend about 50% of their time on housing assistance. As well, two staff are available for drop-in youth at the SVYC Resource Room to assist youth in finding housing.	South Vancouver
Urban Native Youth Association HUB	Two Transition workers assist youth with housing needs including housing searches, interviews with landlords and follow up visits. As well they make referrals to the youth safe house, and provide housing assistance to youth who use the HUB drop-in and other programs and services delivered by the association.	Downtown Eastside
DEYAS	Outreach workers refer street youth to agencies that could provide housing. As well, case managers do referrals and help with housing searches.	Downtown Eastside
PACE	Provides services to sex workers regardless of age. If they do need housing, PACE will assist. Has a Community Resource guide, uses Internet, Red Book Online. Provides phones and accompaniment when a youth is looking for housing.	Vancouver
BladeRunners	90% of clients are homeless; uses different agencies in the DTES to find clients temporary shelter or housing.	Vancouver
Sheway	Makes referrals to the YWCA managed supported housing Outreach workers also help pregnant mothers or mothers trying to gain custody of they're children in care to find temporary and permanent housing opportunities. Sheway has served mothers as young as 15.and has no upper limit on age.	Downtown Eastside

A consolidation of youth services occurred a few years ago with the creation of four youth HUBs in separate parts of Vancouver. Each HUB offers a standard array of youth services, as well as some unique services. Housing assistance is offered by each one through Transition Workers. The Broadway HUB is designated to provide specialized housing services, and offers a housing registry, emergency funds, and outreach services. Other agencies may provide housing assistance as part of other services, but typically are able to commit few resources to this task.

Gap analysis

This section analyzes the available housing resources and housing assistance services for young people in Vancouver. It compares the desired components of the housing framework as described in Figure 1, Section 6 with actual resources available - described in the inventory in Section 7. It also incorporates the views of youth and agencies about the gaps in housing resources and services.

The challenge in addressing the housing needs of at risk youth is that they are a diverse group, with a range of living skills and challenges, who are in a transitional stage of life. There is a sense that institutional or program type solutions are not as acceptable to young people as other housing options which cater to a desire for a normal living situation, with support available on an as needed basis.

Figure 3 below shows the number of beds/units available in each of the elements of the housing framework and illustrates some of the gaps (in green). Vancouver possesses housing within each key element of the youth housing framework with the exception of independent affordable housing specifically allocated for youth. However, there are gaps in terms of specific types of emergency shelters, transitional housing and supportive housing.

Overall, in terms of capacity, if there are between 300 and 700 at risk and homeless youth in Vancouver seeking accommodation, and 169 dedicated youth shelter beds and housing units, there is a significant undersupply of suitable shelter and housing in the range of 130 to 530 beds/units.

Emergency accommodation

Vancouver emergency shelters and safe houses turn youth away from their doors every day. In 2005, Covenant House turned away 682 youth on 1,718 separate occasions for reasons including no beds (421), barred temporarily (56), detoxing (114), and other reasons (91). In addition, many youth stay in adult shelters. At least one transitional housing facility has a waiting list, and youth visiting HUBS seeking independent

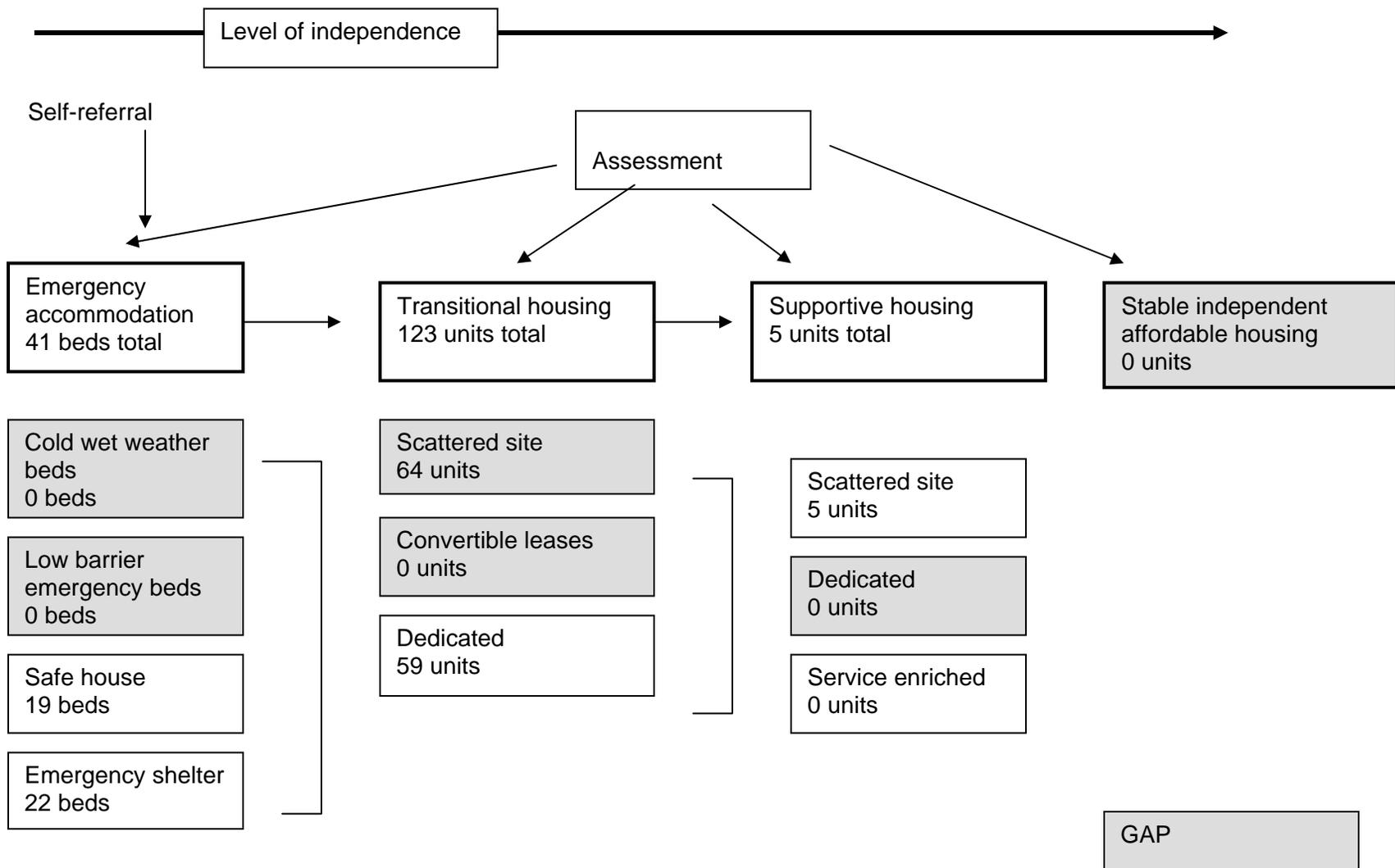
accommodation can find little that meets their needs. Clearly, there is a capacity issue and perhaps an issue of who is served.

At present, there are no low barrier emergency shelter or safe house beds, cold wet weather emergency shelter or safe house beds, and/or shelters for specific sub-populations of youth (with the exception of Aboriginal youth at one safe house). The need for a low barrier shelter is illustrated by the fact that Covenant House turned away 114 youth from their shelter in 2005 because they needed to detox prior to entering the shelter. The relatively high number of street youth in Vancouver, as found during the count, also speaks to this gap. Youth cite a number of reasons why they will not stay in a shelter, such as the rules, drug use and pets, which suggest that lower barrier facilities might serve this segment of the population. They note that there is a gap for services for young people who use drugs and/or alcohol. They also pointed out that other young people do not want to be around drugs. Most service providers also believe that there are not enough youth shelter or safe house beds, and that the ones that do exist present too many barriers. A minimum barrier, harm reduction shelter is thus a serious gap in the system, one that has existed for quite some time.⁵⁸

In terms of sub-populations, women are under-represented in the shelter population generally, and are more likely to be found on the street. There is a sense that separate facilities for young women might go a long way to alleviating their fears about male intimidation or violence in shelters. LGBTQ youth, because they represent a relatively large share of the at risk population for which there are no specialized emergency services, might likewise benefit from the option of a dedicated safe house or shelter. Another gap according to youth, is emergency accommodation for young people with children. As well, regardless of whether or not separate facilities are provided, the shelter system must be able to serve Aboriginal young people, couples, and young people with pets in order to get them off the street. Training for front line workers in youth shelters and safe houses to ensure staff are familiar with youth sub-populations and their challenges would address this issue.

⁵⁸ Chand et al. 1997

Figure 3
Gap analysis



Transitional housing

While there is a substantial supply of transitional housing for youth in Vancouver, particularly compared with some of the other housing options, there is not a sufficient range of transitional housing options to accommodate the diverse youth population with their differing support/independence needs. One size does not necessarily fit all, and different forms of transitional housing should be considered. Youth with addictions are of particular concern, representing a significant share of the at risk and homeless youth population. The City of Vancouver *Homeless Action Plan* has identified the need for 100 units of transitional housing for this youth population as well as 150 units for special populations such as youth and refugee claimants.⁵⁹

Two of the existing transitional housing options are located in dedicated buildings, have program requirements, and vary in the amount of independence they provide. Bantleman House has a waiting list consisting of 37 individuals while Covenant House Rights of Passage sometimes has vacancies. While one of the advantages of providing transitional housing in a dedicated building is the ability to provide on-site support, a limitation of this approach is the need for graduates to move on, which is difficult for young people in Vancouver's rental housing market.

Vancouver has a limited supply of scattered site youth housing subsidies that are transitional in the form of the SIL funding for youth with addictions, and transitioning youth involved in the Youth Agreement Program. A broader scattered site transitional housing program might be successful in accommodating a range of youth who want to avoid institutional settings, and live more independently while still receiving ongoing support and mentoring. The scattered site approach is also advantageous because there are not many youth in one building and the temporary form of accommodation can be made permanent by converting the lease. This addresses the need for transitional housing and also the need for stable housing – without requiring a person to move should they wish to stay. Given the extreme shortage of affordable housing in the region and limited resources for youth, the convertible approach is highly desirable.

⁵⁹ City of Vancouver. *Homeless Action Plan*. 2005.

Supportive housing

There are few units of scattered site supportive housing available in Vancouver (5), these are designated specifically for youth with mental illness and they have been funded fairly recently. Youth can remain in these units upon reaching adulthood, but may need to apply for adult funding to continue to receive support and a rent subsidy.

Both the young people and agencies pointed out that supportive housing is a key gap in existing housing resources for youth, particularly for some youth with specific disabilities who may require support on an ongoing basis. The profile of at risk and homeless youth in Vancouver shows they have a range of needs and challenges that could require ongoing support. Youth are living with other health issues, such as concurrent disorders (mental illness and addictions), FASD, and HIV/AIDS.

At the same time, while many youth have significant and often multiple challenges, there also appears to be a need for housing with less support, for example a semi-independent living environment or service-enriched housing, where youth could rely on a house mother or foster family for support on an as needed basis while living in their own suite or unit. The need for semi-independent low cost apartments in Vancouver for youth leaving care, recovering from addictions or mental illness was also noted in 1997.

Stable independent affordable housing

Many older youth are living in SROs in the Downtown area because SRO units are the only housing in Vancouver that can be rented for rates approaching the welfare shelter rate. There is no social housing for youth and no priority for youth in the existing social housing allocation system. The youth interviewed for this study consider that affordable, stable housing is the highest priority of all housing types for Vancouver youth. This is consistent with previous youth surveys, such as those conducted by McCreary in 2002, where youth identified low rent apartments as their highest priority. Agencies however, do not share this view, and are concerned that young people may be optimistic about their ability to live independently. Consequently, agencies view the need for housing with a minimal level of support. While the support may be short-lived, the

housing may be needed indefinitely. Scattered site supportive housing with flexible levels of support on an as needed basis would fill this gap.

Housing services

Assessment was an area of housing services that could be improved, according to agencies. Development of a suitable assessment tool that would enable agencies to place youth in the type of transitional or supportive housing with the right level of support and independence for them is crucial (along with having a variety of options in which to place them).

Many agency key informants identified a need for a centralized housing information centre, such as a youth oriented website to provide housing information. While the Broadway HUB currently maintains a Housing Registry, which is shared with all HUBS, there is room for improvement in the sharing of information. One provider felt that services at the Broadway Housing Registry were under-resourced, so that the registry was not able to fully serve youth in their struggles to find housing. The young people and agencies identified a need for additional housing support workers attached to the HUBs who can assist clients with identifying housing opportunities and if required accompany youth to interviews– “like they have for job searching” and to provide an “on spot reference” and help them with the business of signing a lease. However, it is important to note that more housing information and more workers chasing after too few units will not address a shortage of affordable housing.

In addition, the young people identified a need for some informal support once in housing, for example, where a housing worker would follow-up with them to make sure they were managing in their housing.

Service providers were consistently positive about the existing level of information sharing among them. However, several noted that the history of agency competition for contracts does not foster sharing. They identified the need for a central clearing house for information such as a youth-oriented website funded for continued updating or a specific telephone number such as a hot line. These resources would benefit both youth and youth serving agencies and would allow for information to be accessed city-wide (e.g. at libraries and community centres). As well, better protocols are desirable for

passing along care plans when a youth transfers from one organization to another. Current practice appears to be informal and not consistent from one agency to another.

Conclusions

The following gaps have been identified based on the resource analysis and interviews with youth and stakeholders. They are not listed in order of priority, but according to the proposed youth housing framework. Given the limited housing options available for Vancouver youth, we found no duplication in the provision of housing or housing services.

Housing

- Low barrier emergency shelter. This would permit separation of youth who are intoxicated or high, from those who are eligible for the higher barrier programs currently in operation.
- Emergency accommodation for youth age 16-24 with children who should not be sharing facilities with adults and need very specific supports. Could be very small e.g. Vi Fineday.
- Cold wet weather beds. These may or may not be low barrier beds.
- Scattered site transitional housing units with leases that may convert into stable affordable housing if appropriate. This approach could be implemented relatively quickly in the existing private or social housing stock. Units clustered in a building could be used to provide specialized services to sub-populations such as youth who are LGBTQ, pregnant youth and young parents.
- Dedicated and scattered site supportive housing for young persons including persons with HIV/AIDS and those with FASD. This might involve designating youth as a "vulnerable group" so they are eligible for provincial independent living programs or other supportive housing programs.
- Stable, independent housing. Allow youth to use rent supplements, give youth priority access to existing social housing units, and provide incentives/guarantees to encourage landlords to rent to youth.
- There is also a need to encourage placement of youth housing resources in other areas of the region to ensure that young people can have their needs met in their home communities.

Housing assistance services

- Enhanced house finding services/outreach workers to help youth access the full range of housing options.
- More follow-up by workers to help young people maintain their independent housing.
- Implement a pilot initiative to permit dogs in a youth shelter and a transitional housing project, based upon the model policies developed by the National Canine Defence League in the U.K.
- Better/more staff/training/supervision to ensure that youth shelters and safe houses can meet the special needs of different sub-populations.

Priorities

The following describes priorities as identified by the youth and agencies interviewed. Youth identified independent affordable housing as the highest priority housing type for Vancouver youth, followed by supportive and transitional housing and shelters. Supportive housing is top priority among youth serving agencies, (with some respondents specifying a client sub-population including women under 19 and especially young mothers, youth with the most difficult behaviours and youth with mental health issues, addictions or both). The second highest priority identified by agencies is emergency shelter for youth, including a low barrier shelter, followed by transitional housing. These differing perspectives may be explained by the fact that agencies tend to see more high needs/multiple need youth compared to the youth who were interviewed and/or youth may be optimistic about the level of support they require to live independently.

Best practices in youth housing

This section of the report highlights available information on “best practices” for youth housing. By this we mean “...[a] *term used in a wide variety of contexts to refer to actions, initiatives or projects from which others can learn, adapting them to their own situation.*”⁶⁰ For the purposes of this report, best practices refers to practices, activities or approaches that produce successful outcomes for youth as well as exemplary youth housing models or initiatives.

Best practices are drawn from several reliable sources that focus on housing options for youth. They include a review of BC safe houses and emergency shelters, a Canadian study of innovative housing for homeless youth, a U.S. report on supportive housing for youth, and, most importantly, a review of best practices in youth housing prepared for B.C. and a U.K. review of foyers for youth. A practice or model is typically labelled a best practice on the strength of opinions or case studies rather than rigorous evaluation research. Program participants, key informants, and reviewers acknowledge these practices as important for the successful operation of youth housing.

Best practices are summarized in Table 9 according to type of youth housing. Some best practices refer to design or operation of a particular youth housing model, others refer to youth housing in general and this is noted.

Housing types

ES	emergency shelter
SH	safe house
TH	transitional housing
Sup	supportive housing
IL	independent living
ALL	all forms of housing

⁶⁰ Serge, 1999. P. 1

Table 9
Best practices

Best Practice	Type of housing applicable
Services	
Meet basic needs for food and safety first	ES
Assess/screen for readiness to engage and to separate youth in different stages i.e. newly on street versus street entrenched, and according to medical needs, drug use etc.	ALL
Integrate/coordinate a range of services/ preferably located on site. This can include a continuum of housing services.	ALL
Develop partnerships with existing service providers	ALL
Facilitate parent/family involvement (not necessarily re-unification), focus on the whole family, and provide mediation	ALL
Provide mentorship programs to link youth with an adult who understands their needs and models positive life skills e.g. life skills mentor, cultural empowerment mentor, and corporate-business mentor	IL
Promote relationships of trust with adults e.g. nurture connections with kin, foster parents, or caring adult.	ALL
Ensure cultural sensitivity to meet unique needs of aboriginal, immigrant and diverse cultural backgrounds and lifestyles	ES
Develop Individualized approach/youth centred	ALL
Promote youth participation and control	ALL
Offer emotional support	ALL
Provide case management	TH
Focus on youth positive behaviours/strengths, not pathology	ES, SH, Sup
Provide life skills training	ALL
Provide support for parenting youth	TH
Incorporate peer support – opportunities to meet other youth in similar situations through seminars, camps, activities, etc.	IL
Connect youth to training, education and employment	ALL
Target services to unique needs of sub-populations	ES, SH
Provide substance abuse treatment	SH, Sup
Provide mental health services and treatment	TH, SH, Sup
Long term – community integration	
Provide follow-up/aftercare involving regular re-assessment and further intervention if necessary	ES, SH
Work to ensure availability of affordable housing/social housing for youth to move on to	TH
Anticipate aging in place	Sup
Develop exit strategies to prevent repeat homelessness	TH
Work with youth to develop action plans covering 8 or 9 life areas	TH
Focus on reintegration with community	ALL

Location/facilities/housing models	
Keep youth in community of origin	ALL
Note that smaller is better for size of facility	ALL
Incorporate scattered site housing, including agency lease arrangements.	TH, Sup
Convert transitional housing lease to permanent after some specified period	TH
Staff/volunteer training	
Focus on staff/volunteer skills and training	ES, TH
Monitoring and evaluation	
Data collection/outcomes measurement	SH, ALL

Examples of best practices

This section describes nine youth housing initiatives located in Canada and the U.S., which illustrate some of the best practices described above. They were selected because they illustrate a range of best practices and could be used as models to fill identified gaps in the Vancouver youth housing continuum.⁶¹

Initiative	Best practice
Comprehensive Services	
Larkin Street Youth Services	Integrated services and housing
Pape Adolescent Resource Centre	Partnerships with existing service providers
Emergency Shelter	
Eva's Satellite	Meeting basic needs first
Richter St. Youth Centre	Meeting basic needs first
Transitional Housing	
Bill Wilson Center	Integrated services and housing, case management and mentoring
Chelsea Youth Foyer	Integrated housing with employment and training
Lighthouse Transitional Housing	Scattered site transitional apartments, convertible lease
Green Chimneys	Target services to unique needs of sub-populations
Supportive Housing	
Supporting Our Youth	Partnership between service agency and housing providers, mentorship

⁶¹ While providing culturally appropriate services is a best practice, we were unable to profile a youth initiative utilizing this approach.

A brief profile of each housing initiative is provided, including contact information. For the most part, each profile focuses on one or two best practices that are employed by that initiative, although there may be others. Interviews were conducted with agency representatives to learn why a particular best practice was adopted, how it works, the advantages/disadvantages, factors for success, challenges and outcomes.

Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco, California

Larkin Street Youth Services (Larkin Street) is presented as an example of an organization that provides integrated services and housing options, an important best practice with respect to youth housing. The organization incorporates many other best practices within the range of services they provide, including case management, scattered site housing, specialized services for sub-populations, peer support and mentorship, although these are not described here.

Best Practice – Integrated services and housing options

Larkin Street began as a drop-in centre in 1984. Since then, it developed a full spectrum of services to help San Francisco's most vulnerable youth move beyond life on the street. As shown below, Larkin Street offers a range of housing options, from emergency shelter to permanent supportive housing. Larkin Street recognizes that youth are not a homogeneous group - that younger youth (aged 12-17) have different needs compared to older youth (aged 18-24), and that some youth have special needs. Larkin Street has developed a range of housing options to address the diverse needs of the youth population – to support youth at each stage of their journey. Larkin Street also offers a range of services such as outreach, drop-in, education programs, job training, medical care, HIV prevention, and case management.

Goals

Larkin Street's mission is to create a continuum of services that inspires homeless and runaway youth to move beyond the street. They believe that providing a continuum of services under one umbrella organization facilitates access to these services. Goals are to:

- Give youth the tools they need—through housing, medical care, education, and job training to move ahead with their lives; and
- Give youth the support they need to be able to rejoin their families or reach their highest potential for independence and self-sufficiency.

Approach to housing and services

Larkin Street provides an integrated approach to services and housing. For many homeless and runaway youth, initial contact with Larkin Street is through outreach teams who encourage youth on the street to take that critical first step into Larkin Street. At the drop-in centre, youth find nutritious meals, hot showers, clean clothing, trained counselors and a safe haven.

The Lark-Inn emergency shelter provides a safe place where youth can stabilize their lives. It is also an entry point to other programs and services offered by Larkin Street, including case management, health care and job training. At the Diamond Youth Shelter, staff work to help youth reunite with their family or to find an appropriate housing situation. The shelter provides youth with the basics, such as a bed, food, clothing,

showers, laundry, lockers and crisis counselling, and encourages the youth to access other services at the drop-in centre.

Larkin Street provides a range of transitional housing options. Residents have access to services including case management, life skills training, counselling, and access to Larkin Street's full continuum including a medical clinic⁶², mental health and substance use services, HIV prevention, education and employment programs. Youth may also have access to peer support and mentorship. Youth in the dedicated housing have access to on-site support staff. Larkin Street staff work with youth in transitional housing to develop a plan for their next stage in life, which could include family reunification, moving to another transitional housing option, or moving to permanent housing, usually on the private market. Larkin Street helps youth find housing and provides continued case management based on the needs of each individual youth. This support can continue until the youth is 25 years old.

Larkin Street also provides permanent supported subsidized housing in the Ellis Street Apartments. Larkin Street provides case management on-site. Tenants may access Larkin Street's other services which are off-site, but nearby. The building owner (Tenderloin Neighbourhood Development Corporation) provides a building manager who lives and works on-site to oversee building operations. Six units are reserved for youth living with HIV/AIDS.

Housing profile: Larkin Street Youth Services

Type of housing	Target group	Max length of stay/age limit	Total # Beds/ Units	Description of housing	Year opened
Emergency shelter					
Diamond Youth Shelter	12-17 years (some 18 year olds)	6 months	16 beds	Dedicated building. Beds provided in dormitories. Separate dorms for males and females. Kennels available for pets.	1993
Lark-Inn	18-24 years	4 months	40 beds	Dedicated building. A few dormitories contain different numbers of beds (e.g. 4-8 beds/dorm). Separate dormitories for males and females. Kennels available for pets.	2000
Transitional housing⁶³					
Castro Youth Housing Initiative	18-25 years. Many have substance use and/or mental health needs. Many identify as LGBT	Up to 2 years	26 beds	Scattered sites. A mix of units including singles and 2-3 bedroom apartments	2004
LEASE	For 18-24 year old youth who have emancipated from the foster care system	Up to 2 years	60 beds	Scattered sites. A mix of studio, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments	2003

⁶² Operated in conjunction with the San Francisco Department of Public Health

⁶³ The intent is for residents to stay 30 days to 2-3 years. Support services are generally provided.

The LOFT (Larkin Opportunities for Transition)	15-18 years	When youth age out of care	9 beds	A licensed under-age group home	2002
Routz	For youth with serious behaviour and health issues 18 – 24 year olds	Up to 2 years	18 units	Scattered sites. A mix of studios, SROs and 2 bedroom apartments.	2006
Assisted Care Program	18-24 years HIV positive	Until they age out of care	12 units	A residential program in a dedicated building. Studio units with private bathrooms. An HIV specialty clinic is located on the first floor. 24-hour care and medical support is available.	1997
After Care	18-24 years HIV positive	Until they age out of care	Up to 50 units	Scattered sites. A mix of SRO, studio and 1-bedroom units.	1997
Avenues to Independence	18-24 years	Up to 18 months	15 beds	Dedicated building with 24/7 staffing	1996
Permanent Supportive housing⁶⁴					
Ellis Street Apartments	18 years and over (6 units specifically for youth diagnosed with HIV/AIDS)	No maximum	24 units	Dedicated building. Self-contained studio apartments. A partnership with Tenderloin Neighbourhood Development Corporation (TNDC)	2002

Rationale for this approach

Larkin Street developed a continuum of integrated services and housing options in response to the needs of youth based on the belief that youth would benefit from a one-window approach. In addition, the organization recognized that homeless youth do not access adult services and need programs specifically targeted to them. Larkin Street also recognized that the diverse youth population needs a range of housing and service options. Some programs were developed according to specific government programs (e.g. for emancipated foster care youth).

Advantages/disadvantages

The advantage of an integrated approach is that youth can get all their needs met through one organization. In addition, Larkin Street can offer each youth a housing option that best meets their needs, skill levels and stage of development. For example, Larkin Street believes that a scattered site option works well for youth who are able to live independently with an off-site case manager (e.g. based on education, employment skills, communication skills etc.) Other youth may manage better with on-site support

⁶⁴ Affordable permanent housing with supports and no limit on length of stay. Provides residents with the rights of tenancy under landlord/tenant legislation and is linked to voluntary and flexible support services designed to meet resident's needs and preferences.

services. Another advantage is the ability to move youth from one housing type to another without too much difficulty, if appropriate.

Outcomes/evidence of success

Larkin Street has received numerous awards over the years. Organizations from around the U.S. look to Larkin Street as a model of innovative and effective service provision for homeless and runaway young people.

Larkin Street estimates that:

- 75% of youth who participate in their housing programs and complete case management exit street life permanently; and
- 90% of Lark-Inn's guests move on to more stable permanent homes after leaving the shelter.

Conditions needed for success

- Planning
- Communication and collaboration within the organization
- Staff training and professional development
- Input from youth
- Youth need to be supported and empowered to make choices for themselves

Challenges

The main challenge is that the organization needs to pay a great deal of attention to communication within Larkin Street and developing mechanisms to ensure internal collaboration.

Pape Adolescent Resource Centre (PARC), Toronto, Ont.

The Pape Adolescent Resource Centre (PARC) is a supportive housing program providing preparation for independence in Toronto, Ontario for youth 15-24 years, most of who are coming out, or have left, foster care. PARC is a partnership of three child protection services, the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, the Catholic Children’s Aid Society and the Jewish Family and Child Service and has developed partnerships with housing providers. PARC programs incorporate the best practice of developing partnerships with existing service providers and housing providers.

Best Practice – Partnerships with existing service providers

Goal

PARC’s goal is to assist youth in their transition to independence and self-sufficiency by supporting their personal and emotional growth and preparing them to integrate into the community.

Approach to services

PARC serves youth who are in care, or coming out of care, with the three partner child protection agencies, as well as youth who were not in care. PARC offers rent geared to income housing in partnership with the City of Toronto and with two non-profit housing providers. PARC offers youth units in:

- Four houses owned by the Toronto Community Housing Company (TCHC) and leased to PARC, supporting 20 youth.

Housing type	Supportive
Date opened	1989
Target group	Youth 15-24, many of whom are coming out of foster care
Description of housing	Houses and scattered site apartments
Number of beds/units	20 beds in 4 houses 24 beds in scattered site apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18 bachelor units - one youth for each unit ▪ 3 two-bedroom units for 6 youth sharing
Building ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The houses are leased from the City of Toronto and are managed by PARC. ▪ The scattered-site apartments are leased to the youth through arrangements with three supportive non-profit housing providers. The housing providers manage the units and PARC offers support to the youth.
Maximum length of stay	Until the person is ready to leave, no matter what age
Average length of stay	For the houses it is about 3 years. Bachelor units are permanent with stays up to 10 years
Who pays operating costs	Core funding for PARC comes from Ontario’s Ministry of Community and Social Services PARC applies for other funding through government RFP’s, Children’s Aid Foundations, and private donations.
Contact person	Bruce Hallett and Tamla Mathews-Morgan Phone - (416) 462-1010 Fax - (416) 462-0161 Email – bah@parcyouth.com

- Scattered site apartments through an arrangement with the TCHC and two other non-profit providers, supporting 24 youth.

In the houses, each youth has her or his own room. They are designated co-ed, although over time a house may tend towards one gender or another. The TCHC pays PARC an Enhanced Management Fee to manage the houses. This provides funding for a dedicated housing coordinator position. PARC is responsible for the day to day management of the four houses: collecting rents, filling vacancies, doing minor repairs, house meetings and individual support to youth living there. The youth tenant signs a lease agreement and must be able to live cooperatively with others and maintain housekeeping standards. The housing coordinator visits the houses weekly, chairs the house meetings, problem-solves with the youth individually and as a group, and brings concerns back to the PARC team and individual youth workers. The housing coordinator is also the contact between PARC and the various housing partners, collecting and paying rent and arranging evictions.

With the scattered site apartments, the housing providers manage the units and PARC selects the tenants and offers supports services. The supports offered to the youth ensure more stable tenancies, reduced damage to property and helps to maintain good relations with neighbours and the community.

To access a PARC unit, a youth must be actively connected to a PARC worker and the worker must know the youth well enough to be able to make a strong case to the PARC team that housing will benefit the youth. (E.g. The youth will benefit from the housing because he/she wishes to attend a trades program and needs inexpensive accommodation.) Once the youth is in housing, they must attend house meetings, maintain a working relationship with their PARC worker and be a tenant in good standing. Support is offered for as long as the youth has a need. Youth have the right to discontinue contact with PARC and their PARC worker but so long as they are in PARC housing, they must work with the housing coordinator.

PARC housing is regulated under the provincial Tenant Protection Act and the lease agreement with the youth states that no illegal activity is allowed in PARC housing. If required, PARC works with youth on substance abuse issues. Youth may stay in the housing as long as they wish.

The youth in the apartments and houses are of varying ages. Youth who are new to the PARC program tend to be referred to the houses first and therefore are usually younger with an average age of 19. The majority of the apartments are for youth with mental health problems. PARC does not evict based on age so youth in the apartments tend to stay longer and are in their twenties.

PARC's integrated services offer assistance with employment, health issues, substance abuse, identity, sexuality, life skills, links to the community and the One-Stop Housing Program.

The philosophical approach of the program is based on the reflection-action axis. It suggests that to be independent, people must master a process through which they reflect upon their lives and then take action. After taking action they then must reflect again and take action again. The process seems simple enough but for young people who feel little hope, and who often feel little control over their lives, the process is difficult

to trust and master. PARC employs this process in programming, and planning as well. Staff and youth are engaged in this axis together through dialogue. The process respects the knowledge base of both teacher and learner, youth and staff. It engenders hope and possibility.

PARC also operates the One-Stop Housing Program, which assists youth to find market rental housing. It is a partnership of nine youth serving agencies, including the City's mental health housing provider. The City of Toronto's Homeless Initiative Fund funds one Stop. Its goal is to provide options for safe affordable housing for homeless youth 16-24 years. It is a referral process that any young person or a youth's worker can access. One-Stop's clients come from other agencies or they self-refer. One-Stop is available to those in PARC housing who wish to move into market-rental units, although it is not often utilized. Those leaving PARC housing usually do so on their own, having been stabilized by their experience with PARC and able to take on this task themselves.

One-Stop collects information on the youth required by the City, such as age, gender, etc. It also asks in where the youth wants to live, what they can afford, do they have pets, etc. so that One-Stop can match the youth to an appropriate vacant unit. One-Stop's staff member compiles and keeps lists of available housing using public websites and lists from other agencies (e.g. vacancies in mental health housing system). One-Stop also keeps databases of landlords willing to rent to youth and information about moving and where a youth might obtain furniture, etc. (One-Stop Housing can sometimes supply youth with household items gathered through community donations.) If requested, a PARC worker or the One-Stop staff person will accompany a youth to view an apartment. The staff person for One-Stop is also involved in workshops preparing youth on what to expect once they have their own accommodation.

Rationale of Approach for programs at PARC

Youth coming out of the foster care system and/or traumatized settings were not well served and were found to have problems adjusting to their independence. They needed housing and support services that would allow or assist them to gain stability.

Advantages/disadvantages

The primary advantage of partnering with non-profit housing providers to access scattered site apartments is that the units are rent-geared-to-income and are therefore affordable to youth with very limited incomes. As well, if the youth moves to independence and has achieved a good tenant record he/she can continue to live in their unit permanently. Partnerships with housing agencies also permit PARC to focus on providing youth services.

Conditions needed for success

- Appropriate funding;
- A variety of partnerships and resources to address core needs i.e., housing, employment, education, mental health services;
- A dedicated staff with a wide variety of skills;
- Embracing youth as an equal partner with an equal voice;
- Empowering youth to make improvements in their lives;

- Must have follow through with youth, find out how they are doing once they are in housing; and
- Recognize that housing youth is only one element of preparing them for living independently.

Challenges

- Lack of funding;
- Competing with other programs for dwindling resources;
- Many non-profit housing providers are not willing or able to house youth and especially youth in care; and
- Success for the youth can be compromised by the challenges they face.

Eva's Satellite, Toronto, Ontario

Eva's Satellite is an emergency shelter for youth located in Toronto, Ontario. It is presented as an illustration of a youth shelter that "meets basic needs first", an important best practice for emergency shelters. It means that the shelter addresses an individual's basic needs (e.g. for food and shelter) regardless of issues that may present barriers to service in most other shelters (e.g. substance use and identification). Often, these types of shelters are referred to as "low barrier".

Best Practice - Meeting basic needs first

Eva's Satellite helps "meet basic needs first" because it is designed to be accessible, particularly for youth unable to access mainstream, abstinence-based youth shelters. Youth can go there without having to "jump through hoops". For example, Eva's Satellite will accept youth who do not have ID – although staff will encourage and help youth to get ID, and will keep it safe for them. Youth can simply "show up at the door". As well, agencies that serve youth may refer them to Eva's Satellite if they know the youth are actively using drugs and/or alcohol.

Very few expectations are placed on youth at the shelter. However, youth are expected to follow house rules such as respecting the curfew, and refraining from verbal aggression or causing property damage. Eva's Satellite offers drop-in programming five days a week that includes various services, workshops, activities, and discussion groups. In addition, all youth are encouraged to use a variety of services offered in the area, such as the library, the community centre, the local YMCA, and employment agencies. Youth are encouraged, but not required, to participate in the various programs and activities.

There are very few situations where a youth would be required to leave Eva's Satellite. Staff do everything they can to avert a problem. However, if a resident were discharged, this would generally be for 24 to 72 hours. For a very serious offence, and where a youth refuses to cooperate with Eva's Satellite, a youth might be barred from the shelter for up to one week. Rather than being discharged, a youth could agree to attend a meeting with a counsellor and/or supervisor, write a paper on the discharge issue, write an apology or attend specific programming.

Most youth who go to Eva's Satellite are actively using drugs and/or alcohol. These youth are unable to access most other shelters because of their rules. Youth who are not actively using substances may also stay at Eva's Satellite, however, the staff would ensure that this is the most appropriate shelter, and make suitable referrals when necessary.

Goals

The goals of Eva's Satellite are to:

- Serve homeless and at-risk youth who have difficulty accessing mainstream, abstinence-based youth shelters;
- Address basic needs for food and shelter;

- Establish low-threshold programs (i.e. programs that are easily accessible to as many clients as possible) and effective in-house services;
- Help residents reduce the harms associated with drug and alcohol use, and the lifestyle that often accompanies such use; and
- Facilitate access to programs and services in the community.

Approach to services

Eva's Satellite operates its program and services using a harm reduction approach. The shelter defines harm reduction as "staying safer and healthier by learning about and reducing the harms associated with risky behaviour". Eva's Satellite aims to promote harm reduction by:

Housing type	Emergency shelter
Date opened	1997
Target group	Homeless youth (16-24 years old) who have difficulty accessing mainstream, abstinence-based youth shelters. Most are actively using drugs and/or alcohol. Many youth also have mental health issues.
Number of beds	26 beds
Description of housing	<p>A dedicated building. Eva's operates out of a temporary location provided by the City of Toronto. It is an old building with two floors. The first floor includes a large common room and contains a dormitory with 6 beds for females. The second floor contains bedrooms for the males. Some have 2 beds per room and some have 3-6 beds per room for a total of 20 beds. There are two washrooms available for all the youth and three showers. There are no kitchen facilities for cooking, but meals are provided from an external kitchen.</p> <p>Eva's Satellite is planning to move to a new facility being developed by the City of Toronto. Plans are underway for the new 32 bed building, dormitory style, with 2 beds per room, and males and females on separate floors. It is expected to contain space for programs, a gym, weight room and kitchen. Completion expected 2008.</p>
Building ownership	City of Toronto
Maximum length of stay	There is no maximum length of stay, but youth cannot stay past the age of 24 years.
Average length of stay	Youth stay for varying periods of time. Some stay on and off for a few weeks. Others stay on and off for a few years.
Who paid for capital costs	City of Toronto
Who pays operating costs	Most funding is from the City of Toronto through per diems. Eva's Satellite also receives funds through fundraising and a few special projects.
Contact person:	Morag Perkins, General Manager Tel: 416 441-3162 ext. 222 E-mail: morag@evas.ca

- Treating clients with respect. This means accepting clients for who they are, wherever they are at, not judging them, listening to them, respecting their decisions and asking others in the community to treat their clients with respect.
- Giving clients the basics of life, such as a safe and clean place to sleep and nutritious food to eat.
- Giving clients accurate information, education and resources so they can make informed decisions.
- Providing programs and services to homeless youth, as long as they meet the agency's age requirements and can reasonably comply with the agency's house rules.
- Facilitating access to a wide range of programs and services both on site and in the community.

When youth arrive at Eva's Satellite, staff conduct a risk assessment within 24 to 48 hours. Staff ask the youth about their background, physical and mental health and drug use (e.g. the types of drugs they are using and how long they have been using them). Staff also discuss different options about how the youth might reduce the harms associated with their drug use, and the nature of the relationships the youth have with their families to see if it is possible for them to return home.

Eva's Satellite provides basic services such as information, harm reduction education, food, clothing, toiletries, short-term storage, bedding, condoms, referrals and workshops.

Additional services include:

- Access to health services, mental health services, substance use counselling, employment programs, and life skills/money management;
- On-site youth service workers and harm reduction workers; and
- Community liaison to help youth access services in the community.

Rationale for this approach

In the late 1990s, it was noted that increasing numbers of youth seeking shelter were using drugs and alcohol. These youth were unable to access traditional youth shelters because they required abstinence.

Advantages/disadvantages

The advantage of a low barrier shelter such as Eva's Satellite that aims to "meet basic needs first" is that it is accessible for youth. Youth are accepted there, regardless of other issues that might make them unable to stay at other shelters. Once the youth are at Eva's Satellite, staff are able to engage them in the services. The staff that work there are committed to the youth and understand what it means to work with this particular population.

Disadvantages are that this approach can be more expensive than other shelters to operate. The shelter needs more staff, and the staff need to be well trained and patient. In addition, because some youth may not have ID, staff may not know for sure if they really are who they say they are. It is possible that a youth might not meet the shelter's age requirements, and there may be things about the youth that staff should know.

Outcomes/evidence of success

Eva's Satellite defines success as being able to work with their clients over time and provide them with the services they need to achieve stability. They believe they are successful in engaging youth to participate in their programs.

Eva's Satellite has observed that some youth reduce their consumption of substances while at the shelter youth. Furthermore, they generally reduce the harms associated with their drug use. They may change their drug of choice to one that is less harmful, switch to less harmful combinations of substances, or change the way they use drugs to be safer.

Eva's Satellite estimates that about 35-40% of their residents have jobs. They believe their program helps their clients gain the confidence they need to keep their jobs.

Conditions needed for success

Eva's Satellite believes the main reasons for the success of their program include:

- Their harm reduction approach
- Low-threshold programs and services that make it easy for youth to participate
- Clear house rules
- Doing what it takes to help youth remain at the shelter where they can become more stable
- Committed staff
- Relationship building with the youth to develop honest and trusting relationships
- Systematic development and implementation of programs, which includes obtaining input from the youth to ensure programs will meet their needs.

Challenges

- The ability to access sufficient funding to implement all the programs Eva's Satellite would like is an ongoing challenge.
- Serving this target group is a challenge. A significant number of their clients have a mental health issue, but most are not receiving treatment. In addition, it can be difficult to reason with a person about rules and treating others with respect if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. As well, most youth do not have health cards, which make it difficult to refer them to appropriate medical treatment.
- Youth who are 16, 17 and 18 present some specific challenges, which suggest that perhaps younger youth would be better served in their own facility. For example, these youth are below the legal drinking age, so alcohol use is against the law for them. Also, it may be appropriate for them to have an earlier curfew, but in a facility that also serves older youth, this is not practical. Furthermore, younger youth are more impressionable than older youth and are likely to be influenced by them.

Sources:

Conversation with the General Managers of Eva's Satellite
Case study prepared for CMHC report: Homelessness, Housing, and Harm Reduction: Stable Housing for Homeless People with Substance Use Issues.

Richter Street Youth Shelter, Kelowna, B.C.

Richter Street Youth Shelter is an emergency shelter for youth (13-18) in Kelowna, BC, operated by the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs. It is presented as an illustration of a youth shelter that “meets basic needs first”, an important best practice for emergency shelters. It means that the shelter addresses an individual’s basic needs (e.g. for food and shelter) regardless of issues that may present barriers to service in most other shelters (e.g. substance use, identification, and parental consent). Often, these types of shelters are referred to as “low barrier”.

Best Practice - Meeting basic needs first

The Richter Street Youth Shelter helps “meet basic needs first” because it is designed to be accessible to youth who are highly street involved or entrenched, with a minimum of rules. For example:

- The shelter accepts youth who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol – unless a youth presents a risk to him/herself (e.g. needs to go to a hospital) or poses a safety risk to others.
- There is no need to obtain written parental consent for youth to stay at the shelter. For youth under 16, the shelter will contact the youth’s guardian or a person they consider family, to inform the person that the youth is at the shelter and to obtain verbal consent. For youth over 16, the shelter has an obligation to inform a person that the youth considers family that the youth is at the shelter. However, there is no need for consent. If the shelter is unable to contact the youth’s guardian, the shelter will contact MCFD for information. This approach avoids the need for youth to have ID, since the shelter can confirm age and identity through the phone calls.

Youth at the shelter are required to adhere to a code of conduct regarding respect and safety. Youth who present a risk to staff or other youth will be asked to leave. If a youth is required to leave the shelter, they can return when they are able to adhere to the code of conduct.

Goals

The goals of the Richter Street Youth Shelter are to:

- Give youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness a safe place to stay;
- Address basic needs;
- Provide an integrated and coordinated approach to engage youth in services, and help youth build skills, connect to other community resources, and take the next step to move forward with their lives; and
- Serve as the first stage in a multi-stage approach to transitional housing for youth.

Approach to services

The low barrier approach adopted by the Richter Street Youth Shelter is designed to “get kids in the door”, after which there is an opportunity to engage them in services. The shelter is specifically designed for youth who are unable to meet the requirements of a more structured program. At Richter Street, staff work to meet the needs of each individual – based on where they are at - and to focus on each individual’s strengths. For example, if a youth has chronic substance use issues, staff will work with him/her to help identify these issues. When the time comes (and it usually does) that the youth is ready to address their substance use issue, staff encourage them to speak with a counsellor on site, or refer them to a treatment program. The

Housing type	Emergency shelter
Date opened	October 2005
Target group	Male and female youth from 13 to 18 years from a variety of backgrounds and living situations. They may have mental health and/or addictions issues, be involved with MCFD, be experiencing conflict within their families, and have a history of sexual exploitation.
Number of beds/units	8 beds and 2 overflow beds
Description of housing	<p>The shelter is located in the Richter Street Youth Centre. There are two separate rooms for the males and females, with four cubicles in each. The boys and girls also have separate bathroom and shower facilities.</p> <p>The shelter also includes a washer and dryer, video monitoring of common areas, and containers for storage in a locked room. At night, the shelter can be closed off from the rest of the building. The building has a kitchen where meals can be prepared.</p>
Building ownership	City of Kelowna
Maximum length of stay	Youth may stay 21 nights in a 31-day period. However, the shelter is flexible, and the length of stay may be extended based on individual circumstances (e.g. a youth found a job and is waiting for an apartment, or pending a youth agreement).
Average length of stay	On average, youth stay 1 week to 10 days. Some youth come for one night. The shelter does not encourage long stays. Staff work with the youth to develop a transition plan that could involve connecting the youth to other programs, helping the youth find other housing, or helping the youth return to their families or foster placement. The goal is to help youth transition to a suitable living arrangement as quickly as possible.
Who paid for capital costs	<p>The building is owned by the City of Kelowna and leased to the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs for \$1 per year.</p> <p>The federal government through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) provided capital funding to renovate the building and purchase appliances. CIBC Wood Gundy contributed \$45,000 for start-up costs.</p>
Who pays operating costs	SCPI provides funding for 1 full-time position. The provincial government (through MCFD) provides \$50,000/year to staff the shelter and support related programs. The local food bank, churches, local business and individuals have also donated funds, food, clothing and other supplies to the shelter. The City of Kelowna funds Club 180, the recreation drop-in program.
Contact person	<p>Mike Gawliuk, Area Director, Central Okanagan Youth and Family Services Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs Phone: 250-868-8541 ext. 219, Cell: 250-869-2728 E-mail: mgawliuk@boysandgirlsclubs.ca</p>

local health authority has started an outreach addictions program that is seen as a much-needed service.

The Richter Street Youth Shelter provides basic services, such as food, clothing, and a place to shower, do laundry and sleep. In addition, staff help youth connect to other community resources and take the next step to move forward with their lives.

In addition, shelter clients have access to Club 180, a daytime drop-in program located on site. It offers a variety of programs and services including recreation, life/social skills, and referrals to other programs. The club also has a supply of musical instruments so kids can get together and jam. Alcohol and drug counsellors come to the club, and education programs may include presentations and videos on the impacts of drug use. On-site programs include Reconnect, Outreach Mental Health, Youth Employment Services, Parents Together, Kelowna Family Support and Restorative Justice.

Future plans include working with the local school division to provide on-site education for the youth and provide a street nurse, social worker and alcohol and drug counsellor in the building.

Rationale for this approach

In 2003, the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs brought all its youth programs in Kelowna together in one building, known as the Richter Street Youth Centre. Through its work with at-risk youth, the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs identified a gap in services for youth who were homeless – particularly 15 and 16 year old males, and felt there was a need for a youth shelter. Reconnect outreach workers were seeing 30-40 youth on the streets that had no place to go other than adult shelters.

Several other agencies and organizations, including the Central Okanagan Four Pillars Coalition and Kelowna Homelessness Steering Committee, also identified a need for a low barrier youth shelter. Information from the Kelowna homeless counts undertaken in 2003 and 2004 confirmed that there were homeless youth living on the streets of Kelowna.

The need for a low barrier shelter that would “meet basic needs first” was identified for youth who were unable to be served in existing youth programs. These included youth who were actively using drugs or who were simply not ready to meet the expectations of structured programs. A significant number of youth wouldn’t access these programs because they thought they would be “kicked out” or they did access the programs and were kicked out. The need for this type of shelter was also identified for youth in a structured program who needed a safe place to go if things went “sideways”. A safe shelter would help prevent them from losing everything they had gained and having to start from the beginning again.

Advantages/disadvantages

- This approach provides youth with a safe place that meets their basic needs and engages them in services.
- The Richter Street Youth Shelter is cost-effective (\$150,000/year).

- Locating the shelter in a building dedicated to serving youth provides one stop, integrated services, and opportunities for partnerships with a variety of service providers.

Outcomes/evidence of success

The Richter Street Youth Shelter defines success as being able to provide youth who have been living outside with a place to stay - where they are safe from harm, seeing the youth become engaged in services, and seeing the youth move forward with their lives.

The Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs believe their shelter is successful because youth are using it. When the shelter first opened, it was anticipated that it would accommodate 4 youth on any given night. Since then, the shelter has served an average of 5-6 youth per night. Some nights the shelter operates at over-capacity (youth may sleep on a couch). Other times there is less demand. In 2006, the shelter served 154 individuals who stayed for 2,301 bed nights.

By wrapping other youth services around the shelter, the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs has also been successful in engaging youth in programs and services such as school, employment and treatment. The shelter has helped some youth find a way to live successfully with their families, and has helped some parents learn how to reduce conflicts with their children. The shelter has also been able to help youth with time-limited goals, such as satisfying conditions to be eligible for a Youth Agreement.

There is strong community support for the Richter Street Youth Shelter. During 2006 Homelessness Awareness Week, the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs identified 21 different sponsors who have contributed funding, food and supplies to the shelter and the Richter Street Youth Centre.

Conditions needed for success

The Richter Street Youth Shelter believes that conditions for success include:

- Effective and integrated services housed in one building. Housing and service providers need to work closely to develop effective strategies for each youth. The shelter by itself can provide the basics, but it needs to collaborate with programs and other agencies that provide services, including schools, employment training, and treatment, to connect the youth to these other services and help the youth move on with next steps.
- Staff who are able to work with this population, see the potential in each individual, and work with each youth to develop and implement a transition plan.
- A continuum of services to address the range of needs of youth and their stage of change.

For the youth, having their basic needs met helps them accomplish other goals. A full stomach and good night's sleep makes it possible to go to school or work the next day. The programs also help youth develop self-confidence, life skills and the ability to take care of themselves.

Challenges

One of the most significant challenges is for staff to recognize the difference between enabling youth to continue with a lifestyle that is causing harm, rather than helping the youth to move forward. Staff constantly need to recognize their role in facilitating a positive transition.

Other challenges include:

- Finding staff that are able and qualified to provide the services needed, who know how to engage youth and work with other community agencies, and who are willing to work during the hours when the shelter is open.
- Making sure that youth don't have a negative impact on each other.
- Obtaining assessments for each youth with the input of all the professionals involved in the life of the youth.
- The short-term nature of SCPI funding.

The Bill Wilson Center, Santa Clara, California

The Bill Wilson Center in Santa Clara, California provides a broad range of housing and services focused on homeless and at risk youth, although adults and families are also among the more than 10,000 clients served annually.

The approach used by the Bill Wilson Center is exemplified by the following quote from the report *Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds*.

“The vast majority of youth who do not make a successful transition (to independence) fall within one or more of the following four groups of 14-17 year olds: 1) those who do not complete high school, 2) youth deeply involved in the juvenile justice systems, 3) young, unmarried mothers, and 4) adolescents who experience foster placement. Thus, adolescents in any of these statuses should be a major focal point of public policy. There needs to be substantial improvement in the current systems that work with these youth while they are still minors, with the goal of reconnecting them to school and social support to the maximum degree possible. This support should continue until they have made a successful transition into young adulthood” .⁶⁵ⁱ

The Bill Wilson Center incorporates the following best practices for youth housing that are described below: integrated services with housing as well as case management, and mentoring. Other best practices are employed as well.

Housing type	Transitional housing
Date began	1995. Apartment sites have been added over the years as funding increased.
Target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) for youth and young families 16-19 years who are in foster care; and ▪ The Transitional Housing Program (THP) for youth and young families aged 18-24 who have either aged out of foster care, are homeless or street involved.
Substance use policy	Harm reduction approach. If abuse is disruptive or use interferes with the regulations of the apartment complex, the Case Manager will issue a warning. On the 2 nd or 3 rd warning (depending on the youth's contract) youth are given a 30-day suspension from the home. Clients receive support for substance abuse treatment.
Number of units	53
Number of youth housed at one time	Most often 53, except that at any one time, a 2-parent family may be sharing a unit, which adds to the total number of youth served. This doesn't account for the 25+ babies or small children.
Description of housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transitional Housing Placement Program – 1 house (6 bedrooms for 5 young women and the monitor), plus 2 two-bedroom apartments in a scattered site building and 2 one-bedroom apartments for families.

⁶⁵ Wald, Michael and Martinez, Tia, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Working Paper, 2003 *Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds*.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transitional Housing Program – 2 houses plus apartments in 6 scattered site complexes.
Ownership:	Bill Wilson Center owns the 2 houses, one 5-unit apartment block, and one triplex. The rest of the houses and apartments are in private market rental buildings.
Lease in rental housing:	Held by the agency.
Maximum length of stay	Clients can move from the THPP program to the THP program and stay until they are 24.
Average length of stay	Less than 1 year
Who paid for capital costs	City of Santa Clara
Who pays operating costs	Range of federal, state, county and city funding as well as donations and grants from foundations.
Contact person	Lorraine Flores, Associate Director Bill Wilson Center Phone: 408-850-6131 Fax: (408) 246-5752 E-mail: lflores@bwcmail.org

Best Practice # 1 – Integrated services and housing

Goals

The goal of the Bill Wilson Center is to provide an integrated services and housing approach so youth can access the variety of services needed to grow into healthy and self-sufficient adults.

Approach

Bill Wilson has two transitional housing programs with wrap around services:

- The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) for those 16 and older who are in foster care. This program continues until the youth is 18 years for those no longer in school and 19 years for those still in school; and
- The Transitional Housing Program (THP) for those who have aged out of foster care, (60% of the youth in this program) or for homeless or street youth. Homeless and street youth enter the program through the Center's drop-in or directly from the streets.

The programs provide comprehensive services to youth aged 16 to 22, including parenting youth and their infants. It provides long-term shelter, independent living skills training, job readiness skills, and counselling. Young parents also learn parenting skills.

The Bill Wilson Center believes there is good reason to provide both the dedicated and scattered site housing models, serving as a transitional system towards permanent housing. Youth who need more supervision, such as a new parent, are placed in the houses. As these youth reach their goals of education, employment and increased self-sufficiency they move on to an apartment where there is less supervision. Youth who do

not need the added supervision are housed immediately in one of the scattered site apartments.

While the youth are in transitional housing, a certain portion of their income is kept in a savings account to teach them that when they are on their own, a specified amount of their earnings will need to go to rent. The funds accumulated in this account are given to the youth when they leave the program.

Contact with the youth decreases the longer the youth is in the program, although all care and services are offered on an as needed basis. Bill Wilson programs include:

- An Independent Life Skills Program providing job and interpersonal skills and household management, offered both on- and off-site;
- Parenting skills training on site, as well as services for the children;
- An education program;
- Drug and/or mental health counselling;
- Support groups;
- Vouchers for food, clothing, etc.; and
- A mentoring program where youth who have been at Bill Wilson for a period of time mentor newcomers.

After care is offered to youth once they exit the program for permanent housing. This includes weekly to monthly phone contact, a monthly support group, and other services as needed, such as crisis intervention. For youth who were in foster care, Bill Wilson provides a two-year rental subsidy of \$500 per month when they exit the program, as long as they attend school and stay connected to their case manager. Some financial assistance is also offered to exiting youth who were not in the foster care system. As well, the Center offers subsidized day care for the children of parenting youth in the program until that child is 13 years old.

The Center has good relationships with local colleges and universities and with employers to enable their clients either to go to school or find work. As well, Bill Wilson can connect a youth to community services. It employs incentives, either monetary or vouchers, to attract youth to the programs, and sometimes to encourage them to use the services.

Rationale for the approach

The majority of youth leaving the foster care system at 18 experience great difficulty transitioning to the community. These youth exhibit the highest percentage of substance abuse, the poorest health, poorest education, HIV/AIDS and a lack of skills necessary to live independently. The THPP and THP Programs connect youth to the support and guidance missing from their lives. Without support the youth often fail. The support provides the encouragement and advice to help them to keep trying.

Advantages/disadvantages

The advantages of these programs are easy access to wrap around services, such as drug and/or mental health counselling, employment and education, that are based on the needs of each youth as well as the integration of housing placement with support services.

Outcomes/evidence of success

Each youth has an individual treatment plan and goals with specific delivery outcomes, (e.g. employment at \$13/hour). As well, each youth has performance measure outcomes such as behavioural changes, substance abuse changes, etc.

Service delivery and outcome data is submitted monthly. The following outcome performance measurements are for the year 2005-2006:

- 55% of participants attending college;
- 77% moved into permanent housing;
- 100% completed some individual goals as outlined in service plan;
- 65% completed all individual goals as outlined in service plan;
- 80% are gainfully employed;
- 85% linked to other services;
- 0% lost custody of their children;
- 0% had second child while in program; and
- 100% of parenting youth provided with subsidized child care.

Conditions needed for success

- Decision makers need to see youth aging out of foster care as a population that requires significant support and services.
- Should provide a range of housing types from congregate living to independent apartments, scattered site and dedicated buildings. For example, some youth find it difficult to live alone and may feel lonely, or find that the reality of living alone is more complicated than they expected. Parenting youth start in a house in a congregate setting where there is an opportunity for more eyes to watch and assist. Once their skills have developed they can move to an independent apartment.
- Need to provide a full range of services delivered in a way that youth will want to use them.
- Need to examine each youth's needs from a comprehensive perspective and identify and provide the range of life skills required for them to be successful adults. As well, you must identify health issues that need treatment.
- Consider having youth on the board of service provider agencies to introduce the voice of the youth into planning and program operation.

Challenges

- Youth who are raised in group homes or foster care "age out" of the system at 18 regardless of whether they have a job, money, or the skills needed to be independent. Many end up homeless on the streets.
- Funding is always a challenge.

- Youth can be transient. Bill Wilson will sometimes lose contact with them before they can be housed.
- Street youth often come into housing, fail and then come back again.
- Young mothers who make a mistake can lose their child.

Best Practice # 2 – Provide case management and mentoring

Goals

The goal of the case management service is to provide the capacity to help youth develop a life plan and to connect to the services they need. The monitoring program provides support and the opportunity for youth to learn about healthy relationships with adults by having a positive relationship with a mentor.

Approach

Integral to the support offered to each youth in transitional housing is a case manager and a live-in monitor for each site.

- The **case manager** is a staff person who works a 40-hour week overseeing the youth's life plan and treatment plan, which set out goals for that youth. The case manager also works with the youth's education needs, employment readiness and with parenting skills for young parents.
- The **monitor** serves as a mentor to the youth at each site. In the houses, the monitor occupies one of the rooms, and at the scattered sites, the monitor occupies an apartment in the building. He/she receives free rent in lieu of providing oversight for curfews and apartment regulations, responding to disturbances or emergency needs, leading community meetings and inspecting each apartment once a month to ensure housekeeping standards are met. The monitor also serves as an extra pair of eyes to ensure that the children of parenting families in the program are cared for and properly supervised. Monitors can be graduates of the transitional housing program, former street youth, college students, or retirees.

Rationale for this approach

The case management and mentoring programs were developed because it was recognized that many youth have not had supportive relationships with adults. Many have not acquired the skills necessary to fend for themselves and they leave the foster care system without positive adult role models.

Advantages/disadvantages

Through contact with mentors, youth gain insight into real life and they have an adult that they can approach 24/7. The case managers are able to develop working relationships with youth and in many cases will be the first adult with whom the youth has bonded.

The only disadvantage for case managers is traveling from one scattered site to another to meet with youth.

Outcomes/evidence of success

The statistics listed above in the section on Transitional Housing with Integrated Services also apply to the success of the case management and mentor programs.

Chelsea Youth Foyer, NY, New York

Chelsea Youth Foyer is a housing-based career development program targeting youth who are aging out of foster care, homeless or at risk of homelessness. It utilizes several floors in a 207-unit building called the Christopher that provides permanent supportive housing for low-income or formerly homeless adults. Common Ground Community Services operates the Christopher, while Good Shepard Society operates the Chelsea Youth Foyer within the Christopher. One of the main goals and a best practice for youth housing is Chelsea's aim to connect youth to training, education and employment.

Best practice: Connect youth to training, education and employment

Common Ground, a major non-profit provider of supportive housing, is the facilities manager, but the units

are leased to Good Shepherd Services (GSS), which has experience in youth development. Good Shepard society provides intake, case management, youth development, mentoring, education/training, and employment services to Foyer residents.

Chelsea Youth Foyer has developed a partnership with the Columbia University, School of Social Work, Workplace Center to create a vocational service curriculum tailored to the needs of the young adult population. Columbia developed the program, trained Foyer staff to deliver the vocational service and has been providing ongoing support to staff in the early phase.

There are three components to the vocational program:

Housing type	Transitional housing
Date opened	2004
Target group	Youth 18-24 years old who are aging out of foster care or homeless. Must earn less than 60% of area median income.
Conditions of participation	Residents must participate in 18-24 month personalized program.
Number of units/bedrooms	40 youth in 25 furnished units. 20 studio suites and 5 4-bedroom suites.
Description of housing	The Foyer comprises 5 floors of a larger supportive housing complex for adults. There is a separate entrance and private elevator to the Foyer. Common areas include staff office, common lounge, laundry room, computer room and kitchen.
Lease/tenancy agreement	Residents sign an agreement with Good Shepherd Services. Good Shepherd holds the lease with Common Ground.
Rent subsidized	Yes. Residents pay a monthly program fee that will be returned to them if/when they complete the program.
Maximum length of stay	2 years
Average length of stay	20 months. It has ranged from 3 weeks to 2 years.
Who paid for capital costs	A private donation and United Way contribution covered rehabilitation of Foyer units and 2 years of operating costs.
Who pays operating costs	Services are mainly funded through the federal McKinney-Vento program. Other sources include the city's Administration for Children's Supportive Independent Living Program, the New York City Department of Homeless Services, and Welfare.
Contact person:	Brenda Tully, Program Director Chelsea Youth Foyer Good Shepherd Services Brenda_Tully@GoodShepherds.org 646-485-3941

- Career club, a weekly 90-minute group comprised of youth and staff, offering support, networking and thematic discussions.
- Assessment. Staff help youth identify aptitudes, preferences and obstacles as well as help with career planning and workplace intervention.
- Labour market development. Program staff develop relationships with employers in the neighbourhood and in fields of interest to the youth. They aim to ensure a matching of youth/employer needs.

Goals

The goal of the Chelsea Youth Foyer is to facilitate youth to develop new skills and abilities, and enhance existing ones so that they become more marketable and earn a higher wage when they graduate. Another aim is to broaden youth's understanding of the workplace.

Description

The Foyer, with its own entrance and a private elevator, utilizes area on five floors. While the two programs share a common building there is not a lot of interaction between the Common Ground tenants and Foyer residents.

On the first floor are staff offices and a large lounge. Each of the other floors has a four-bedroom suite with a kitchen and two shared bathrooms plus six single units with kitchenettes and bathrooms. Other common areas include a computer room, rehearsal room, multipurpose room, laundry room and TV room.

The Chelsea Foyer is staffed at all times. A dedicated case manager negotiates an 18-month action plan for each resident, helps the resident achieve the goals, and addresses whatever individual needs the resident has.

There are several conditions of participation. Residents must agree to work at least 20 hours per week, attend educational training, participate in life skills workshops (4/month), meet with their case manager (2/month), follow up with their independent living counsellor, pay a program fee in lieu of rent, have no guests in their apartment and not use drugs or alcohol on the premises. The Foyer employs a harm reduction approach to substance use, and will work with the youth to develop a strategy to cope with substance problems as they occur.

Rationale for this approach

Good Shepard had been supporting youth to make the transition from foster care to independent living for many years, by providing a range of supports and services. Despite this, many 21 years olds were not ready and experienced difficulty when they aged out of foster care at age 21. Good Shepard found that the young people needed an intermediate step to ensure success.

At the same time, providers of adult supportive housing, like Common Ground, found that they were challenged to meet the needs of young adults in their supportive housing facilities. Youth possessed many unique developmental needs that adult agencies were unfamiliar with. One of these was a lack of job experience and in many cases, no role models.

The emphasis on employability derived in part from the fact that New York is a very competitive labour market, with a shortage of jobs. It was felt that youth who were better qualified would get better jobs, with access to all-important health insurance.

The success and model of youth foyers in Europe was another key motivator for adopting this approach, i.e. transitional housing with a focus on helping youth to obtain the skills the need for self-sufficiency.

Advantages/disadvantages

Dedicated housing allows youth to experience the positive (and negative) influence of peers, and promotes learning about social interaction.

Outcomes/evidence of success

Good Shepherd Services is in the process of setting up an outcome monitoring system, and as yet has no measurable results. The Foyer has been operating for less than three years, but there has been one set of graduates. Good Shepherd follows up with graduates on a monthly basis for one year.

The majority of those who have graduated to date have obtained their own apartment in the private market. Some have moved in with family or friends, and a few have managed to find subsidized housing.

In the view of Foyer staff, about 92% of youth are discharge-ready when it is time to leave; only a few are not quite ready.

Young people are positive about the vocational training aspect of the program, and report that it has enhanced their overall functioning in the program, both from an employment and housing perspective.

Conditions needed for success

According to program staff, the conditions needed for success are:

- Having high expectations of young people
- The positive effect of the peer community
- Having dedicated, qualified staff
- Making safety a priority
- A focus on workforce development

Challenges

There have been challenges with ensuring young people contribute their program fees regularly on a monthly basis.

Developing a workable vocational training and support component has taken time and there have been a few bumps in the road.

Lighthouse Youth Services Transitional and Supportive Housing,

Cincinnati, Ohio

Lighthouse Youth Services of Cincinnati, Ohio provides comprehensive services to children and families in crisis. On any day, Lighthouse is providing residential care for more than 250 children, youth and young adults in foster homes, groups homes, boarding homes, residential treatment centres, shared homes, supervised scattered apartments, and other residential programs.

Lighthouse believes that offering a full range of housing allows the organization to care for a variety of youth who have a variety of needs and abilities. For example it allows for youth who need a fair amount of supervision to be supervised and for youth who prefer not to live alone to share. As well, a youth is able to step up from one housing type to another as self-sufficiency increases and if needed, step back to more supervised housing to work on goals to become more independent.

As well as offering the transitional housing programs described below in the box, the Independent Living Program and the Transitional Living Program, Lighthouse offers Shelter Care Plus (also profiled). This is a supportive housing program, federally funded, that provides rental assistance to homeless youth with disabilities such as mental health and addiction, including parenting youth and their children. Shelter Plus Care is another element in the range of housing programs offered by Lighthouse. It allows youth in transitional housing programs subsequently diagnosed with mental health concerns to be moved out of the transitional housing and into permanent housing with supports.

For youth leaving the transitional housing programs, Lighthouse offers a moving truck, furniture, supplies, landlord contact if the youth does not take advantage of the convertible lease, repairs, words of wisdom and some services. Lighthouse has limited funds for a small after care program to assist with such things as paying the rent of a former client who has fallen into arrears or moving or re-supplying furniture. Once a youth reaches 19 or 22, depending on the program, funding to them stops.

Two of the best practices employed by Lighthouse, scattered site housing and a convertible lease, are described below.

Housing type	Transitional housing
Target group	Independent Living Program (ILP) - for youth 16-19 in foster care Transitional Living Program (TLP) – for youth 18-22 who were not foster care Includes pregnant and parenting teens
Date began	ILP began in 1981, TLP about 1990
Number of units	ILP – unlimited but currently about 70 beds TLP – 30 beds
Number of youth housed at one time	See above
Description of	A mix of individual apartments, shared homes, supervised apartments, host

housing	homes, boarding homes and college dorms.
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All scattered-sites are privately owned. Shared homes and supervised apartments are owned and operated by non-profits.
Lease in rental housing	<p>ILP - leases held by Lighthouse TLP - youth signs lease</p> <p>In both cases leases are convertible if desired, if youth is ready and if the landlord agrees.</p>
Maximum length of stay	<p>ILP - Depends on the age of entry. Youth usually stay until they graduate from high school and maybe a few months beyond that. Most youth are gone by 19 years</p> <p>TLP - 18 months</p>
Average length of stay	ILP – 10-11 months.
Substance use policy	Lighthouse has a policy of no drugs and/or alcohol. How strictly this is enforced depends on the individual youth: how old they are, their current behaviour, etc. If it becomes necessary, a youth found with alcohol or drugs may have to leave the program or be transferred to a more supervised situation. If youth become chemically dependent, they can be referred to an alcohol/drug treatment program.
Who paid for capital costs?	<p>ILP – no capital costs</p> <p>TLP – Given a building by the city and received foundation help for renovations. Received a federal grant for some building costs and for staffing and eventually HUD funding.</p>
Who pays operating costs?	<p>A variety of funders, both government (all levels) and private funders, such as donations, United Way, grants from foundations, etc.</p> <p>Rent is paid by Lighthouse for the ILP program. In the TLP, youth pays at least 30% of income in rent.</p>
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighthouse pays the security deposit, rent, utilities and telephone and supplies furniture and household items, Lighthouse provides life skills training, case management planning, referrals to the community services, employment assistance, discharge planning, emotional support and guidance through informal and crisis counselling, support groups and life coaches, and self-sufficiency workshops. Most services offered on site in scattered housing units. Self-sufficiency training is given to youth before they move into housing. The ILP has more funding than the TLP and consequently more services are offered to ILP youth.
Contact person	<p>Mark Kroner Lighthouse Youth Services 1501 Madison Road Cincinnati, OH 45206 Phone: 513-487-7130 Fax: 513.221.3665 E-mail: mkroner@lys.org</p>

Housing type	Supportive Housing
Target group	The Shelter Plus Care Program provides housing and supportive services on a long-term basis for homeless young adults 18-25, including parenting youth, with mental or emotional disabilities or who are in recovery from drug or alcohol addiction. Some have come from the foster care system. If youth from another Lighthouse program develops a mental illness they can be moved to this program and supported.

Date began	1995
Number of units	60-65
Number of youth housed at one time	55-65
Description of housing	All Shelter Plus Care housing is in scattered sites.
Ownership	Market rental housing.
Lease in rental housing	Youth signs lease.
Maximum length of stay	The Lighthouse Shelter Plus Care Program has no time limit for housing and case management services for young adults and families who suffer from mental illness or substance abuse.
Substance use policy	Lighthouse has a policy of no drugs and/or alcohol. How strictly this is enforced depends on the individual youth: how old they are, their current behaviour, etc. If it becomes necessary, a youth found with alcohol or drugs may be terminated, or transferred to a more supervised situation. If the youth has become chemically dependent, she can be referred to a alcohol/drug treatment program.
Who paid for capital costs?	Units are leased from the private sector.
Who pays operating costs?	Federal Shelter Plus Care Program. HUD/McKinny/Private Funds. Youth pays at least 30% of income towards rent.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighthouse pays the security deposit, rent, utilities and telephone and supplies furniture and household items, • Lighthouse provides life skills training, case management planning, referrals to the community services, employment assistance, discharge planning, emotional support and guidance through informal and crisis counselling, support groups and life coaches, and self-sufficiency workshops. • Most services offered on site in scattered housing units. • Self-sufficiency training is given to youth before they move into housing. • Most often youth with mental health concerns have a case worker from a Mental Health agency
Contact person	Mark Kroner Lighthouse Youth Services 1501 Madison Road Cincinnati, OH 45206 Phone: 513-487-7130 Fax: 513.221.3665 E-mail: mkroner@lys.org

Best Practice #1 - Scattered site apartments

Goals

To provide the youth with the ability to experience housing as it will be when they are independent. To give youth support while learning the day-to-day realities of living independently and becoming self-sufficient.

Approach

Lighthouse has an arrangement with 30 to 40 landlords and rental companies to provide scattered site apartments. Once the program had been operating for a period of time, Lighthouse had a group of landlords that they could then use as references with additional landlords. Over time Lighthouse has been able to build a core group of landlords who understand the program and are willing to give new youth a try.

Landlords appreciate the program because the rent comes in on time, there is support for the youth and the landlord or building manager can call for assistance 24/7 if necessary. Lighthouse covers all damage (Lighthouse goes after the client for repayment), handles confrontations, cleans up the messes left by skipping tenants (Lighthouse hires unemployed youth to clean up, usually paid with the program-generated savings of the skipping youth), evicts if necessary, limits the number of visitors and attempts to assure the landlord that no one will be in the apartment if the tenant is not there. By watching the youth and seeing that they follow Lighthouse regulations, (often stricter than the landlord's regulations) landlords or resident managers become extra eyes, especially on tenants who are underage. When Lighthouse signs the lease for a unit for an ILP tenant, they inform the landlord that if the tenant does not work out the landlord, or Lighthouse, can cancel the lease, and the landlord automatically keeps the security deposit.

Lighthouse has a policy of no more than two youth in a housing complex at one time to avoid situations that can occur when youth are housed together as in a group home (e.g. one youth leading another on, confrontations, etc.)

In the ILP, the fact that Lighthouse holds the lease on a unit allows them to fill that unit should it become vacant for any reason. Lighthouse uses a natural consequences approach with its youth, i.e. you break the rules and these are the consequences. Wherever possible, and if not harmful, youth are required to accept the consequences of their actions.

Rationale

When youth live by themselves they must be responsible for all aspects of their lives. Youth on their own learn self-sufficiency much faster than youth living in congregate housing or dedicated buildings.

Advantages

- With scattered site housing, group and crowd control problems are not a primary issue. Most problems reported by supervised youth apartment programs are due to interaction between the youth residents.
- The scattered site model teaches youth what life is like in independent living. Youth, like everyone else learn best by doing, feeling directly the consequences of their actions, within reason. The transition to self-reliant living will be smoother if the living arrangement resembles the future situation of the youth.
- The jump from a program with an abundance of resources and staff to life alone can be unsettling and confusing. The scattered site transitional housing program allows for a transitional period, where the youth is supported but living independently.

- The agency does not have to purchase or maintain property.
- Clients can be accepted immediately if apartments can be located with landlords willing to rent to teens.
- Clients can choose a location that is convenient for them, close to work, school and their social support network.

Disadvantages

- Scattered site housing is labour intensive due to the distance support staff must travel to reach all the youth.
- Youth are not visible to staff unless staff is visiting. However, the experience of Lighthouse is that youth's mistakes happen anywhere and will happen in supervised settings as well.
- Lighthouse must spend time continuously finding apartments for their programs.
- Staff must be vigilant that a landlord, building manager or other tenants are not involving themselves negatively with the youth.
- There is a risk of damage in scattered site situations where supervision is minimal. However, in 25 years Lighthouse has never made an insurance claim from one of its scattered sites, whereas they have made claims for group homes and shared spaces.
- Lighthouse can get burned when youth skip out of a lease.
- If the city has a low vacancy rate, or high cost of rental accommodation, this can affect on the ability of the program to find adequate housing for the youth.

Outcomes/evidence of success

- 75% of youth complete the program, meaning they stay in program for an agreed upon length of time, get work or school experience and leave the program with stable housing in place (not necessarily converting the lease; may move into another stable situation).
- 80% of youth in the programs increase their self-sufficiency goals.
- 1/3 have taken over the apartment lease.
- 65% make progress on their education goals.
- 65% get some work experience, and leave the program with a job.

However, measuring success is individual. For example, there will be some youth who go from a Lighthouse program directly into the adult mental health system. They will not be self-sufficient, but they will be in the best possible circumstance available.

Conditions needed for success

- Youth need basic cognitive abilities, common sense, time to mature, and the ability to learn from mistakes to be successful in a scattered site program.
- Youth must have a desire to be self-sufficient and have had self-sufficiency training prior to entering housing.
- Staff must be stable, but also creative, flexible, tolerant, have a high tolerance for stress, be able to handle chaos well, and be good salespeople.
- Housing must be affordable and there must be a sufficiently high vacancy rate.
- There must be back-up plans for when setbacks occur. Creative problem solving is required.

- Relatively stable funding, as well as extra sources of funding such as fundraising, donations, foundations, free or discounted supplies and mini-grants.
- Public-private collaboration and a private agency that can sign the lease.
- A good working relationship with landlords.
- Good administrative support and an executive director who can convince the Board to allow youth to be placed by themselves.

Challenges

- Non-stop unpredictability from youth, from neighbourhoods, and from referring agencies, and administrative turnover all require time and effort from Lighthouse.
- 10-20 calls per week for on-call staff. Staff work call on a rotating basis.
- Unrealistic expectations for youth from funding agencies.
- Foster and group homes that infantilize youth.
- Per diems paid for youth that do not keep up with costs of living.
- Staff burnout due to increased paperwork.
- The youth themselves, e.g. some youth are developmentally disabled.
- Not enough time to prepare youth to live independently.

Best Practice #2 Convertible lease

Goals

To assure that a youth has workable housing in place at discharge.

Approach

A youth who wishes to leave a housing program at Lighthouse or who reaches the maximum age may convert the lease on the unit he/she occupies if the youth meets several conditions. These include: having proven to use good judgement and understand basic expectations, has a source of income and has met landlord approval. The youth then keeps the unit's furnishings and supplies, the security and telephone deposit, etc. This motivates youth. There are some aftercare services available.

Advantages

- The youth can keep the apartment, the furnishings and the security deposit and leave the system with a fully furnished living arrangement with long-term possibilities.
- The youth does not have to move and readjust to a new apartment building, and possibly bus routes to school or work, grocery stores, etc. This is important for many of the youth in this program.

Outcomes/evidence of success

Over the last 20 years about 30% of youth in the Lighthouse program have taken over leases.

Conditions needed for success

The case managers and mentors must subscribe to the belief that they don't give up on a youth when they stumble.

Challenges

The relationship with a case manager and/or mentor does not work for some youth if they are not ready to trust adults.

Triangle Tribe Apartments, NY, New York

Serving the needs of specific sub-populations of youth is one of the best practices identified in the literature and is the focus of this profile. The Triangle Tribe transitional housing programs for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning (GLBTQ) Youth provided by Green Chimneys Children’s Services, a child welfare organization in New York state, illustrates this best practice. Other best practices employed at this site are life skills training, scattered site apartments, peer-to-peer mentoring and aftercare support.

Best practice: target services to the unique needs of sub-populations

Triangle Tribe Apartments is a Transitional Living Program (TLP) provided by Green Chimneys Children’s Services for youth who are LGBTQ. It was initiated in 2000 as a response to the lack of services for this youth sub-population. The program is an 18-month scattered site transitional housing program in New York City, offering housing and support to homeless youth age 17 to 21 years.

Green Chimneys is a large established child welfare agency in New York State that provides a variety of child and youth services. The New York City branch of Green Chimneys operates a wide range of residential, social service and educational programs that specifically focus on responding to the unique needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth and their families. Green Chimneys was the first mainstream child welfare agency in the country to develop and operate residential, educational, and social

Housing type	Transitional housing
Date started	2000
Target group	Homeless youth (17-21 years old) who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning.
Conditions of participation	Meet with therapist on a weekly basis. Substance use assessment and counselling if necessary. Life skills session on a one to one basis monthly. Meet monthly to explore goals they have set. Work or attend school or both. Save money. Do household chores. Look after their room.
Number of bedrooms	10 youth served. Provided with own furnished bedroom.
Description of housing	Scattered site housing. 3 apartments located in 3 buildings in the Harlem area of New York. These are shared furnished apartments.
Lease/tenancy agreement	Agency holds the lease. Youth pay no rent.
Maximum length of stay	18 months.
Average length of stay	18 months, although some leave sooner.
Who paid for capital costs	N/a
Who pays operating costs	Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Program and New York State.
Contact person:	Miguel Carabello, Program Coordinator, Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Green Chimneys mcarabello@greenchimneys.org 212-491-5911

services programs, which were designed specifically for LGBTQ children, youth, and families.

Among the other residential programs offered for this client group is transitional independent living (TIL) which provides 24-hour supervision and serves LGBTQ youth who are slightly younger. As well, Green Chimneys operates a Basic Center which provides emergency/crisis services for LGBTQ runaway/homeless youth. It focuses on the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter and is available to address the needs of the young people who call and walk in looking for a place to stay, a meal to eat, or a coat to keep warm. Staff also provides counseling and referrals to medical care. A four-bed emergency shelter apartment is a part of the Basic Centre. These emergency beds are used for youth who have no place to stay because they've been kicked out of their homes, run away from abusive homes, been harassed or even beaten up in other shelters, or they have no family available to help them.

Goal

The goal of the Transitional Living Program is to move LGBTQ youth from homelessness to independent living in the community with the support of a dedicated and caring staff.

Description of program

Green Chimneys staff provides many services to the residents of the TLP. Staff members focus on preparing youth in the program for responsible adulthood and self-sufficiency by utilizing the nationally recognized Green Chimneys curriculum, called Life Skills for Living in the Real World. Life skills training is provided in the areas of cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, money management, job seeking and job maintenance skills, etc.

The programs provide counseling and therapy for youth in various areas of their lives. This may include working towards family reunification if this is desired by the youth.

Youth entering the program must set some goals and develop a plan that will see them successfully exit the program in 18 months. Staff tries to impress upon the youth that they do not have the luxury of a lot of time, and must try to stay focused. Staff also works with youth on job seeking and maintenance skills. Staff supervisors mentor and monitor each person's progress toward their goals.

They also monitor the youth twice per day in their apartments. A staff member is on call 24 hours per day to address emergency situations. They may call in outside services as necessary.

The shared housing model promotes a peer led environment where roommates can teach each other various life skills as well as support each other through life's ups and downs. However, the disadvantage is that it can lead to personality conflict, although staff try to minimize this by involving residents in the selection process.

Transition planning is started early, with staff assisting youth to find and save for suitable accommodation when they leave. Often the young people will move to a shared living situation or rent a room, since apartments are very expensive in NYC. Green Chimneys

also provides aftercare services to former tenants in the form of continued appointments with a therapist, financial assistance in obtaining a transit card or a microwave, or whatever is needed. In short staff will try to do whatever is necessary to provide the financial and other support necessary for the youth to make a successful transition.

Rationale for this approach

The program's originator found that LGBTQ youth were not well served in existing homeless shelters and needed a service of their own. LGBTQ youth were ostracized in the community because of their sexual orientation, and they needed a place where they could just be themselves. As such, Green Chimneys became the first mainstream child welfare agency in the country to develop and operate residential, educational and social services programs, which were designed specifically for LGBTQ children, youth and families.

"We saw a population of children in New York City that wasn't being served and was crying out for service," says Joseph A. Whalen, executive director of Green Chimneys. "These were the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth -- regular teenagers, but living on the street."

TILP accepts youth who are male and female, as well as both male and female identified.

Advantages/disadvantages

There has been some debate about the need to mainstream gay and lesbian young people into already existing youth services programs as opposed to developing an array of specialized youth services for LGBTQ youth. Opponents of special services note that LGBTQ young people need to interact within the larger heterosexual context of society and claim that such programming promotes segregation rather than integration and ghettoizes LGBTQ youth. Those who favour programs geared specifically for LGBTQ youth claim that LGBTQ youth will not use generic services because they perceive these services as anti-gay. They also assert that special services can hire openly LGBTQ staff who can empathize with the struggles of LGBTQ youth and act as role models. Proponents of specialized services note that youth services practitioners are often uncomfortable, unskilled, and untrained in working with gay and lesbian youth and, moreover, that most youth services settings are generally unsafe places for a self-identified or even a perceived gay or lesbian young person.

Other advantages of having specialized services for the LGBTQ youth sub-population are that:

- It is important that LGBTQ youth are with other LGBTQ youth, so they know that they are not alone in dealing with some of the difficult issues they have to face.
- It is important for LGBTQ youth to have a place where they can be themselves and not worry about what others think.

- The peer-to-peer approach can best be implemented in an environment with other LGBTQ youth.
- Safe supportive environments are essential for young people who are LGBTQ.

Although LGBTQ youth do not always require special services designed for them, they do require services that are responsive to their needs. LGBTQ and non-gay youth can and should be integrated into existing youth services, but there are circumstances when specific LGBTQ affirming services should be created.

Outcomes/evidence of success

The program sees youth move on to college, employment, and the military or in some cases, return to live with their families.

Conditions needed for success

Staff who are skilled, knowledgeable, caring and committed are the primary factor for success of this program. In addition, some staff have similar life experiences, can empathize with what youth are dealing with and can more effectively support and assist youth on their path.

The program is backed by the considerable breadth and depth of a large well-known child welfare agency, Green Chimneys. Along with this backing comes access to a wide range of services that can be offered to residents.

The peer led environment is important so that kids can assist each other in dealing with difficult issues, as well as day-to-day issues such as housework.

Challenges

- Trying to teach youth to live independently in a relatively short time frame of 18 months.
- Helping youth to stay focused on their goals and plans and to carry them out. They are still very young.

Supporting Our Youth, Toronto, Ontario

Supporting Our Youth (SOY) is a community development project designed to improve the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgendered (LGBTQ) youth in Toronto. Program staff work to create healthy arts, culture and recreational spaces for young people; provide supportive housing and employment opportunities; and increase youth access to adult mentoring and support. SOY incorporates several best practices identified for youth housing, including partnerships with housing providers, mentorship, community integration and incorporating scattered site housing into their program. Only the first two best practices are described below.

Best Practice #1 - Partnerships between service agency and housing providers

SOY enters into agreements with non-profit and co-operative housing providers to secure subsidized housing for their clients. At present, they have access to 15 units with different providers in several buildings. All the units are self-contained bachelor and one-bedroom units. The housing providers agree to make a certain number of units available to SOY. In return, SOY agrees to ensure that their clients have access to whatever support is necessary to make their housing tenure a success.

SOY is proactive in seeking units from housing providers. This can be challenging because many community groups in Toronto are competing for a limited number of units for their clients. However, one of the partner agencies, St. Clare's Multifaith Housing, approached SOY because they are committed to housing youth. St. Clares is planning to develop more housing and to continue to designate some units for SOY clients. It should be noted that SOY's housing partners generally have partnership agreements with a number of service agencies to serve a variety of population groups. For example, the Hugh Garner Housing Co-operative, one of SOY's housing partners has also entered into agreements with Romero House, an agency that serves refugee claimants and new immigrants, and Anduhyaun Inc., an agency that works with Aboriginal people.

Goals

The goal of SOY's housing initiative is to gain access to safe and affordable housing for marginalized youth, particularly the LGBTQ youth population. The initiative supports one of SOY's main objectives - to promote youth positively in communities and support the building of inclusive communities.

Key services

Youth who are housed through partnership agreements are required to participate in the SOY Mentoring Program (described below) for at least the first 6 months of their tenancy or to participate in other programs provided by SOY.

In most of the non-profit and co-operative housing units, SOY has found that they have a great deal of contact with their youth clients when they first move into their unit. They help youth find furniture, dishes, and other necessary items. However, after the youth have settled in, they don't seem to need much ongoing support. The youth and their

mentors generally see each other once a week and SOY is in touch with them once a month. The youth can call SOY any time if they have concerns about their housing. It is also understood that the housing agency will call SOY for assistance if problems arise.

In general, SOY is available to provide support until youth turn 29. However, in the St. Clares Multifaith Housing units, SOY will support the youth as long as they remain tenants in the designated SOY units. These youth are required to participate in programs provided by SOY and generally have higher needs than the youth who are housed with other providers. St. Clares Multifaith Housing also has personnel on site to liaise with the service agencies, provide programming for the common areas and employment counselling, and ensure that tenants receive appropriate supports.

SOY offers a variety of programs, services and events for youth – in house or through referral – including counselling and help with employment.

Housing type	Supportive housing (minimal support)
Date started	2001
Target group	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transgendered youth from 16 to 29 years old.
Number of units	Access to 15 units in several different buildings
Description of housing	The units are integrated within housing operated by non-profit and co-op housing providers. All units are self-contained bachelor and one-bedroom units. The buildings serve a mix of tenants. Some tenants in the building pay rents geared to incomes while others pay affordable market rates.
Building ownership	The units are in buildings owned by non-profit and co-operative housing organizations
Rent	All the units for SOY clients are subsidized through various housing programs
Lease/tenancy agreement	The youth enter into a tenancy agreement with the landlord/housing provider
Maximum length of stay	There is no maximum length of stay
Average length of stay	In general, the youth have been very stable in their housing. There is very little turnover in the one-bedroom units. In the bachelor units provided by St. Clares Multifaith Housing (in operation for 2 years), youth have remained 8 months and longer.
Who paid for capital costs	Depends on the housing provider
Who pays operating costs	Depends on the housing provider
Contact person	Leslie Chudnovsky, Program Coordinator Program Mentoring Supporting Our Youth Tel: 416-324-5082 Email: soymentoring@sherbourne.on.ca

Rationale for this approach

Youth face many barriers in trying to secure affordable housing. This initiative was seen as a proactive way to help youth access decent, affordable housing and achieve housing stability.

Advantages/disadvantages

This approach works well for the youth who are able to access the units. However, the demand is much greater than the supply of available units.

Outcomes/evidence of success

SOY believes the partnership arrangement is successful because they are able to access units for their clients. In addition, youth with a history of unstable housing, who have been in and out of shelters, are able to become stable tenants. Once they are housed, the youth are able to move beyond “survival mode” and to focus full time on their education and employment.

Information was not obtained from SOY’s housing partners about their satisfaction with the arrangements. However, St. Clares Multifaith Housing appears to be satisfied as they are willing to designate additional units for SOY clients in future buildings that they develop.

Conditions needed for success

- Good quality units. SOY has found that if youth have a nice place to live, they want to stay, and do everything they can to protect their tenancy.
- Rent should be paid directly to the landlord, particularly for clients on social assistance. SOY has found this helps youth manage their money and protects their tenancy.
- Service agencies and housing providers need to work together to ensure a smooth move-in process.
- It is important for housing providers to develop a culture in their buildings that actively supports diverse and inclusive communities. Housing providers need to make it clear that this is the intent of the building. This can be done through posters, events, and interaction with all their tenants.

Challenges

- Some youth need more support than others, and some find it difficult to live alone. Youth may feel lonely, or find that the reality of living alone is different from what they imagined. SOY works to help these youth through their programs. In addition, they may try to find a two-bedroom unit so that friends could live together.
- The main challenge is the need for more housing. SOY receives numerous calls from youth seeking safe, secure and affordable housing. It is difficult to secure units from housing providers because of the large number of community agencies trying to do this.

Best Practice #2 - Mentorship

SOY's mentoring program is about connecting LGBTQ youth to safe, out, adult mentors from the community. The program involves matching youth with a safe, screened adult in a one to one relationship. Matches are based on the needs of the youth, shared

interests and values. Mentors support some SOY clients who are housed through agreements with housing providers (see above), as well as other interested clients.

Mentors are LGBTQ (or gay-positive and trans-positive) adults, 26 years of age or older who help youth explore their questions about identity, sexuality and community. They provide support, encouragement and a non-judgmental listening ear to discuss issues going on in the youth's life, including family, school, friends and relationships. Mentors come from diverse backgrounds and have a variety of life experiences. All mentors undergo a thorough orientation and screening process before they are accepted into the program. They are required to abide by program policies that clearly outline their role and responsibilities. Ongoing support and training are provided.

Mentors and youth are expected to spend time together on a regular basis (about once a week). Activities might include meeting for coffee, going to a movie, exploring the city, sharing a meal, and celebrating birthdays and holidays.

Goals

The goals of SOY's mentoring program are to:

- Help youth feel positively about themselves and their futures;
- Provide support; and
- Provide an opportunity for youth to learn about healthy relationships by having a positive relationship with a mentor.

For many of the youth involved with SOY, a mentor is the only positive adult relationship in their lives.

Rationale for this approach

The mentoring program was developed because it was recognized that many of the youth did not have a supportive relationship with adults. Some did not have family support and others were new to Canada.

In addition, there was a lack of connection between the adults and youth in the LGBTQ community. A need was identified for a program that would provide an opportunity for youth and adults to connect with each other, make the community more youth friendly, and bridge the gap between the generations.

Advantages/disadvantages

The mentoring program is providing a positive way for adults and youth to work together, and provides a sense of belonging.

Outcomes/evidence of success

The mentoring program is becoming well known in the community and is receiving increasing numbers of referrals. The program has gained a reputation as a safe and supportive place for youth – particularly youth who feel isolated.

Conditions needed for success

- It is important to make it as easy as possible for youth to become involved in programs and to provide many “doors”. A drop-in program Monday nights is an example of a low threshold program. It provides an opportunity for street involved and homeless youth to get together with adult mentors, socialize, relax, and share a home cooked meal. There are movie nights, arts and recreational activities and special workshops and events.
- Youth need to be comfortable with the mentor. They need to have a lot of say about what is important in a mentor and control in the process of getting a mentor.
- Youth and mentors need ongoing support from SOY.

Challenges

The main challenge is finding a pool of mentors as diverse as the youth.

Glossary

Cold wet weather beds

Operated and funded on a seasonal basis during the winter months, generally from October/November to March/April. May include beds and mats on the floor. Support services are provided on a much more limited basis than in year-round shelters.

Convertible or sliding lease

In this model, the terms of tenancy are converted from temporary or transitional to “permanent” after a certain period of time thus removing the requirement for the resident to “move on” after successful transition. Units are originally leased to an agency, which in turn rents to an individual. When the individual is ready or has successfully completed a program, the lease is transferred from the agency to the individual so that they can remain in the unit and assume responsibility for the tenancy.

Dedicated units

Units are provided in one building dedicated to a specific target population.

Extreme cold wet weather beds

Provides extra shelter spaces for homeless people during periods of extreme winter weather (as defined by each community). Heavily dependent on volunteers with very few support services provided. They are a crisis response not intended as a substitute for year-round and Cold/Wet Weather shelters or for long-term affordable housing. Some Lower Mainland municipalities have Extreme Weather Response Plans.

Harm reduction

An approach aimed at reducing the risks and harmful effects associated with substance use and addictive behaviours, for the person, the community and society as a whole, without requiring abstinence.

Low barrier shelter

A shelter that addresses an individual’s basic needs (e.g. for food and shelter) regardless of issues that may present barriers to service in most other shelters (e.g. substance use).

Scattered site apartments

Units are leased from private or non-profit housing providers in buildings that serve a mix of tenants, throughout a city or neighbourhood. May include clustered housing units, for example, several units rented in a building located on one floor.

Supportive housing

Supportive housing refers to permanent or stable housing offering support services to help residents maintain their housing and address ongoing physical, mental health or other issues. Housing is linked with voluntary and flexible support services designed to meet residents' needs. The level of support may vary. There is no limit on the length of stay, although for youth, programs with a length of stay exceeding 2 years are considered supportive housing.

Transitional housing

Transitional housing refers to housing with support, which is available for a fixed time period, from 30 days to 2 years, while the resident addresses issues affecting their ability to maintain permanent housing. The expectation is that the resident will move on to other housing upon stabilizing their situation or convert the lease to their name for permanent housing. Support services are generally provided to help move people toward independence. For youth, housing is considered transitional if they must move after a certain time limit or when they reach adulthood.

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APPENDICES

A - Youth interview summary

B - Agency interview summary

C - Examples of youth housing initiatives

Appendix A

Youth interview summary

During October and November 2006, a group of 7 youth sought input from more than 40 other young people about housing issues in Vancouver. The youth conducted one-on-one interviews with 41 young people in Vancouver, held a focus group with another 5, and also provided their own input on some questions. In conducting the interviews and focus group, the youth followed an interview guide. The interview guide for the focus group was modified, and did not ask for personal information.

The youth interviewers participated in a 3-hour training session and a 1-hour debriefing session. In addition, some of the youth interviewers contributed their own personal stories about their housing situations and gaps in services.

The following agencies were involved in the interview process. Some helped recruit the youth interviewers, others helped facilitate the interviews, and some did both.

Urban Native Youth Association Broadway Youth Resource Centre Directions Youth Centre South Vancouver Youth Centre - operated by Connexus Family and Children Services Covenant House Crystal Clear Immigrant Services Society of BC BC Youth in Care GAB Youth Services Dunbar Community Centre

Who we heard from

The interviewers heard from a variety of young people living in different circumstances in many parts of Vancouver. Those who were interviewed ranged in age from 15 to 24. Twenty-one were male, 19 were female, and one young person reported as “other”. Twelve of the young people identified themselves as Aboriginal. In addition, one person said she was part Aboriginal and another said she sometimes considers herself Aboriginal.

Among the young people who said where they were from, the largest group said they were from Vancouver (15) or other parts of the lower mainland (5). Four were from other parts of BC, 13 were from other parts of Canada, and another 4 were from other countries.

When asked what made them decide to move to Vancouver, the most frequent answer was that they had come to Vancouver with their parents. Some other reasons included getting a job, the weather, school, friends, resources, nowhere else to go, and “it is easier to be gay in Vancouver”.

Current living/housing situation

The young people who were interviewed said they were living in the following situations.

Current living/housing situation	Number of young people
In a place where they pay rent	20
Don't have own place	10
At home with parent/relative	8
Foster home/group home	3
Total	41

In a place where pay rent

Of the 20 young people who were living in a place where they pay rent, 6 had a room in a hotel, 6 lived in a basement suite, 4 were in transitional housing, 3 lived in a non-profit/co-op apartment, and one was sharing the top floor of a house. Several people were sharing a place with roommates. Others were living with one or more children, a spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend, family member or alone.

Eight young people said they were satisfied with their current housing and two were very satisfied. Three were not satisfied, three were very unsatisfied and four were neutral.

When asked what they liked or didn't like about their place, some of the positive comments included: cost, privacy, the location, cleanliness, amount of space, safety, and the fridge. Others simply appreciated having a place - a "roof over my head". Some youth appreciated the support services available, the community, and 24 hour staff. One young person appreciated the opportunity to earn some money for chores.

Some of the negative comments included: problems with neighbours, (e.g. loud, "people getting high or hammered" and fighting), problems with roommates, living in an old building with old appliances, not good for children, too expensive, lack of privacy, too small, location (area not safe, far from where they need to go, or "in the middle of nowhere"), bed bugs, noise, rules, guest fees, "the landlord is a jerk", and only two windows.

One person living in a hotel who was very unsatisfied complained that the rent is \$350 for a "small cockroach-filled room," the bathrooms are dirty, he has to walk up 6 sets of stairs, and the room wasn't cleaned before rented. This young person said he has been staying outside because it costs an extra \$20/night for his girlfriend to stay with him in his room and his pet is not allowed inside. He uses the room as a place to store his stuff.

Don't have a place

Of the 10 young people who said they didn't have a place to live, 4 were living outside, 3 were couch surfing, 2 were in a shelter, and 1 was living in a hostel. The person in the hostel said he was paying \$40/night (\$1200/month), but couldn't find an apartment – or landlord who would rent to him and his pregnant girlfriend. [They told the interviewer

that one landlord had told them they had the place but changed his mind at the last minute. They were finding the situation very stressful and noted that looking for a place was a full-time job. When asked about their thoughts now about trying to find a place to live, the person interviewed said it was “a f....ing nightmare”.]

At home and not paying rent, foster/group home

Eight young people said they were living at home, and three were in a foster/group home. Most of these young people were not asked about their housing satisfaction. However, one young person in a group home indicated that she was very unhappy there. “There’s no privacy and they don’t understand me.”

Emergency shelters/safe houses

The interviewers explained that “emergency shelters and safe houses are places that young people can stay for a short period of time, generally from 7 days to 30 days.”

Is there a need for more emergency shelters?

When asked if they thought there is a need for more emergency shelters and safe houses for young people in Vancouver, the focus group participants and almost all the 41 young people who were interviewed (39) said yes.

Some of the reasons given were that there are not enough beds, there are a lot of homeless people in Vancouver, and the shelters are always full. As one person said, “Cuz its hard to get into one.” Among those who said no, it was suggested that funding be increased for existing shelters.

Why do young people tend not to stay in shelters?

Specific barriers. When asked why they thought young people tended not to stay in shelters, the answer given most often by those interviewed (mentioned by 17 youth) was related to specific barriers. Five young people said that youth can’t get into shelters because there **isn’t enough room**, while one said youth don’t go because they expect the shelters to be full. Other specific barriers identified included:

- A lack of identification
- Having a child or afraid of being sent home. As one person said, “You can’t go if you have kids unless you are over 19. Even then, sometimes they call the Ministry of Children and Family Development or if you’re under 19 they call your parents and they have to say its OK for you to stay.”
- Having a girl/boyfriend
- Having a pet

- Not knowing about shelters
- It's a "hassle" and "easier to stay outside."

Rules. The "rules" was mentioned by 17 youth. Some young people noted that the rules are too strict or can be hard to follow. One person said it "feels like prison" where they have no choice. The curfew was also noted as a negative factor.

Don't like them. Sixteen young people mentioned specific things about shelters that they don't like. These included the general atmosphere, the food, and that young people don't feel comfortable there. Some commented on the lack of privacy, overcrowding, noise, lack of cleanliness, bed bugs, and the smell. One person commented on the location, and said, "not everyone wants to go downtown." Two young people said that shelters need more supportive workers to talk to about what's going on and how they are feeling, and complained that shelters "don't meet youth where they are at." One youth expressed concern that shelters are subject to homophobia-isms.

Safety. Not feeling safe was mentioned by 10 youth. One of them said "sometimes you feel safer on the streets with your family "street friends." It was noted that some young people have had a previous bad experience in a shelter and some were afraid they would lose personal belongings.

Drug issues. Drug related issues was mentioned by 8 of the young people who were interviewed. While some of them expressed concern about drug use at the shelters and people hanging around outside selling drugs, others said that the requirement to be sober is one reason why young people tend not to stay in shelters.

Personal feelings. Six young people stated that some young people may not stay in shelters because of their pride, they may feel embarrassed, it makes them feel dependent, and concern about stigma associated with being in a shelter.

What is an ideal shelter?

The young people were asked to describe their ideal of an emergency shelter/safe house that would meet the needs of young people in Vancouver – and were asked to be realistic.

Staffing and support. This was mentioned most often by the young people who were interviewed (mentioned by 16 youth). They said an ideal shelter would have 24 hour staffing, seven days a week - someone you could trust and talk to. Ideally, staff would understand where the youth come from and what they need. They would be friendly, able to relate to their lifestyle, really care and "treat you human". As one young person said, in an ideal shelter, "you would feel more cared for." It was suggested that an ideal shelter would have peer support counselors, and that shelter workers would have the necessary skills to assist youth and advocate for them. Some young people thought shelters should be able to help youth connect to job and education opportunities, teach lifeskills and relationship skills, provide free condoms, birth control, child care, relationship skills, help with clothes, and provide access to medical services and fitness

facilities e.g. gym/pool. It was also noted that an ideal shelter would help youth figure out what they need rather than being so job oriented.

Safety. Six young people who were interviewed said that an ideal shelter would be safe.

Rules and expectations. Five young people said an ideal shelter would not have so many rules. One person identified a need for new rules that make sense for today's times. Another young person said, there would be "No pressures or expectation. Where you can have a good sleep and a good meal and feel safe. And pets allowed." The young people wanted more freedom and more choice about what to watch on TV. One young person identified a need for a shelter that would promote independence. For example, the youth would be given keys to an individual suite and staff would be available as needed.

Privacy/less intrusion. Respect for privacy and being able to stay somewhere "without questions" or conditions was also noted. As one person said, "No need for goals or religion." Other comments were:

- "Lots of beds where they don't care where you're from or don't ask a whole lot of personal questions about you and your parents and what your life is like and all that s--t. Just somewhere that is OK to be and you can get in."
- "They trust you and they don't jump to call people if you don't want them to...."

Clean and comfortable. According to the young people who were interviewed, an ideal shelter would also be clean, in a good location, have comfortable beds, let people sleep longer and stay longer, and provide good food. The comments reflected different points of view about shelters. For example, one young person's ideal would be "anywhere that's not in a dorm setting", whereas another youth suggested that a dormitory style shelter would be ideal. Another young person said, "Its nice when it's a house where you're in a bed rather than the floor". But another said the ideal shelter would have a "matt, blanket, pillow, toiletries, a meal and breakfast".

Specific population groups. Some of the comments reflect the need for shelters to accommodate a range of young people, including couples, pregnant women, underage parents with kids, young people with pets, and young people who have been abused. A need was also identified for youth shelters to serve older youth (18-29 years old) and more younger youth (but in separate shelters).

Some young people identified a need for a shelter that would follow a harm reduction approach for youth who use substances, "where you can't use drugs but if you are already high, its OK". However, the ideal shelter for other youth is a place "without so many drug addicts". Some young people identified a need to separate youth who have been on the street for a while from other young people "who haven't been on the streets before or they just can't go home for a while."

Should there be separate shelters for specific sub-groups of youth?

The young people who were interviewed were asked if, in general, they think it is better to have separate emergency shelters/safe houses for specific sub-groups of youth or shelters for all young people.

Seventeen young people said that there should be separate emergency shelters/safe houses for specific sub groups. They identified a need for separate shelters for older and younger youth, those who use drugs and those who don't. They also noted that gender division is important. As one person said, "13 year old girls and 18 year old boys should not have to stay under the same roof".

Nine young people thought that shelters should be able to serve all young people. As one young person said, "We are all the same. We all come from the same background." Another said, "It is important to live in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environment". Some concerns about having separate shelters were that there is not enough money to keep so many houses running, and that shelters for specific sub groups would divide youth even more and might make it more difficult for young people to access shelters.

Nine young people thought there should be both separate shelters as well as shelters that can accommodate all youth, "so people can choose what makes them most comfortable and safe." Another youth suggested that if youth "don't want to be labelled they can go to a shelter for all, but if they want specific services, there would be a shelter for them."

Another young person said, it "Doesn't matter as long as people have somewhere to go."

When the young people who were interviewed and focus group participants were asked about specific sub groups, they had the following responses.⁶⁶

Sub group	Need separate shelter	Accommodate in existing shelters	Need both separate shelters and ability to accommodate in existing shelters	Don't know/answer unclear	Total
Young people with children	38	3	0	1	42
Young people who use alcohol and/or drugs	32	7	1	2	42
Young people who want an alcohol and drug free shelter	30	6	1	5	42
Young couples	27	13	0	2	42
Young people with pets	25	13	0	4	42
Males and females	23	15	4	0	42
Aboriginal young people	22	18	0	2	42
For gay/queer/bi/trans young people	20	17	4	1	42

a. For young people with **children**

Among those who supported having separate shelters for young people with children, the main reasons were to avoid separating young parents and their kids and to provide a safe place for the children. One young parent said: "I have a little boy but I had to put

⁶⁶ For the purpose of the table, focus group members are treated as a group.

him in a placement when I ran away 'cause there was no where to go and now I'm stuck in a group home and still can't get him back."

And another young parent said, "'cause as soon as I have my baby I can't go home and I have nowhere to go and I don't want to lose her or have a social worker and I'm too young to live at Sheway." It was also noted that "lots of parents kick their young kids out when they find out they're pregnant. Where are they supposed to go..."

In addition to serving mothers with young children, two people who were interviewed noted that a place is also needed for young fathers with children.

One of the young people who did not support a separate shelter said that it was a priority to serve young mothers with children, but not in a separate shelter.

b. For **low barrier shelters** (i.e. youth may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs)

The main reason why the young people interviewed supported a low barrier shelter was so youth who are using alcohol and/or drugs "can be watched over and be safe". There was general consensus that "Whether or not they are under the influence, everyone needs a safe place to sleep." Another young person noted that if there are both low barrier shelters and alcohol and drug free shelters, it would be possible to separate young people who use drugs from those who don't.

One of the reasons given for not supporting a low barrier shelter was that the priority should be "for people that want to make changes".

c. For shelters that are **alcohol and drug free**

The main reasons given for supporting an alcohol and drug free shelter were to provide "a place without triggers", so that youth do not "get peer pressured into drugs/alcohol", "because drugs, booze and straight never mix well," and because such a shelter would make it "easier to clean yourself up". One young person suggested that there be "a sobering centre like one in Victoria that allows pets where you can sleep and recuperate for 48 hours."

However, two young people felt that all shelters should be dry, and one pointed out that the existing shelters are supposed to be dry "Cause I couldn't get in".

Among those who did not support a separate alcohol and drug free shelter, one of the reasons was that it is "not practical." Concerns were expressed that "even if the shelter doesn't want alcohol or drugs, people will bring it in," and that "you can't shelter people from the real world." Another young person said that rather than a shelter, "after detox, youth should be able to go to dry transitional housing."

d. For young people who are **couples?**

Among those who supported a separate shelter for couples, the main reason was that "so many stay on the street to be together." As one young person said, "There's a massive need for a place because if they can't do it together, they won't do it at all."

One young person cautioned that such a shelter should have “a structure and principles appropriate for couples/families.”

Some of the young people who did not support a separate shelter for couples indicated that couples should be welcome in other places, and should be given separate rooms.

e. For young people with **pets**?

Several young people talked about the importance of pets and how the young people will not be separated from them. Some of their comments were:

- “Where my pet goes I will go”
- “Street youth and their pets are unseparatable”
- “Pets are our children.”

As one young person observed, some youth stay homeless because they have pets and can't bring their pets to the shelters.

Among the young people who did not support a separate shelter, they thought pets should be welcome in all shelters - that shelters should have a kennel or access to a kennel. Although one person said, “I don't think they should have pets if they can't even take care of themselves.”

f. For **males and females**?

The young people who supported a separate shelter for males and females thought this is especially needed “if one has been abused by the other gender”. They noted that a young person might be afraid to go to a shelter if the other gender is welcome. Others identified a need “to be safe from harassment”. One young person said, “Yes for girls. It's really weird to be in a hallway with a bunch of boys and you don't really feel safe 'cause staff don't really see what happens.” And another said, “I hate staying with a bunch of boys. It's always like that – 1 girl and 7 boys”.

Some youth thought there should be both co-ed and gender specific shelters. While participants in the focus group suggested that males and females could be accommodated on separate floors.

g. For **Aboriginal** young people?

While about half the young people interviewed supported a separate shelter for Aboriginal young people, 10 of the 12 young people who identified as Aboriginal thought there should be separate shelters for Aboriginal young people. The main reason was that native people feel safer and more comfortable with other native people. As one young person said, “We are discriminated against the most in the entire world. We feel safer with our own people.” Another Aboriginal person pointed out that Aboriginal youth in shelters get picked on because of their race.

Among the youth who did not support a separate shelter, the main concern was about “ghettoizing” Aboriginal young people. It was suggested that “existing shelters need to develop cultural awareness and an effective way to meet the needs of all cultural sensitivities.”

h. For **gay/queer/bi/trans young people**?

It should be noted that unlike the Aboriginal young people who participated in this study, gay/queer/bi/trans young people were not asked to self-identify. Therefore, we do not know what proportion of them believe there is a need for a separate shelter. The young people who supported a separate shelter for gay/queer/bi/trans young people thought this was necessary so they could meet others in the same position who could understand what they have been going through. Others thought this was necessary “for safety and trust issues”. It was also noted that “Homophobia is a major problem in shelters and safe houses” and a separate shelter “would help people feel comfortable and stop bashing”. However, one person who supported this option raised the concern about what if a separate shelter doesn’t get used.

The young people who did not support a separate shelter expressed concerns about “ghettoizing” this population and did not want to see them segregated. They also expressed concern that dividing youth in this way would further serve to encourage homophobia. One young person suggested that a better alternative would be to help these youth “get their own place”.

Some of the young people interviewed thought there should be separate shelters for gay/queer/bi/trans young people but that they should also be able to be accommodated within existing shelters. They noted that a separate shelter is necessary for this group because they are “more easily victimized”. However, they shouldn’t be restricted or excluded from other places.

i. Any **other** groups?

The young people who were interviewed identified several other groups of youth who need special consideration to accommodate their needs. These include:

- New immigrants/refugee youth
- Young people who are HIV+ - although it was noted that strong guidelines would be needed to prevent the shelter from being labelled
- People with serious mental health issues
- “Real” street youth
- Older youth – just over the age category but not mature enough to be with adults (19-24 year olds)
- Abused kids
- Young people with disabilities who may need specifically trained staff

Affordable Housing

The interviewers explained that “affordable housing is cheaper permanent housing for young people who can live independently. There is no time limit on how long you can stay. This kind of housing would be available in mixed buildings.”

When asked if they thought there is a need for more permanent affordable housing for young people in Vancouver, all young people who participated in this study said yes.

The young people noted that it is so hard for youth in Vancouver to find housing and “so many people are homeless”. One young person observed that “youth need a solid foundation to work and live in”. And one pleaded to “give us a chance”. Another young person noted that a lot of kids who don’t have their own place are no different from other kids who do – it’s just that they can’t find anything they can afford. The young people identified a need for more housing of every kind where kids can go for help - and “something affordable where you don’t have to room with 6 other people you don’t know.”

The young people provided some insights as to why they need affordable housing:

- “More youth are getting kicked out of the house at an early stage due to fighting with parents. Not getting along or their parents can’t financially take care of them anymore.”
- “Because young people don’t usually get high paying jobs”
- “Government doesn’t give you enough money for rent”

A few young people commented on how affordable housing could help them:

- “So badly I want to move out but I can’t find anything”
- “Then I could get out of this f---ing shelter”
- “I wish I could get into a place like that”

Supportive housing

The interviewers explained that “supportive housing is cheaper permanent housing that is linked to some kind of support services (either there are staff on site to provide support or residents are linked to an organization that provides them with support). There is no time limit on how long you can stay.”

The interviewers also explained that sometimes an entire building is supported housing, other times people are put up in buildings where there is a mix of tenants.

Is there a need for more supportive housing?

When asked if they thought there is a need for more supportive housing for young people in Vancouver, focus group participants and most of the 41 young people who were interviewed said yes (38).

The young people supported this option because of the need for more housing and because some young people need support so they can learn how to live independently. One young person thought supportive housing was a good idea especially for young people who are on their own for the first time, as they “need help to get started”. And another said, “because people who do not have anyone to help them need to stay somewhere where they could support them.” It was noted that “a lot of kids just need a little more help in lifeskills than other kids” and that “sometimes youth just need someone to talk to and advocate for them.” However, another pointed out that some youth may require longer term or more intensive support: “a lot of street youth have issues or are

hard to house". One young person said, "You need to be patient with youth that are 'hard to house'. They need to have a solid place they can't get evicted from."

Two young people commented on how supportive housing could help them:

- "If there was more places like those I wouldn't be bouncing around Vancouver couch to couch".
- "I would want to live in a place like that. Where they would teach me things 'cause I don't really know how to live on my own and I'm going to have a new baby I'm going to have to take care of and I'm so scared I won't know how to do anything and I won't have any support."

One young person suggested that supportive housing "should operate on a model where the youth is an adult and capable of making their own decisions, although I would suggest the intake process requires demonstrating a desire to improve oneself and address any personal issues."

And another recommended that "supportive housing units should not be identifiable".

One young person liked the idea of supportive housing that would... "help them form a better life knowing they don't have a limit on how long they can be there." However, another expressed concern that if there is no time limit, this might "make them lazy to find jobs and their own place to live".

Should supportive housing be provided in dedicated or mixed buildings?

The young people were asked if they would prefer supportive housing in a dedicated building or supported housing in mixed buildings.

Seventeen of the young people who were interviewed expressed a preference for dedicated buildings "because everyone in the building is on the same page that you are. So there's more support." They thought it would be easier for residents to succeed, to make friends, and to "have a community". Concern was expressed that "If mixed, might be judgment from one side to another." It was suggested that buildings could be dedicated to serve specific sub populations, such as pregnant youth and young moms, young people in recovery and HIV+ youth.

Nine of the young people expressed a preference for mixed buildings, "To allow influence for independence from other people that are self-supporting and established/stable" and because it "allows you to meet people of different ages and different support people."

Eight young people and focus group participants thought that both dedicated and mixed buildings had their advantages and identified a need for both options.

Transitional housing

The interviewers explained that "transitional housing is housing where youth can remain for a limited period of time, usually up to 2 or 3 years. After that, they have to move.

Support services are usually available onsite to help with things like employment skills, life skills, hook-ups to other community services, counselling and mediation etc.”

Is there a need for more transitional housing?

When asked if they thought there is a need for more transitional housing for young people in Vancouver, focus group participants and most of the 41 young people who were interviewed said yes (36).

They noted that it is hard to get into existing transitional housing because of long waiting lists. The young people supported the idea of transitional housing where they could “get their act together” and that would “help them find a job and settle whatever problems they have.” One young person explained that two years is enough time for people to move on.

While some young people really appreciated the kind of support offered in existing transitional housing, some identified a need for a place with fewer rules and “conditions” and where younger youth of 16 can go.

One young person who did not support transitional housing said, “Transitional housing wouldn’t be necessary if there was more affordable housing. No one needs their life dictated by the agenda of a government or other organization.”

Other types of housing for young people

The young people were asked if they had any other ideas or suggestions about the kinds of housing young people need or want. There was support for the full range of options presented, including shelters, transitional, supportive and affordable. Important criteria were that the housing be affordable, clean, decent, and have “enough room to walk around”.

Other suggestions included:

- More housing specifically for youth e.g. BC Housing for young people – and shorter waiting lists (e.g. 3 months)
- Youth co-ops – including co-ops or subsidized housing where youth can work
- Communal rent-to-own houses “where you sub-divide a house you can eventually own part of”
- “Low income housing where you get to pay a mortgage so you can some day OWN your own place”
- Assistance with rent – “Over 50% of my income goes to rent, and this is sharing with 3 other people”
- Housing that offers both support and independence (e.g. self-contained suite)
- Bachelor apartments for young people
- More than “just a room to crash. It should be connected to community”
- “A place that feels like home”
- “A building where there is a club and a place to chill, where you could be helped to find jobs and be free”

- “It would be cool to have like an apartment with like 3 couples who ran it and they were kinda like parents and you could talk to them and they could like help you with things you didn’t know like cooking or grocery shopping and rent would be cheap”
- “Family oriented. Clean houses. Fenced yards. Bathtubs”
- An apartment building for youth mixed with affordable, supportive and transitional units
- Places for people with pets
- Safe havens
- A tent program – where tents are provided to people who are homeless.

Housing gaps for youth sub-groups

The young people also identified a need for supportive/permanent affordable housing for particular sub groups as follows:

- Pregnant young women and young parents with kids
- Young people with mental illness
- Young people with HIV or other terminal or life-threatening illness – minimal support when the youth requests it
- Young people that need stability to continue working/school as long as they can

The need for housing for young people who are HIV+ or who have other health concerns and yet are able to work, was highlighted by one member of the interview team who stated,

“As a member of the interview team for this research project, the subject is an issue that is close to home for me. Last year, I was diagnosed HIV+ and have found that there are little to no resources for young people that have been diagnosed with a terminal condition but are still able to choose to continue to work and therefore not eligible for Persons With Disabilities Assistance (Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance).

I have personally experienced very significant barriers to maintaining my employment, and as a result, have been forced to neglect my health because I am not able to balance employment with self-care in the other areas of my life, such as sustaining the cleanliness of my home, fitness and the planning and preparation of healthy nutrition, and emotional welfare.

In my opinion, one of the largest gaps in services is affordable or supportive housing for young people with significant health concerns (not related to addictions or mental health) that are able to maintain employment and independence but need some level of additional support.”

One young woman who is pregnant described her plight and need for housing as follows: “I’m living with my mom and her stupid boyfriend. But I have to leave in 4 weeks when I have my baby because he doesn’t want me there and she listens to him. Because I’ll be an embarrassment to them, and I’m supposed to be an adult mother, but really I’m just a kid.”

Housing priorities

The young people who participated in this research were asked, “Of all the kinds of housing we talked about, what do you think are the top 2 priorities for young people?”

They responded as follows:

- Affordable 35 - includes housing specifically for youth (5), housing for Aboriginal people (1) and new moms (1)
- Supportive 17
- Transitional 16
- Shelter 17

Barriers to getting housing and services needed

Barriers to getting housing

The young people who were interviewed were asked about some of the reasons why young people can't get safe housing.

Landlords won't rent to them. The answer given most often by the young people (mentioned by more than half the youth) was that landlords won't rent to young people because the landlords don't trust them. According to the young people, the landlords assume they won't pay the rent, and that they will “party, and do drugs”. The young people also feel that landlords stereotype them and are prejudiced against young people. Sometimes they are judged by how old they look and their clothing. In particular, the young people reported that “No one wants to rent to a child having a child,” and landlords won't rent to:

- People with pets
- People on welfare, and
- People who don't have a steady income.

Race was also noted as an issue. As one person said, “most landlords take a look at a native youth (like me) and say sorry and close the door.” It was also noted that landlords can be choosy about who they rent to, and would rather rent to older people with more money.

One young person who has been couch surfing over a year had this to say when asked about his experience looking for housing, “I tried to find a place just yesterday. I made at least a dozen phone calls. I'm not sure if they judge me by my voice or my age. Nine out of ten times they were just rude or made up a lie and out of ten calls I only got one appointment which was too far for me to go and I didn't have bus fare...”

Rents are too high. The second biggest barrier reported by the young people was that rents are too expensive for them (mentioned by 21 youth who were interviewed). They pointed out that their jobs don't pay enough, they don't have a job, or welfare rates are

too low to find housing they can afford (mentioned by 10 youth). Some young people have roommates to be able to afford the rent, but noted, "It's hard to find trustable and dependable roommates that pay their own rent and can get along with." Another person said, "I have no problem making money, it's just most one bedrooms range from \$700 to \$1000 and they usually allow only one tenant."

Lack of affordable, decent housing. Low vacancy rates and the lack of affordable/social housing was mentioned by 13 of the young people, who said they "can't find anything". Or else, as one young person said, "what is available is in some scabby alley – at least the ones I can afford."

Lack of knowledge/skills. Not knowing where or how to look for housing was also noted by young people. One young person said she "has known people who want to leave their current situation but don't know where to go." In addition, some young people lack reading and writing skills and may feel intimidated by signing a lease on their own. They don't want to look stupid in front of the landlord.

Other barriers. Other barriers mentioned by the young people included:

- Not having references
- Substance use issues
- Mental health issues
- The attitudes of youth themselves e.g. "belligerent and obnoxious behaviour" or forgetting appointments
- Lack of ID
- Lack of transportation
- Municipal zoning bylaws that are "ghettoizing neighbourhoods"

The following story from one of the interviewees explains some of the challenges for a young person trying to get her own place. "Well my story is that I ran away from home when I was 16 years old and was fortunate enough to have people let me stay with them for a period of time and that helped out a lot. I am 21 years old now and I am still homeless. I haven't been able to work since Dec/05 because I got into a car accident and I am still healing from my injuries. I am looking for work and trying to get back into school. I have been trying to find a place for a while now and its very hard because I look young (13-15 years old) and because I never rented before so it makes it really hard. I am on income assistance for a short time and my cousin has let me stay there till I get a place and we tried to get help from welfare but they can't do anything about it. I am hoping to get a job and get back to school and hopefully get a place to call home."

Services needed to get housing

Services and support. When asked about the kinds of services needed to help young people get housing, by far the answer given most often (mentioned by 30 of the young people interviewed) was "more people to help people find housing". The young people called for more housing workers who could check out apartments with them and provide an "on spot reference", someone who could come with them to meet a landlord and help them with the business of signing a lease. It was also noted that workers need to be available after regular business hours. Some youth identified a need for more information about available housing options (e.g. housing lists), more places like BYRC,

and an office specifically devoted to helping youth find housing – “like they have for job searching”.

More affordable housing available for youth. The young people also identified a need for more housing for youth. Ideas included a quota for BC Housing – so that a certain number of units would be set aside specifically for youth, a school/housing program so that youth would have a place to stay “as long as you are attending school”, and more supportive housing.

Housing subsidies. The young people identified a need for a housing subsidy/allowance payable to young people so they could afford to pay market rents. And also emergency assistance to help young people “with rent when they run out of cash.”

Jobs. It was also noted that young people need jobs that pay enough so they can afford market rents, as well as programs to help young people get jobs.

Incentives to landlords to rent to youth. It was suggested that landlords be given incentives to rent to youth and that investigators be hired to find out what kind of people landlords turn away from their units.

Will young people give up looking for housing?

Some of the young people described their experiences looking for housing as “terrible, absolutely f---ing horrible. Discrimination.”

Some are very discouraged. As one young person said, “Too many people give you hope and then dash your hopes i.e. landlords.” Another said, “My hopes were so high, as was my attitude but now I have doubts, serious doubts that I will ever find a place of my own.” One young person said he had mixed feelings about trying to find a place. He noted, “the harder you try, the more barriers show up. Some things aren’t worth it.”

However, it seems clear that the young people really do want to live inside. One person who has been living outside a few months pointed out that he has had some experience paying bills and “can do it”. Another said, “I desperately need a place before its too cold. I’m trying to keep healthy and can’t afford to risk my health that much.” And another young person who has been staying in shelters for more than 6 months said, “it would be nice to have my own place and no rules.”

Among those who have a place, and who talked about what helped them get their current place, the most frequent answer was their social worker. Others received some help from friends and family an outreach worker, advocate, or simply got lucky.

Barriers to keeping housing and services needed

Barriers to keeping housing

The young people who were interviewed were asked what they think is the number one problem for young people trying to keep their housing.

Challenges with rules and rent. The answers given most often were that young people tend not to listen to rules (17) (e.g. partying, drugs, being too loud and disruptive) and have trouble paying rent on time. As many as 15 young people said that money challenges make it hard to pay rent on time. Some of these challenges include not having skills to manage their money, utilities not being included in the rent, job uncertainty, low wages - the fact that \$8 or \$6/hour doesn't go very far, and the timing of pay cheques. As stated by one young person, "expenses overwhelm someone just becoming independent."

Problems with landlords. As many as 8 young people blamed landlords as the reason why they are unable to keep their housing. A few noted that landlords "try and take advantage of them and just blame everything on them." or that landlords "try and make them pay more" and "tend not to give back the damage deposit." Other young people said that landlords do not understand them or have enough experience dealing with youth, and show "bigotry towards their lifestyle and clothing."

Lack of living skills. A lack of living skills was noted by 7 young people. As stated by one young person, "not knowing how to live on their own, how to spend money, how to grocery shop, and how to get a job". One young person put it this way, "... And I never really had parents, well I did but they didn't teach me anything like how to communicate or save money or pay bills and if you can't do that s--t then you don't have a lot of luck." Another said, they get "scared and lonely realizing they have to grow up and realize what they have to face." A few young people said they didn't know their rights and how to enforce them.

Services needed to keep their housing

Support. When asked about the kinds of services needed to help young people keep their housing, by far the answer given most often (mentioned by 28 young people) was support. This included workers to provide help with issues such as budgeting, life skills, relationship skills, personal skills, anger management, depression, and cooking. Other suggestions included:

- More one-to-one workers in drop in centres
- Employment support
- Monthly workshops to discuss what's going on with their living situations.
- Visits e.g. social worker to help them understand their house rules and follow up on them at least 3 times/year.
- Peer mentors: "they kick ass. They help out a lot."
- People to talk to who will understand and help you.
- A start-up kit for when they move on their own to help them become independent

Income support. The young people identified a need for help with incomes so they have enough to pay rent e.g. jobs, monthly allowances, grants for kids in care, emergency rent support and underage welfare.

Drug and alcohol support. This included counselling and detox, and a “fall back plan if youth slips into drug use.” It was also suggested that if a youth goes to detox, housing should be available for them afterwards.

Subsidized/affordable housing. This includes government housing and using empty and abandoned buildings to build units to take people off the street who are homeless. The young people noted that units should rent for \$300/month and include all costs, such as utilities.

Other suggestions. Other suggestions included

- Better access to information on tenant rights
- Opportunities for social/community activities
- Free/cheap laundry
- Respite for moms with kids “so we don’t have to pay for sitters”

APPENDIX B

Agency interview summary

During the months of October and November 2006, the consultants interviewed nineteen agencies about gaps in housing services to at-risk youth, and how to close these gaps. The interviewees were:

Aunt Leah's Bantleman Court Housing Society Blade Runners Broadway Youth Resources Centre Covenant House Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society Early Psychosis Intervention Program Family Services of Greater Vancouver Gordon House Youth Search Program Justice For Girls	Marc's Place Motivation Power and Achievement Soc. Pace Peer to Peer PLEA Community Services Society Sheway South Vancouver Youth Centre Urban Native Youth Association Watari
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The following is a summary of responses to the interview questions.

1. What **issues** does your agency face in delivering services to youth?

A number of the responses spoke of the lack of affordable housing in Vancouver and that this deficit can lead to inappropriate housing for youth, either inadequate or unsuitable housing, such as having to share accommodation when this is not in the best interest of the youth. Other issues included:

- Not many housing providers specifically serving youth
- Youth specific shelter and transitional housing is very limited
- The lack of a coordinated effort to facilitate youth finding accommodation
- Inadequate and inconsistent funding of programs
- Inability to obtain Income Assistance (IA)
- Inadequate provincial funding for youth to rent accommodation
- That the issues youth face, e.g. abuse, homelessness, addictions, anxiety, prevents them from engaging at the levels required to get the full benefit from what an agency can offer.
- Discrimination against youth by landlords
- Not enough services to be able to place youth at the time they are ready
- Youth are presenting with more complex issues
- Funders are not building time into program contracts for staff to conduct housing searches, yet stable housing is a necessity if youth are to overcome their challenges
- Length of time that program funding allows for the youth to remain in housing is not always adequate to fully address their challenges
- Under 19 youth have difficulty finding a place of their own. This can result in unsafe relationships to satisfy the need for accommodation

2. Do some sub-populations present particular challenges?

Most agencies had clients that included youth with mental illness and/or addictions, sexual minority/transgendered youth, and youth involved with the sex trade. Several had clients who were young single mothers. Several stated that challenges that are visible to a landlord make those youth difficult to place into housing. Many stated that landlords don't want to rent to youth, period. Two mentioned racial discrimination in accessing housing, especially for First Nations youth. However, some agencies stressed that their programs have demonstrated that with proper support youth with challenges can be stably housed.

3. How does your agency address these challenges?

- Try to accommodate everyone on a case by case basis
- Try to stabilize youth sufficiently to have them accept treatment or support to overcome their challenges
- Try to ensure that supports are available, especially one-to-one support
- Developed partnership programs such as The Hard Targeting Project that brings together a number of youth service providers to exchange information and create group strategies to assist the hardest to house youth
- Work to create special relationships with specific landlords who recognize that, with supports, youth with challenges can be successfully housed
- Offer support for youth in filling out a rental application, approaching a landlord, using acceptable body language and dressing effectively, understanding the roles and responsibilities of both the renter and the landlord, and money management
- Educate staff to provide appropriate and non-discriminatory service for the various sub-populations
- Use a tough love approach. Youth work one-to-one with a social worker or mental health team and are given an initial 3-month contract. If the contract does not work, it is not extended
- Have a variety of staff, mental health worker, outreach worker, cultural worker, mediation, sports and recreation program, etc. and many partnerships with community groups

4. What **barriers** do you think affect the ability of youth to access affordable and appropriate housing?

- High housing costs coupled with low incomes and low shelter allowances (Tough market and getting tougher)
- Lack of affordable housing stock
- Minimal transition and shelter spaces specific to youth, and especially minimum barrier accommodation
- Landlords who don't want to rent to youth, plus discrimination and racism
- Difficulty in getting IA
- Youth should not have to move out of accommodation merely because they have turned 19.
- Lack of decent references
- Bureaucratic requirements, such as cannot be in school and on welfare at the same time

- Youth need to have their basic needs met, e.g. food, help with addictions, housing, before they can absorb life skills that will allow them to live independently
- Mental wellness of youth: having to deal with challenges such as abuse at home, discrimination, little work experience, lack of high school completion

Housing related services

5. What are the *gaps* in services to help youth ACCESS housing?

Many responses stated the need for a centralized housing information centre, such as a youth oriented website to provide housing information. Another frequent response was for more housing workers and increased funding to these workers to allow them to go out with the youth to apply for housing.

Other responses included:

- Housing services need to be able to provide some financial support to youth to help them get started
- Former foster parents might be willing to rent a suite or bed sitting room to a youth; if so, a registry could list these opportunities
- Offer some support and training (and/or some form of subsidy) to landlords who are willing to rent to youth
- Supply youth with IDs so that they can apply for IA
- More downtown service centres, especially in the downtown eastside
- More publicity about the Youth SIL program
- Youth cannot stay in shelters long enough to find accommodation
- No emergency funding for youth who are not in care i.e. no underage IA and no bus passes for them to search for housing

6. What are the *gaps* in services to help youth KEEP their housing?

Most responses were that the lifestyle of at risk youth is not conducive to maintaining housing. Most cited the need for more accessible life skills programs and the need for continued support to youth to stay clean and maintain employment.

Other responses included :

- Need a consistent reliable support worker for one-to-one support for longer periods of time
- Need a broader range of housing services, including harm reduction housing
- Income for the youth is too low
- The IA system does not allow for error, and youth make mistakes
- Those with substance abuse need to build their physical capacity to take on employment
- Youth have to understand the rules and responsibilities of a landlord
- Need tiered transitional housing services with a final expectation of independence
- Need a SIL-type program for young mothers at risk for homelessness
- Training for families offering the Family Care model of housing and for landlords
- Unsuitable accommodation can easily lead to the youth being back on the street.

7. What are **gaps** in services targeted specifically to youth who are homeless?

“The options that we’ve created for these youth creates homelessness. Youth do not want the kind of homes the system establishes.”

Need:

- Shelters and safe houses, especially those offering a harm reduction approach. (Several interviewees suggested that the shelters be sparsely furnished, possibly dormitory style, with a large food budget, because food is good way to gain a youth’s trust. The shelter should not be staffed with “nurturers” but should be geared to stabilizing the youth and then to getting them out into transitional housing as quickly as possible.)
- Safe houses for young women, i.e. separating them from young men
- 24-hour drop-in centres offering a harm reduction approach. “Don’t criminalize or marginalize youth if you want to give assistance.”
- A guarantor for each youth under 19, and a contract of understanding between youth and a case manager, and case manager and landlord
- Outreach services
- Mental health services (currently an 8-year waiting list for mental health housing)
- Support services for all and for specific groups such as young mothers
- A centralized registry for intake for emergency housing
- Better and easier access IA or a disability pension
- Detox beds
- Pet services
- More realistic expectations of at risk youth from the Ministry of Children and Family Development. For example, it is very difficult for a youth to attend school if he/she is homeless.

8. What other **gaps** in services that affect housing for youth?

Need:

- Education of landlords
- A more graduated system that takes a youth from foster care or Youth Agreements to being on their own. Extend the Youth Agreements to age 20.
- Follow-up once the youth is placed in housing
- Transitional housing for youth coming out of detox
- Employment programs that work for homeless youth
- Sufficient income
- A better consensus among various programs for what constitutes a “youth”

9. Are any **areas of overlap and/or duplication** in services to help youth with housing issues?

A unanimous No.

Housing

10. What is the **range of housing and shelter options** that should be available in Vancouver to address the housing needs of homeless and at risk youth (e.g. shelter, transitional, supported, permanent)?

Almost all responses recommended a complete continuum, giving youth the time, tools and supports necessary to achieve their needs. Responses covered single night shelters to permanent housing, and included both long and short-term supportive housing. (One continuum looked like this: Shelter – supported group living – semi-independent living – independent subsidized housing – independence.) Shelters should be for youth only or youth friendly and be minimum barrier. All forms of housing need supports attached and pets should be considered.

Respondents also pointed out that other communities in the Lower Mainland and in the province must provide supported facilities so that youth are not forced to come to Vancouver for services and Vancouver is not forced to provide the services.

11. What do you think are the current **gaps in housing**, and for what sub-populations of youth?

Responses noted that there are minimal housing resources available for youth as compared with those available for adults. Sub-populations specifically mentioned were those with addictions, mental health issues, concurrent disorders, FASD, young women, pregnant women, young mothers, youth under 19 who have been abused at home, and youth of all ages who have come out of shelters, treatment facilities, and hospitals. Transitional housing was often cited as a particular gap. Among other things, a good term in transitional housing could provide a youth with the reference he/she needs to rent more permanent housing.

Other gaps included:

- Cold/wet weather capacity
- Difficulty accessing housing for youth who don't fall into special categories (e.g. not on IA, not Aboriginal, older than 19)
- Permanent housing for youth with disabilities (mental health, etc.) available when they age-out (otherwise they will be back on the streets)

12. What do you think is necessary **to address the needs of these groups**?

Several responses cited the need for sufficient addiction treatment facilities that allow for youth to be placed in treatment when they are ready and not be put on a waiting list.

Other means of addressing needs included:

- Minimum barrier housing options. This includes being realistic about the challenges homeless youth face and that they may not be able to meet all the demands of a program or facility. (An example of harm reduction transitional youth housing operating in Holland provides small apartments, with minimalist interiors, small kitchens and bathrooms, security rules, 24/7 staffing and

- standards for tolerable and intolerable behaviour, deliberately spread throughout a city to enable youth to learn to live independently in the community)
- The co-op model, where tenants have responsibilities to their housing, a good way for youth to learn life skills. Could be either a youth-based co-op or youth units in a mixed co-op, with support services attached
 - Realistic projects with exit plans into real jobs with opportunity for upward advancement and relevant education
 - More adult SIL subsidies for graduating youth
 - Education for subpopulations in accepting one another
 - A range of staff in shelters with various skills, e.g. detox staff, doctors

Emergency shelters and safe houses

13. What do you think are the current **gaps in emergency shelters/safe houses** for youth in Vancouver and for what sub-populations of youth?

Most interviewees stated that there were not enough youth shelter or safe house beds, and that the ones that did exist were not minimum barrier enough. Many interviewees cited the need for a minimum barrier, harm reduction shelter. Also cited was the need to place these shelters in “safe” neighbourhoods, i.e. out of the downtown eastside. Some stated that the lack of appropriate emergency beds was worse for those under 19. Other specific gaps were:

- A medical detox for those under 19
- Beds for transgendered individuals, who can be turned down at gender-specific shelters
- The need for training for front line shelter workers in youth shelters and safe houses to ensure staff are familiar with youth sub-populations and their challenges
- A range of emergency shelters, some offering only a stay for one night. (One respondent pointed out that a shelter might give a bed to a youth who then stays out after curfew, leaving the bed vacant, while at the same time there are youth who want beds but cannot find them.)

14. One of the issues we are considering is whether it is better to have **separate emergency shelters/safe houses for specific sub groups** or to have an **integrated approach where shelters/safe houses have the resources to accommodate the wide range of needs of the youth population and sub-populations.**

Some responses pointed out that there were advantages and disadvantages to separation or integration. For example, if sub-populations that are served separately may be easier to serve, and that youth with similar issues can help one another. As well, an integrated approach is more like the world the youth will inhabit, and youth have to learn to live harmoniously with others.

Specific sub-populations	Responses
Males and females	<p>Evenly divided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eight believed that separate facilities worked best ▪ Five thought that co-ed facilities would be fine, while an additional three felt that the success of a co-ed facility depended on the number and skill levels of staff and the shelter's physical arrangement <p>One interviewee noted that it was easier to integrate genders in safe houses which are typically small, than in larger shelters, but that if the safe house had a treatment component, it would be better to have separate housing.</p>
Sexual minority/ Transgendered youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two interviewees thought that a separate facility might make some youth more comfortable ▪ Several thought segregating this population is not in their best interest, that they need to learn to integrate into the world and that a multi-faceted environment can be a place for positive learning ▪ Several mentioned that staff at any youth facility must be sensitive to this population and that there must be zero tolerance for violence or discrimination against any youth ▪ One stated that youth she spoke to thought there should be a separate shelter
An alcohol and drug free facility and/or A minimum barrier harm reduction facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Almost unanimous in the need for both integrated and separate facilities. ▪ Other comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adults have more of an issue with this than youth. The abstinent youth should be housed not sheltered. ○ Whether separate facilities or not depends on length of time abstinent. If abstinence is more than 2 years, the youth could mix with those who are using. Abstinent for less than 2 years would cause problems for the youth in a harm reduction facility.
For youth with pets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several mentioned the importance of pets to street youth, that pets are both protection and companionship. "Recognizing the reality instead of punishing them for having pets is a simpler, more compassionate solution that will yield results." ▪ Several felt that accommodation should be found for pets in the shelter system, but that the youth must be made aware that the pet is their responsibility. For example, if the pet is at Directions for more than 12 hours staff will call the SPCA.) ▪ Might need to have funding for vet treatment for the pet ▪ Might find people who would serve as foster care for pets for youth in shelters or treatment
Other groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young mothers and their babies, for when they leave hospital ▪ Other youth coming out of the structured institutional setting of a hospital ▪ Refugee youth ▪ Youth who do self-harm ▪ FASD youth

15. Do you have **any other ideas** or suggestions about housing and/or shelter options for youth?

- There needs to a continuum of care, of supports, as well as a continuum of housing.
- More subsidized apartment buildings with units for youth similar to Glynn Manor. Or subsidized units for youth in a market rental building.

- Units in market housing rented by the service provider who is then responsible for any damage, and who provides tenants for the unit. (This is a form of a Head Lease)
- Accommodation such the SOS Children's Village house in Vancouver, where a live-in couple serve as coaches to young mothers, 19-24 years. Could be used for those under 19
- Foster parents who take on the young mother as well as her baby.
- A Secure Care Act like in Alberta, to enable someone to step in and assist youth using or in the sex trade who cannot leave by themselves.
- 24-hour resource centres that youth can connect with, spread out around the city.
- Some entity, properly funded, that service providers can consult for access to housing for their youth clients.

16. What do you think are the **top 2 priorities** for action around youth housing and/or shelter issues?

Top priority cited: **Supported housing**, with some responses specifying a client sub-population including women under 19 and especially young mothers, youth with the most difficult behaviours and youth with mental health issues, addictions or both

Second highest priority: **Emergency shelter** for youth, including a low barrier shelter

Third highest priority: **Transitional housing**

Other priorities:

- Increased flexibility around IA for youth
- More group home facilities for youth under 19
- More support for youth in housing and follow-up
- Better coordination for accessing housing
- Addictions treatment followed by transitional housing
- Training for shelter staff

Information sharing/partnership

17. What are some of the existing mechanisms for information sharing around housing issues among youth serving agencies and between youth serving agencies and other sectors?

Several responses noted that they had no formal meetings or protocols with other agencies, but did engage in informal networking and information sharing. Other mechanisms included:

- Carnegie Centre resource guide
- RedBook Online and other Internet sites
- Meetings at the Broadway Registry
- Meetings between specialized workers or agencies such as the youth workers for those on Youth Agreements, Youth Transition Teams, HUB managers, etc.
- Newsletters and other information-sharing by specific organizations

18. Do you think there is a need for more information sharing among youth serving agencies and between youth serving agencies and other sectors? If yes, how this could be achieved?

Responses were consistently positive. However, several noted that the history of agency competition for contracts does not foster the potential for sharing. Several identified the need for a central clearing house for information such as a youth-oriented website funded for continued updating or a specific telephone number. This would allow for information to be accessed city-wide (e.g. at libraries) rather than at a single location, although one respondent pointed out that libraries are not always welcoming places for a homeless youth and that getting a library card is impossible with no fixed address. One respondent felt that services at the Broadway Housing Registry were under-resourced, so that the registry was not able to fully serve youth in their struggles to find housing.

Other suggestions were:

- More information sharing between youth serving agencies and the business sector
- Better protocols for passing along care plans when a youth goes from one organization to another

19. Do you think there are some potential opportunities for agencies to share resources or initiate partnerships to address gaps in services and improve the integration/coordination of services to help youth with housing issues?

Absolutely. Respondents felt that they must share resources and work together and reported that in some cases this is already being done. One noted that there should be continued and further cooperation between social workers and the police to reach youth early before they become street-entrenched.

20. Do you have any other suggestions about ways to improve coordination and the delivery of housing and housing related services for youth?

- Greater support from BC Housing and MCFD, more units, higher staff pay.
- Creating space and time for front line workers to get to know and trust one another and to help overcome isolation.
- Establish youth committees to guide MCFD in their decisions.
- Ongoing youth forums.

APPENDIX C

Examples of youth housing initiatives

**Selected for complete best practice profile

Name	Location	Sponsor	Type/Description	Start	# Units	Best Practice i.e. what best practices are incorporated
Continuum/range of housing options						
Centrepoint Services	London, England		<p>A range of services including emergency shelter and transitional housing.</p> <p>Shelters: Centrepoint Safe Stop (can stay up to 9 nights), Centrepoint Berwick Street (can stay up to 28 days, Centrepoint Greek Street – for young people who have slept rough.)</p> <p>Transitional housing: Several options to serve a range of sub groups, including young women, 16 and 17 year olds, young ex-offenders, pregnant women and single mothers, young people with complex needs. Centrepoint Sutton provides 6 self-contained flats with education and employment support. Centrepoint Flats and Bedsits – provides a secure base for young people to try out independent living, taking up employment and education opportunities. Also offer foyer initiatives with shared and self-contained flats within hostel buildings with on-site education, training and employment advice services, and IT training suites.</p>			A number of different options to meet specialized needs
Choices for Youth	St. John's, NL		Provides youth with a range of supportive housing options, access to a variety of services promoting healthy personal development and a sense of belonging. A shelter for young men, a supportive housing program for youth (male/female) and a youth services centre are among the services offered.			A range of housing and support options

**Larkin St	San Francisco CA	Larkin St Youth Services	<p>Emergency shelter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lark-Inn. A 40 bed facility with a computer lab and kennel for pets. Launched in 2000 for youth 18-24. • Diamond Youth Shelter for kids 12-17. <p>Transitional housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castro Youth Housing Initiative. Housing and services include case management, life skills, referrals for Mental Health and Substance Use, and access to educational support and employment training. Many youth identify as LGBTQ. • LEASE. Youth are placed in studio apartments and receive support e.g. counselling, employment training, referrals, case management....for 18-21 year olds. • The LOFT. For kids between the ages of 15 and 17 [16?]. A 9-bed transitional living facility. • Avenues to Independence. For youth 18-24. Comprehensive services and stable housing. <p>Supportive housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellis Street Apartments. For youth 18-24. 24 studio units, 6 of which are for youth diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Case management is on site. Other services nearby. "Normal city apartment life". 	1984		<p>A comprehensive continuum, integrated services</p> <p>ID as best practice</p>
McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association	Calgary, Alberta		<p>The youth homelessness programs include Wellington Place: provides residential placements and support with education and employment to homeless youth between 16 and 21; and Hope Homes Program and Hope Homes Program for Aboriginal Youth: provide room and board situations and one-to-one support to homeless youth in the process of completing high school. Programs for homeless youth include a short-term shelter and long-term programs—two years and longer—such as a group home and a host families program.</p> <p>SIL program – provides housing and support to youth between the ages of 18 and 20 who are involved with Children’s Services and require assistance to develop skills to live independently. Youth may share accommodation with a skilled adult mentor or live in their own apartments in the community.</p>	1975 ?		<p>A number of different services to meet specialized needs</p>

**Pape Adolescent Resource Centre (PARC)	Toronto, Ontario		<p>Serves youth in care and former youth in care between the ages of 15-24 years. Support is offered for employment, education, housing, identity, sexuality, emotional/mental health, substance abuse and lifeskills. PARC works to establish independence by linking youth to the broader community. Housing programs include Single Housing Opportunity Program (SHOP): 4 houses for 20 youth in cooperative living; partnerships with several non-profit agencies to accept youth in their units; and working with CAS in developing a plan to build housing for youth in care and former youth in care.</p> <p>Also offer One Stop Housing Program to provide housing resources to young people to help them find safe, decent housing. Resources include housing lists, landlord databases, moving, info re furniture, how to get started, and helpful hints about housing in general.</p>			<p>Integrated services and housing options</p> <p>Community integration</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
Phoenix House and Supervised Apartment Program	Halifax, NS	Phoenix Youth Services	<p>Offers a range of services including a youth centre; learning and employment centre for homeless and at risk youth ages 16-24; Phoenix House, a 10 bed residential facility; a 20 bed emergency shelter, Supervised Apartment Program, where 3 homes are rented to 3 youth and a live-in support person. A follow-up program also offers ongoing continuity of support and crisis intervention.</p>	1992 for the SAP		<p>A range of programs (but limited housing options)</p> <p>Aftercare support</p>
Urban Peak	Denver Colorado		<p>Offers outreach, shelters, transitional housing and some supportive housing for youth with disabilities.</p>			<p>A range of housing and support services.</p>
Youth Care	Seattle, Washington		<p>A range of housing and services for adolescents (12-17) and youth (18-21).</p> <p>Adolescent Living: Includes a shelter (14 to 30 days) for 12 youth, short-term housing (3-6 months) for 7 youth, and long-term housing (up to 2 years).</p> <p>Transitional Living: Includes 3 community houses and 8 apartments for homeless youth between the ages of 18-24.</p>			<p>A range of housing and services for adolescents</p>
Youthlink	Toronto		<p>Range of residences in various locations throughout the City. Community-based settings with programs offering varying degrees of support. Support programs emphasize individual goal setting, peer counselling, groups, life-skills leading towards independence, while encouraging contact with community,</p>			<p>Integrated services.</p> <p>Peer counselling, assessment,</p>

			<p>family and support systems. Each referral is evaluated for suitability to ensure that the placement is successful.</p> <p>YOUTHLINK Residence (females 14-18). Group home for 12 young women who attend school, have a job or participate in a community program. Staffed 24 hours a day by professional youth workers.</p> <p>Co-op Housing (males 16-24 & females 16-21). Provides supportive housing for young men & women in f-t school and/or work programs and who are ready to be away from home or a high support residential facility. Live-in mentor supports them in gaining life skills, a Program Coordinator who works with them to address their individual goals and a Counsellor is available if needed. One co-op operates without a mentor, using a "senior resident model".</p>			<p>Live in mentor/senior resident model,</p> <p>Sub-populations</p>
Emergency shelter						
**Eva's Satellite	Toronto, Ontario	Eva's Initiatives	<p>Low barrier shelter. No maximum length of stay. Harm reduction approach. Youth expected to abide by clear house rules.</p> <p>Accessible Philosophy of acceptance Range of low-threshold services Work to engage youth in services</p>	1997	30 beds	Meet basic needs first
Kiwanis Emergency Shelter	Victoria, BC		<p>10-bed co-ed shelter for youth aged 13-18 with family referral. Provides short-term shelter for youth in crisis. Staff provides some counselling, information, and referrals to services, meals and hygiene facilities.</p>			<p>Parent-teen mediation and family intervention</p> <p>Best Practice (Olive Branch report)</p>
**Richter Street Youth Centre – youth shelter	Kelowna, BC	Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs	<p>A low-barrier shelter for youth 13-19. The goals are to help youth transition to a more suitable living arrangement as quickly as possible and to provide integrated and coordinated service delivery through on-site support programs and services from the community.</p> <p>Work to connect youth to services.</p>	Oct 2005	8 beds	<p>Small</p> <p>Meet basic needs first</p>

Transitional housing						
**Bill Wilson Center	Santa Clara, CA		<p>Scattered sites (7 locations) for homeless youth and young parent families, 18-22. Stay is up to 18 months Is delivering the Connected by 25 Program a strategy for public- and private-sector investments to help youth in foster care become connected by age 25. Seems to be a national program that is enriched in California with additional foundation funding.</p> <p>Programs provide young people leaving foster care with a variety of supports and services, including help in completing their education, job training and assistance in finding a job, instruction in basic skills (e.g., money management, hygiene, housekeeping, and nutrition), and supervised practice living arrangements, such as renting an apartment on their own or with others while continuing to receive assistance from a child welfare worker.</p>	1995	40 adults, 22 kids	<p>Support for parenting young people.</p> <p>Case manager and a House monitor at each site</p> <p>Life skills</p> <p>Scattered site</p> <p>Integrated services and housing.</p>
Bridge Over Troubled Waters	Boston, Mass.		A wide range of services for runaway, homeless and other seriously at-risk youth. Also have a residential component for homeless youth and single parents – Transitional Living Programs include: Transitional Living Program, Single Parent House, and Cooperative Apartments.	1970		A range of housing and services for adolescents
**Chelsea Residences, a Foyer	New York City	Common Ground Community / Good Shepherd Services	<p>A 207 unit supportive housing development with a 40 unit Foyer for youth. 18-24 in a renovated building of affordable units. Program is listed as “a residential career development program for young people at risk of homelessness.” Plan was to continue to serve youth who have graduated.</p> <p>Each suite has 4 BRs , two baths, and a kitchenette</p>	2004	40 youth in 10 dedicated suites.	<p>Integration of housing with employment and training</p> <p>Clustered housing</p>
Crossroads Duplex	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton City Centre Church Corp. (ECCCC)	Offers transitional housing to homeless women and transgendered persons aged 18 to 30, who are involved in prostitution or at risk of sexual exploitation. Work in partnership with outreach workers. Each resident has a single room and shares kitchen, bathroom and common space.		15 people in 2 bungalows	Sensitivity to diverse needs and lifestyles
Eva's Phoenix	Toronto, Ontario	Eva's Initiatives	Transitional housing with training, education & employment. Dedicated building.	2000	50 youth in shared townh	<p>Integrated training and employment</p> <p>Evaluation</p>

					uses	2004 Best Practices in Affordable Housing Award from CMHC 2005 Promising Approach, National Secretariat on Homelessness
Foyers	England	Many	Transitional	1990s		Integration with employment and training
**Gateway Apartments	Cincinnati	Lighthouse Youth Services Network	<p>Semi-supervised scattered site housing. Youth can maintain their same unit upon discharge, taking over the lease. Served over 1000 youth, or over 80 youth a day. For youth 16 to 19 and 18-25</p> <p>Also housing continuum consisting of scattered site apartments, supervised apts, shared homes (4-5 youth), host homes and boarding homes. Having a number of options allows the agency to find a suitable arrangement.</p> <p>Program guarantees payment of rent to landlords, has strict rules, staff on call 24 hrs/day for supervision and assistance, covers damage to rental units and cleans apt upon termination of lease. Used as a model in the state</p>	1981		<p>Scattered site</p> <p>Convertible lease</p>
**Green Chimneys	New York, New York	Green Chimneys Children's Services	<p>Transitional Living Apartment Program: For 10 runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth ages 17-21. Teach youth how to live in the community as self-sufficient adults. 3 scattered apartments for 10 youth.</p> <p>Transitional Independent Living program: 24 hour supervision for LGBTQ youth, 16-21 years old.</p> <p>(Also operates 9 supportive housing apartments for the same population – serving 20 male youth, a residential foster care home for 25 youth and an Agency Operated Boarding Home for younger youth, 12-16, who require a higher level of care.</p>		3 units for 10 youth	<p>Special needs of LGBTQ youth ages 17-21</p> <p>Scattered apartments</p>
Native Child and Family Centre of	Toronto, Ontario	Native Child and	A full service off reserve child welfare initiative controlled and managed by the Native community. Offers a range of programs	2001		The service model is culture based.

Toronto**		Family Centre of Toronto (NCFC)	<p>for children and adults, including a youth drop-in centre, summer camp, youth outreach and support, preschool program, a culture-based healing program, and education. They also provide transitional housing for 12 male Aboriginal youth between the ages of 16 and 24.</p> <p>Transitional housing is in a large home. There are single and double rooms, common space, a communal kitchen and back yard. A mentor lives in the house 5 days a week and is available on a 24 hour basis. Elders also come to the house to participate in Talking Circles.</p> <p>Controlled and managed by the Native community</p>			Continuum of services.
Orangewood Rising Tide Community	Orange County CA		<p>Transitional housing on two sites, with a total of 162 units of which youth (18-21) occupy 10%. [Two complexes which can house up to 18 (youth) in each complex for a total of 36 beds.]</p> <p>Length of stay [for youth] is 18 months with possible extensions. Mixed buildings. 10% for youth, 15% for people with very low incomes, 50% moderate income households, 25% any income.</p>	?1993	16 units for youth out of 162	Case manager, training, mentor
Peel Youth Village	Mississauga, Ontario	Peel Living	<p>For homeless young adults 16-35 years. Mixed-use development incorporating transitional housing and a community centre. The housing component is for homeless youth in Peel. Community centre serves residents and the surrounding neighbourhood. Provides recreation opportunities including a basketball half-court, as well as social services such as employment and life-skills counselling.</p> <p>48 rooms. 32 of the rooms organized into four-bedroom apartment pods with a shared kitchen and lounge and intended for mid-term or long term stay. The remaining 16 rooms have either one or two beds and are intended for short term stay.</p>	Summer 2006	48 rooms	<p>Integrated with supports</p> <p>Mixed use building (housing and community centre)</p> <p>24-hour staffing.</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
Same House Different Landlord program	Queensland, Australia	Dept of Housing	<p>The Youth Head Leasing Transfer Scheme provides opportunities for homeless young people to be housed with the support of local community groups, prior to direct tenancy with the Department of Housing. A community organization holds the head lease, and after a period of support, the lease is transferred over directly to the tenant. Targeted to tenants in need of crisis and transitional housing – but then, the youth can remain as a permanent tenant.</p>	2002	98	<p>Youth Head Lease</p> <p>Convertible lease</p> <p>Scattered site</p> <p>Anticipate aging in place</p>

Slipping Lease	France	ADAI Service housing, HAS, and Companion s Builders	An agency rents a unit from a private or non-profit landlord. The plan from the outset is that the lease will be transferred to the youth after the youth reaches a set of goals set out in a plan. The agency works with the youth to link them to local support and recreational services to help the youth become integrated into the local community.			Convertible lease Focus on community integration
Aunt Leah's	Burnaby, New Westminst erPOCO Surrey	MCFD, MCFD Aboriginal	For youth in care of MCFD, 16-18 years. (At 19 they have to leave program). 14 basement suites, with Overseer living upstairs who is there for the youth in case of emergency. Sometimes the Overseer owns the house, and sometimes rents the house. Youth tenant has an Aunt Leah's Support Worker to assist with needs including job and life skills training. Youth also has a social worker but no Youth Agreement.	??	14	<i>Mentorship programs - link youth with an adult who understands their needs and models positive life skills.</i> Promote relationships of trust with adults e.g. nurture connections with kin, foster parents, or caring adult.
Permanent/Supportive housing						
Fred Finch Youth Center	Oakland, Ca		Supportive housing for 18-24 yrs olds who have aged out of foster care and who have significant mental health issues. Believed to be first perm supportive housing for young adults with mental illness. Dedicated. Called Coolidge Court Had funding problems in 2003. The website calls this one of their Transitional Programs, but does not give a time limit. Also, a website about another projected home from Fred Finch and community opposition reported that the "Fred Finch center has needed police assistance more than 120 times since January."	2000	18 units	Serving as national model
First Place Fund for Youth	Oakland, CA		Shared 2 bedroom units. To access apartments, youth must complete an 8-week economic literacy curriculum and qualify for a loan for 1 st month's rent and security deposit. Receive life			Focus on employment and life skills

			skills and other supports. Pay 30% of income to rent. As incomes increase, rents increase until they don't need a subsidy. Within one year, 95% of participating youth were employed. Repayment of loans is 93%.			
Mères et Monde	Québec City		Residential and community centre which aims to prevent transience among young mothers and their infants, develop their ability to be independent, break the social isolation experienced by the young parents, and encourage social and labour force integration. The centre brings together 23 units of social housing, community services and training, and an early childhood centre with space for 18 children and opportunities for respite care, and care for children while the mothers are shopping or attending training programs.		23	Support for parenting young people Integrated approach – providing for child care
Seventh Landing	St Paul, Minnesota		Purpose built 2-story building. A coffee shop on the ground floor is used as a training centre for the youth. Other commercial and common space is on the ground floor.		12 units	Integrated training opportunities
Shafer Young Adult Initiative	NYC		Supportive housing in a mixed 91-unit building. 25 units are for youth 18-23 out of foster care. The remaining units are for people with HIV/AIDS. Youth units on 2 floors. First permanent supportive hsg program in NY that includes young adults as tenants. Services voluntary but structured.	2002	25 units for youth, out of 91	Sub-populations Clustered/scattered Anticipate aging in place
**Referral agreement housing co-operative and youth serving agency (SOY)	Toronto	Hugh Garner Housing Co-op and Supporting Our Youth (SOY)	SOY works to improve the lives of GLBTT youth in Toronto. They aim to promote youth positively in communities and support the building of inclusive communities. SOY has secured a number of subsidized units in non-profit and co-op housing. SOY is responsible for ensuring clients have access to whatever support is necessary to make their housing tenure a success. SOY ensures that youth have a mentor to help them learn the ropes of living on their own. SOY also offers a variety of other programs and services to youth – in house or through referral. SOY finds that they have a great deal of contact with clients when they first move into their unit. They help youth find furniture, dishes, and other necessary items. After this, youth and their mentors generally see each other once a week and SOY is in touch with them once a month. The youth can call SOY any time if they have concerns about their housing. It is also understood that the housing agency will call SOY for assistance if problems arise.	2003		Partnership between housing and service provider Mentorship Community integration
