

Calgary  
Homeless  
Foundation

**DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION**

**Setting the Course: A Blueprint to End Youth  
Homelessness in Calgary**

**Calgary Homeless Foundation**

**May 6, 2009**

# Setting the Course: A Blueprint to End Youth Homelessness in Calgary

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Alberta embarks on the mission to end homelessness in ten years, it is critical that the particular needs of young homeless persons are addressed appropriately. If effective interventions are not implemented, today's homeless youth are at risk of becoming tomorrow's homeless adults.

To end homelessness in Alberta, we must address the primary pathways into youth homelessness, including poverty, family conflict, abuse and addictions as well as re-structured interventions to streamline rapid pathways out of homelessness using a Housing First approach.

We strongly support a holistic approach to ending youth homelessness that addresses the needs of youth as old as 24. It's important to note and acknowledge that for many youth, independence at 18 is unrealistic. We must ensure youth are supported toward self-sufficiency irrespective of the age of majority, given their diverse developmental stages.

**Setting the Course** is a discussion paper which aims to quantify and describe the challenge of youth homelessness in Calgary and to identify potential solutions. More importantly we hope to spark community action on to end youth homelessness in our city.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS

### **1. The homeless youth population in Calgary is substantial and growing quickly.**

- The Biennial Homeless Count enumerated 355 persons under 18 years old and 327 youth were between the ages of 18 and 24. In total, these young people represented approximately one-fifth (20%) of the homeless population.
- In 2008, the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre Society reported 1,200 unique intakes for youth 16-24 and the Centre of Hope reported 449 unique intakes of 18-24 year olds. Wood's Homes Exit Youth Shelter served 712 persons between the ages of 12 to 17 years in 2008.
- According to the 2008 Homeless Count, the homeless youth population is growing at an alarming rate. In particular, both the 17 and under and the 18-24 group grew by 34% and 41% over 2006 respectively.
- These figures underestimate the magnitude of the homeless population as youth report most commonly couch surfing with friends and family or sleeping rough and therefore do not show up in the above-noted statistics.

### **2. Street-involved youth experience high levels of vulnerability to abuse and exploitation; many present complex health, mental health and addictions issues.**

- *High levels of violence while homeless.* In fact, 75% of those surveyed in the 2006 Calgary Youth, Health and the Street Study (CYHSS) (Worthington et al.,

2009) reported being the victim of violence on the street and 62% reported they had been violent towards others while on the street.

- *Significant mental and physical health concerns.* About 43% reported a childhood mental illness diagnosis; this rate is higher than that reported by chronic homeless adults surveyed using the Vulnerability Index (32%). Another 57% reported having seriously thought about attempting suicide and 38% had attempted suicide (Worthington et al., 2009).
- *High levels of substance use, which started at early ages, and they also identify that they are engaged in high-risk activities.* Most (94%) reported having used a substance (including tobacco, alcohol, or drugs) in the past 2 weeks. About one third (29%) reported starting using alcohol or drugs prior to age 12, 57% started between ages 12 and 15, and 14% started after age 15(Worthington et al., 2009).
- *Engagement in survival/obligatory sex and prostitution & high-risk sexual activities.* About 20% of male youth and 33% of female youth reported engaging in survival/obligatory sex, and 45% of female youth and 13% of male youth had been asked to be involved in prostitution. About half (48%) of youth reported having been pregnant/caused a pregnancy (Worthington, et al., 2009).

### **3. Homeless youth follow key pathways into homelessness.**

Many street-involved youth report a history of family disruption and abuse in the home. Thus, many have had exposure to physical violence, sexual abuse or have had conflicts with the law, while others who have mental health problems or use alcohol or drugs may have these issues exacerbated by family circumstances. Street-involved youth are often raised in foster home. The CHYSS (Worthington et al., 2009) reported the following findings:

- **Abuse** - 71% of street-involved youth reported having experienced abuse or neglect in the past. 43% of street-involved youth surveyed identified physical abuse, 20% for sexual abuse, 29% identified neglect while 52% identified emotional maltreatment.
- **Family Disruption** - 18% reported witnessing frequent family violence, and another 36% reported witnessing this a few times between parents. 54% street-involved youth reported problematic parent alcohol use.
- **Criminality** - A high proportion (69%) of youth had been charged with a crime in their lifetime. Of these, 79% had been charged as a young offender and 48% as an adult. About 75% had spent time in jail or detention. By comparison, 89% of chronic homeless adults reported having been in jail (CHF 2008 Vulnerability Index Survey).
- **Child Welfare** - 62% of youth surveyed in the CYHSS reported that their family had a history of Child Welfare contact. Of those, for over half (52%) the interaction resulted in placement in care, 19% received no services, and 13% were referred to family services.
- **Education** - 45% of street-involved youth had been kicked out of school, suspended, or had dropped out, and 46% indicated they had been in special classes in school.

### **4. Youth face complex barriers to exiting homelessness.**

- The lack of affordable and supportive housing options appropriate for youth and barriers to access existing opportunities;
- The lack of job readiness, education or experience;
- Gaps in child welfare and protection services for youth who are 16 years of age and older and those aging out of the foster care system.
- Many youth who are 16 and 17 years old are not eligible for income assistance. The eligibility criteria for income assistance for youth who are under 18 make it difficult for them to collect benefits, particularly those lacking Child Welfare status.
- Gaps in social services also exist for those with mental health problems, addictions and dual diagnoses;
- Lack of discharge planning from correctional facilities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To end youth homelessness, our community needs a systematic re-focusing of the current homelessness and mainstream systems on this task. The strategy must encompass housing, rehousing, and prevention efforts tailored to the diverse needs of young people.

Key components of that strategy could include:

**1. The Ministry of Children & Youth Services lead a provincial effort to end youth homelessness.** Children and Youth Services should work with municipalities, community groups and agencies, as well as other provincial ministries to develop a Plan to End Youth Homelessness, which follows the tenets set out by the Alberta Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and the principle of Housing First. Implementation of the plans in Alberta communities should engage key stakeholder in a collaborative response model under the system planning leadership of a community based organization or Child and Family Service Authorities.

**2. The Government of Alberta should adopt an inclusive definition of youth homelessness.** Given the diverse developmental stages of youth, the following definition of a homeless youth should be considered:

“A homeless youth is an unaccompanied person under the age of 24 lacking a permanent residence. They can be living on the street, in shelters, couch surfing, in unsafe and insecure housing, and living in abusive situations. They may also be about to be discharged without the security of a regular residence from a care, correction, health, or any other facility.”

**3. Increase access to Children & Youth Services supports for homeless youth under the age of 18.** Any youth under the age of 18 who is homeless is at extreme risk for abuse, criminal involvement, exploitation, poverty, and health issues. Therefore, any homeless youth under the age of majority (18) should be the responsibility of Children & Youth Services, regardless of their past involvement with this ministry or their Child Welfare intervention status. The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* should be amended to ensure that any youth under the age of 18 has equal access to services and supports available to youth with Child Welfare Status.

**4. Enhance access to transitions to independence supports for older youth up to the age of 24.** The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* contains provisions to support youth in planning for a successful transition to adulthood. Unfortunately not all you have the benefit of these services and supports as these are not available to those who did not have child intervention status before the age of 18. Given the evidence of risk and the developmental stages of youth as old as 24, the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* should be amended to ensure that any youth up to the age of 24 has equal access to services and supports available to youth with Child Welfare Status if they are experiencing of have experienced homelessness.

**5. Adopt a zero discharge into homelessness policy in foster care, group homes, health and correctional facilities and develop housing stability outcomes to ensure implementation.** We strongly encourage the development of cross-ministerial outcomes measuring the successful placement of discharges in permanent housing with supports and long term housing stability (i.e. target of 85% of clients remain stably housed one year post-intervention).

**6. Increase the accessibility and availability of a continuum of housing for homeless and ‘at risk’ youth.** Permanent, affordable and appropriate housing options with supports are critical to ending youth homelessness. The Government of Alberta should ensure that a youth housing continuum is available based on the needs of clients which includes a range of options such as:

- scattered site housing dispersed throughout a community (usually rental market);
- single, multi-unit buildings dedicated to youth that are single site or congregate (such as the Residential Facilities operated under the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*; and
- units or entire floors set-aside especially for youth adults in affordable housing developments

The Government of Alberta should undertake a review of current capacity to provide youth with permanent housing and wrap-around supports to maintain housing stability. A capital plan to create new units dedicated to youth should be developed based on province-wide assessment.

**7. Ensure all youth have access to street level supports and youth emergency shelters.** In particular, the current gap in youth shelters for those ages 18 to 24 must be addressed. Currently, youth over 18 must access the adult shelter system which does not address their developmental needs. In addition, all homeless youth under 18 should have equal access to youth emergency and transitional housing regardless of their Child Welfare intervention status.

**8. Ensure supports for homeless and at risk youth are adequately resourced and qualified to service complex, high acuity clients.** Given that homeless youth are extremely vulnerable and present with complex, co-occurring issues, it is critical that the supports and services we provide for these youth are appropriately resourced and have the expertise to do the job. Current wages in the non-profit sector agencies dealing with this population do not allow for this to occur. A full review of compensation in the non-profit agencies serving the homeless youth population should be undertaken; compensation and competencies should be benchmarked with Child and Family Service Authorities staff serving similar client groups.

**10. Prioritize the creation of addictions treatment and detox facilities targeted for youth.** Given the high acuity youth present with, and the co-occurrence of multiple issues with addictions, services specialized in assisting youth are critical. Youth need safe spaces in which to deal with such issues apart from adults. Segmentation of treatment should ensure younger youth (under 18) have access to separate services from older youth.

**11. Streamline access to income and rent supports for youth transitioning to independence.**

Youth under the age 18 who are homeless should be able to access income supports from Children's Services. Access to income supports for those for whom independent living is appropriate is critical to obtaining housing and ending their homelessness especially as this income is used to obtain and maintain housing. A full review of the current gaps in the income assistance system, which includes rent supports and the Homeless Eviction Prevention Fund should be undertaken to ensure all homeless youth have ready access to the resources they need.

**12. Ensure appropriate case management supports are available for youth to prevent and end homelessness, particularly focused on discharge points.**

Clearly, there is a gap in the continuum of services for youth at risk and homeless in the area of case management. Case management supports should be available to meet the range of acuity of youth with low to high intensity interventions. Ensure collaborative discharge planning between systems and case management teams focused on youth being discharged from corrections, foster care, and health facilities.

**13. Implement and resourcing of a Homeless Management Information System to facilitate the development of common intake and assessment processes for all youth.** This measure will ensure common standards for data collection; facilitate system planning and outcomes measurement to improve interventions. By employing a common HMIS throughout homeless serving agencies, we will ensure appropriate communication across system and services which may not be specifically focused on youth as well.

**13. Enhance gateway and engagement services.** Particular services that should be enhanced include outreach teams focused on intervening with homeless and street-involved youth as well as early intervention.

**14. Develop youth-focused Housing Locators and Landlord Liaisons initiatives.** Programs can include the development of a specialized Rapid Exit Youth program and/or enhancement of Rapid Exit program or new program to support at risk families and youth. Clients of such initiatives should have ready access funds for damage deposit, first month rent, furniture and other start up costs, ongoing rent supports and homeless eviction prevention funds are available to all youth, regardless of status or age.

## Table of Contents

The Case for Action .....	8
A Note on Definitions of Youth.....	9
A Profile of Homeless Youth in Calgary .....	9
How many homeless youth are there? .....	10
Vulnerability in the Youth Homeless Population .....	11
Street Experiences .....	13
Youth Interaction with & Perspectives on Street Services .....	14
Pathways into Homelessness .....	15
Homeless Youth Interaction with Mainstream Systems .....	17
Critical Barriers to Exiting Homelessness .....	17
Key Steps to End Youth Homelessness .....	20
Collaborative Community Response.....	20
System Component 1: Gateway & Engagement Services .....	23
System Component 2: Intake, Assessment & Triage.....	24
System Component 3: Housing and Services Continuum .....	26
Priority Recommendations.....	33
The Ten Essentials .....	37
Works Cited .....	45

## The Case for Action

As Alberta embarks on the mission to end homelessness in ten years, it is critical that the particular needs of young homeless persons are addressed appropriately. If effective interventions are not implemented, today's homeless youth are at risk of becoming tomorrow's homeless adults. To end homelessness in Alberta, we must address the primary pathways into youth homelessness, including poverty, family conflict, abuse and addictions as well as re-structure interventions to streamline rapid pathways out of homelessness.

Street-involved youth require multi-faceted, intensive models of support – support that may include appropriate, affordable housing, education, skills training and employment opportunities, health services, mentorship and much more. *System integration of all these elements is critical.* Supports are youth-focused: the needs of street-involved youth are very different from those of homeless adults. *In adopting a “Housing First” approach, we must place the highest priority on moving homeless youth into permanent housing with the support necessary to sustain that housing.*

Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness identifies youth as a critical priority to address in implementation efforts. It calls for the improvement of mainstream service co-ordination, enhance case management services for youth and develop a strategy to address the mental health, addictions treatment and physical health needs of homeless and at risk youth in Calgary. Further, the Plan outlines the need to develop family and youth emergency shelter beds, youth transitional housing beds and foster care discharge housing opportunities.

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion in the public, non-profit and private sector as well as with those impacted by youth homelessness around solutions to this issue. To this end, the paper will outline a profile of youth homelessness in Calgary, pathways into homelessness and barriers trapping youth in this condition. It will then summarize promising approaches and delineate critical components of a systematic approach to ending youth homelessness effectively and cost-efficiently in Calgary, including recommendations for action in the areas of policy, practice and research.

### *Investing in Youth Pays Off*

Without a commitment to address youth homelessness, the numbers of street-involved youth will likely continue to accelerate, and associated health care, criminal justice, social services and emergency shelter costs will continue to grow. This makes no economic sense. It costs an estimated \$30,000 - \$40,000 per year to keep a youth in the shelter system. The cost of keeping one youth in detention is estimated at over \$250 a day, or \$100,000 a year.

It costs the state of Colorado \$53,655 to place a young person in youth corrections for one year and \$53,527 for residential treatment. Comparatively, it costs \$5,378

for the only licensed homeless and runaway youth supportive housing program in Colorado to move a young person off of the streets and perhaps prevent the incurrence of future expenses (NAEH 2006).

Investing strategically in street-involved youth – by providing critical educational and employment training and opportunities, access to stable, secure housing and by helping them to develop essential life skills – launches them on a positive path towards independence and self-sufficiency as contributing members of society. This kind of investment in youth makes sound economic and social sense.

### **A Note on Definitions of Youth**

For the purposes of this report, the term "youth" refers to those aged 12 to 24 inclusive, which is consistent with literature in this area of study (PHAC 2006). Legal minors (under 18 years old) are the responsibility of their families or the child welfare system of public care. It is important to note and acknowledge that for many youth, independence at 18 is unrealistic. We must ensure youth are supported towards self-sufficiency irrespective of the age of minority, given their diverse developmental stages.

Homeless youth include runaways, who have left home without parental permission, 'throwaways', who have been forced to leave home by their parents, and street youth, who have spent at least some time living on the streets as well as systems youth—i.e., young people who become homeless after aging out of foster care or exiting the juvenile justice system (Farrow et al. 1992; Toro, Dworsky & Fowler 2007). Homeless youth include those in care lacking a permanent placement.

It is important to note that varying definitions of youth are in use and impact data collection, access to services and mainstream systems in addressing youth homelessness. Further, the various ways used to define homeless youth are neither static nor mutually exclusive (Hammer, Finkelhor & Sedlack 2002). A commonly shared characteristic of homeless youth is that they are on their own without the supervision of an adult caretaker (Haber & Toro 2004).

### **A Profile of Homeless Youth in Calgary**

Homeless youth face different challenges than their adult counterparts. The pathways into homelessness for youth share unique patterns to this age group. Their level of development and life experience renders them particularly vulnerable on the street. This is manifested in homeless youth's quick entrenchment into street life.

**Without effective intervention within the first two weeks of street involvement, youth likely become entrenched within two months.** "Entrenched street youth face more serious risks, are more heavily involved in illegal activities, and are much more difficult to engage and to serve" (McLean 2005).

Despite key similarities, Calgary's youth homeless population is extremely diverse in terms of demographics, pathways in and out of homelessness, client needs, use of services and system interactions. This diversity is reflected in the larger Canadian homeless youth population, estimated to consist of approximately 150,000 persons (DeMatteo et al. 1999).

### **How many homeless youth are there?**

In the absence of a Homeless Management Information System, Calgary relies on information gathered through the Biennial Homeless Counts published by the City of Calgary to assess information about the numbers of homeless youth. Nevertheless, the counts only present a snapshot of the homeless population on a particular night.

The 4,060 homeless persons enumerated in 2008 are only the tip of the iceberg. In a 2002 survey of nine emergency shelters, 14,131 different individuals were found to have used the shelters in the period of a year. If the 1.6% prevalence rate of homelessness follows a growth rate similar to the point in time count, more than 21,000 Calgarians may have experienced homelessness in 2006 (City of Calgary 2008).

*Youth make up a significant proportion of the homeless population.* The Calgary Biennial Homeless Count enumerated 355 persons under 18 years old in emergency and transitional housing facilities. Another 327 homeless were between the ages of 18 and 24. In total, these young people represented approximately one-fifth (20%) of the homeless population. If we count only those between 13 and 24, the total is 577, or 14% of the homeless population.

Major shelters that also take in youth that youth reported the following startling facts in 2008:

- The Calgary Drop In reported 1,200 unique intakes for youth 16-24;
- The Wood's Homes Exit Youth Shelter housed 712 young people between the ages of 12 to 17 years in 2008.
- The Salvation Army Centre of Hope reported 449 unique intakes of 18-24 year olds.

It is difficult to estimate the size of the homeless youth population but this data indicates that it could be as high as 2,000 individuals.

*The homeless youth population is growing at an alarming rate.* In particular, both the 17 and under and the 18-24 group grew by 34% and 41% over 2006 respectively. The proportion of those aged 13 to 17 more than doubled from 73 in 2006 to 154 in 2008 (City of Calgary 2008 Homeless Count).

*Homeless youth have a higher proportions of females, Aboriginal and visible minorities than the general homeless population.* About 62% were male and 38% were females. The majority were Caucasian (51%), followed by Aboriginals (27%)

and visible minorities (19%). The proportions of Aboriginal children, youth and young adults were almost double that of the total enumerated homeless population (15%) and were 8% higher than the proportion of visible minorities in the homeless population (10.6%). The proportion of females in the younger population (41%) was double that observed in the general homeless population (22%) (City of Calgary 2008 Biennial Homeless Count).

Population Group	Male				Female			
	Caucasian	Aboriginal	Visible Minority	Unknown	Caucasian	Aboriginal	Visible Minority	Unknown
<b>School Age Children</b> (Age 6-12)	16	19	12	0	14	16	19	0
<b>Youth</b> (Age 13-17)	60	21	16	0	32	16	9	0
<b>Young Adults</b> (Age 18-24)	150	27	23	14	59	42	10	2
<b>Total</b>	226	67	51	14	105	74	38	2

### **Vulnerability in the Youth Homeless Population**

Thanks to the findings from the forthcoming Calgary Youth, Health and the Street Study (WORTHINGTON, ET AL., 2009) (Worthington et al 2009), which included a comprehensive survey of street-involved youth under 25 years of age administered in 2005-06 (N=355), we have an up to date detailed picture of demographics, health and housing needs, and homelessness experiences and causes, and systems interaction. These findings are further complemented by those from the 2005 Seeking Sanctuary study (McLean 2005) focused on Calgary youth ages 12-17 years without Child Welfare status (N=354). Other important research on Calgary homeless youth includes the 2003 Youth Sector Report using data from the 2002 Calgary Homeless Study (Gardiner & Cairns 2003).

Findings demonstrate alarming trends and high levels of vulnerability in this population.

*Street-involved youth experience high levels of violence while homeless.* In fact, 75% of those surveyed in the CYHSS reported being the victim of violence on the street and 62% reported they had been violent towards others while on the street. This finding points to the significant vulnerability of youth on the street given that it is significantly higher than the 69% rate of victimization reported by 135 chronic homeless adults (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2008).

*Street youth face significant mental and physical health concerns.*

- 43% reported a childhood mental illness diagnosis (Worthington et al., 2009); this rate is higher than that reported by chronic homeless adults surveyed using the Vulnerability Index (32%) (CHF 2008). This is confirmed by Canadian studies on homeless youth as well (Frankish, Hwang & Quantz 2005);
- 57% reported having seriously thought about attempting suicide and 38% had attempted suicide (Worthington et al., 2009);
- 33% reported a diagnosed childhood physical condition (Worthington et al., 2009);
- 37% reported a learning disability (Worthington et al., 2009).

*Youth have high levels of substance use, which started at early ages, and are engaged in risky activities.*

- Most (94%) reported having used a substance in the past 2 weeks. These included: 93% tobacco, 87% marijuana, 67% hash, 41% ecstasy, 41% crack, 40% cocaine, 32% LSD, 24% crystal meth, 15% heroin, and 13% glue/gas (Worthington et al., 2009). The rate of substance abuse is comparable to that of chronically homeless adults (95%) (CHF 2008).
- About one third (29%) reported using alcohol or drugs prior to age 12, 57% started between ages 12 and 15, and 14% started after age 15 (Worthington et al., 2009).
- Of the 21% who reported using injection drugs, 29% shared needles or injection equipment (Worthington et al., 2009).

*Many are engaged in survival sex and prostitution.*

- About 20% of male youth and 33% of female youth reported being asked to engage in survival/obligatory sex. Male (13%) and female (45%) youth reported being asked to engage in prostitution. 10% of males and 19% of females had been asked to be involved in recruiting for prostitution, and 54% of both genders had been asked to be involved in “spotting” (on the lookout for police). 16% of males and 9% of females reported being asked to be involved in pimping (Worthington et al., 2009).
- Most (56%) indicated being asked to become involved in prostitution activities between the ages of 13 and 16, while another 20% were asked before age 13, and 24% after age 16 (Worthington et al., 2009).
- These findings are consistent with street youth across Canada; 22.6% reported being engaged in sex trade while homeless. Canadian street youth also reported being engaged in obligatory sex (18.5%); the primary reason for this was shelter (PHAC 2006a).

*Youth report high levels of sexual activity, pregnancy rates and engage in risky sexual activities.*

- Most youth reported having had sex; only 4% of males and 10% of females reported never having had sex (Worthington et al., 2009);
- About half (48%) of youth reported having been pregnant or having caused a pregnancy (Worthington et al., 2009);
- Only 26% reported using condoms for sexual intercourse all the time; 46% reported using condoms some/most of the time and 26% used them rarely/never (Worthington et al., 2009);

- Of the 58% who reported having been tested for HIV, 2.1% (4) were positive. Of those who were HIV negative or did not know their status, 79% thought they were at low or no risk for contracting HIV (Worthington et al., 2009);
- These findings are consistent those from other studies with street youth across Canada. It is important to add that the proportion of street youth reporting they had had STIs grew from 20.8% in 1999 to 26.6% in 2003 (PHAC 2006a).

## **Street Experiences**

In-depth interviews with street-involved youth in the CYHSS suggested that accessing shelters was seen as a last resort by street-involved youth in Calgary; couch surfing, staying outside, group homes, pairing up with other street involved youth, and temporary stays with family members were common. Couch surfing was preferred by interview participants as it provided the most privacy and freedom (Worthington et al., 2009).

Street-involved youth are precariously housed and relocate often. Of the 46% of street-involved youth who were currently living on the street in the CYHSS, 45% spent the last night in a shelter, 20% were outside, and 17% were couch surfing. Of those not currently living on streets, 64% had lived on the street in the past.

Homeless youth are also very mobile; about half (52%) of all the CYHSS participants had also spent time on the street in other cities (Worthington et al., 2009). Research from a study on youth without Child Welfare status between 12 and 17 showed that those who had arrived in Calgary within the last six months come from rural and urban sites from across Canada. Recent arrivals cited the search for work (66%) as the primary motivation for coming to Calgary, followed by positive recommendations from other street youth about the city (18%), and trying to escape threats of harm in their previous locale (16%) (McLean 2005).

Data consistently show that the longer youth stay on the street without effective interventions, the more likely their entrenchment in homelessness is (McLean 2005, Hoffart & Cairns 2009).

Youth made a living mostly through employment and received limited government income assistance; younger cohorts rely primarily on informal income sources.

- Most youth in the Calgary CYHSS earned an income through employment (49%), followed by government or family supports (14%), casual work (10%), illegal activities (6%) and 13% noted no income source (Worthington et al., 2009).
- Calgary street-involved youth reported receiving social welfare significantly less than the larger Canadian cohort (14% to 31.2%) (PHAC 2006a). However, their rate of reporting social assistance was comparable to that of chronic homeless in Calgary (12%) (CHF 2008).
- It is important to note that the 12-17 year olds without Child Welfare status reported their primary income generation/survival activities were panhandling

(46%), drug trade (14%) and sex trade (22%) as opposed to employment (McLean 2005).

Homeless youth rely heavily on informal supports in their home communities, most notably friends, and tend to access formal services only after these have been exhausted. Youth and service providers identify a general 3X3 rule with respect to couch-surfing with friends. That is, a young person can typically call upon support, in the form of a place to sleep, from three friends for approximately three weeks each (McLean 2005).

When asked who they could really count on, street-involved youth in the CYHSS reported:

- 13% said “myself”; 43% said one or two people; 23% said there were no adults they could really trust (Worthington et al., 2009).
- 49% said their friends on street were employed full/part time; 30% said their friends attended school; 55% said their friends sell/run drugs; 47% said their friends panhandle; 41% said their friends steal/sell goods; 31% said their friends hustle/con/scam; 22% said their friends dumpster dive (Worthington et al., 2009).

### **Youth Interaction with & Perspectives on Street Services**

In terms of service usage, youth reported frequently using the following in the last 3 months:

- 48% shelters
- 44% drop-in centre
- 37% outreach services
- 32% food banks
- 25% employment services
- 17% counseling services
- 11% none (Worthington et al., 2009)

Youth who participated in in-depth interviews in the CYHSS had differing perspectives on shelters and outreach based on their level of street-involvement (*no history on the street* – street-involved, but have not lived on the street; *history on street* – not currently living on the street, but have lived on the street in the past; *youth on street* – youth currently living on the street):

<b>Street involvement</b>	<b>Perspectives on Shelters</b>	<b>Perspectives on Drop-In Centres/Outreach</b>
Youth with no history on street	dislike; too dirty; poor location	safe; relaxing; good place to hang out
Youth with history on street	not enough room/beds; helpful staff	safe; relaxing; life necessities; accepting
Youth on street	rigid rules; discomfort; helpful staff	safe; relaxing; life necessities; caring staff

When asked about problems with each service type, the majority (51% to 64%) of youth who participated in the CYHSS survey said “have not had any problems” and only 5% to 10% reported specific issues. Youth currently living on the street were more likely to report problems:

- Affordable housing - 67% described problems finding affordable housing;
- Food banks - 11% refused service;
- Shelters - 18% staff not helpful; 16% refused service; 14% rigid rules;
- Drop-in centres - 13% staff not helpful; 13% rigid rules;
- Financial aid - 11% refused service; 10% rigid rules (Worthington et al., 2009).

Youth who participated in in-depth interviews in the CYHSS described a range of positive and negative aspects of street services:

Positive aspects of street services	Negative aspects of street services
<p><b>Flexible &amp; Full Day Programs</b>            “They’d be like, ‘Well, what time were you planning on showing up?’ And they gave me more leniency – I couldn’t do that every day, but they’d let me do that every once in a while as a treat so I didn’t have an early curfew.”</p> <p><b>“Homey” Environment &amp; Non-Judgmental Staff</b>            “It doesn’t matter who you are, who you’ve been, they don’t – they don’t look at the bad points in you. They just welcome you in.... They extend their ass to you, and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”</p> <p><b>Safety &amp; Security</b>            “So I like coming here because instead of going out and doing drugs or going out and partying and getting into fights and stuff I come here... and there’s no alcohol and there’s no drugs here so I can dance, play pool, and hang out with all my friends. I just like this place.”</p>	<p><b>Location of Services</b>            “A lot of the [services] are downtown and that’s just kind of inconvenient for me because I... can’t be downtown right now. So it’s kind of hard, I’ll have no choice but it’s [availability of drugs] a risk that I’m taking every time I go.”</p> <p><b>Limited Availability</b>            During times of inclement weather shelters were “always packed, they’re always full. You’re lucky if you can stay in a bed in [Agency X]... if you try to get into a safe house it’s actually really difficult because there’s really only, like, three youth safe houses.”</p> <p><b>Employee Attitudes</b>            • “They used to yell at me all the time for not doing things. They always – staff would always pick on me.... I was never rude to any of them. I don’t understand why they were rude to me.”</p> <p><b>Policies Restrict Access to Services</b>            • “You have to be stable for three months, but where can you be stable for three months?”            • “If they [a shelter] send them away and...they have a bad trip or they don’t know where they are and something happens to them, then well, wouldn’t they rather them be somewhere safe when they’re high than on the streets?”            • “Basically they bounce you between [Agency X] and [Agency Y] unless you have [child welfare] status, then you can stay at [Agency ].”</p>

## Pathways into Homelessness

The US Department of Health and Human Services reports that the two principle causes of youth homelessness are 1) a breakdown in family relationships and 2)

inadequate interventions from systems that are charged with protecting, nurturing, and supervising youth when their families cannot.

Youth consistently state the reason for their homelessness is family conflict. The second leading cause of youth homelessness links to the high proportion of homeless youth who have been in foster care. Growing evidence suggests that many homeless youth have spent time in juvenile detention.

Homeless youth share many background characteristics and experience many of the same psychosocial problems (MacLean, Embry & Cauce, 1999):

- Many tend to come from **low-income** backgrounds (McCaskill, Toro & Wolfe 1998).
- It is also not uncommon for homeless youth to report a **history of family disruption and abuse** in the home. Many have had exposure to physical violence, mental health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse and conflicts with the law (CMHC 2001).
- Many grew up in **single-parent** or “blended” households (i.e., stepparent) families (Boesky, Toro & Wright 1995; Greenblatt & Robertson, 1993), and a significant number of these youth have not had any contact with their non-custodial parent (Greenblatt & Robertson, 1993).
- The families of homeless youth also seem to have experienced far more residential moves than those of their housed peers (Cauce et al. 2000; Toro & Goldstein 2000). In other words, their homelessness seems to be part of a longer pattern of **residential instability**.
- They are often isolated with no family ties and few friends. Many have been raised in **foster homes**, have a lack of education and skills, and suffer from poor physical health.

These trends are common in the Calgary street-involved youth population as well, as demonstrated by the CYHSS:

- 71% reported having experienced abuse or neglect in the past. 43% of street-involved youth surveyed identified physical abuse, 20% for sexual abuse, 29% identified neglect while 52% identified emotional maltreatment.
- This finding is consistent with reasons youth age 12-17 without CW status become homeless (McLean, 2005): 32% reported running away from neglect and/or abuse in their family homes and 32% reported being forced by parents/guardians to leave their family homes.
- In the CYHSS 18% reported witnessing frequent family violence, and another 36% reported witnessing this a few times between parents. 54% street-involved youth reported problematic parent alcohol use.
- Self-reported reasons why youth became involved in street life: 38% “friends on the street”, 33% “to buy drugs or alcohol”, and 33% “my parents/guardians asked me to leave”.
- 8% of males and 39% of females self-reported attraction to the same sex or both sexes. This is consistent to larger body of literature that shows over-representation of GLBT in the homeless youth population. Studies show that family conflict over sexual orientation contributes to youth leaving families and care (Ray 2006).

## Homeless Youth Interaction with Mainstream Systems

Given the high levels of family disruption, it is not surprising that homeless youth report extremely high levels of interaction with the justice and child welfare systems. At the same time, their school attendance and high school completion rates are alarmingly low, impacting their future earning capacity significantly.

*Significant levels of Child Welfare & Foster Care involvement as a result of considerable family instability.*

- 62% reported a family history of Child Welfare contact. Of those, for over half (52%) the interaction resulted in placement in care, 19% received no services, and 13% were referred to family services (Worthington et al., 2009).
- Of those who had contact with a child welfare worker, reasons for involvement were family conflict (45%), family violence (41%), emotional abuse (32%) and neglect (28%). 59% of youth reported spending time in foster care or a group home (Worthington et al., 2009).
- Interestingly, 33% of chronic homeless adults reported having had involvement with foster care systems as children (CHF 2008).

*High levels of interactions with Justice.*

- A high proportion (69%) of youth had been charged in their lifetime. Of these, 79% had been charged as a young offender and 48% as an adult (Worthington et al., 2009). 75% had spent time in jail or detention. By comparison, 89% of chronic homeless adults reported having been in jail (CHF 2008).
- 12% had been picked up by police or social workers under the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act (Worthington et al., 2009).

*Low levels of engagement with education systems.* About 17% reported attending school full time, 9% part-time, and 45% had been kicked out/suspended/dropped out. About one third (29%) had graduated and 10% had some post-secondary education (Worthington et al., 2009).

*Health Services*

- In terms of health service use, 17% reported not using health services; others reported using hospitals (23%), walk in clinics (66%), a doctor during business hours (19%), and mobile clinics on the street (13%) (Worthington et al., 2009);
- Evidence from the 2002 Calgary Homeless Study suggests that the youth group has similar levels of health care needs when compared against the overall homeless sample. They did however have a high prevalence of past/present addictions problems and dental treatment needs (Gardiner & Cairns 2003).

## Critical Barriers to Exiting Homelessness

Several consistent barriers to exiting homelessness in Canada have been reported in the literature and confirmed by Calgary data (CHMS 2001). These include:

1. The lack of **affordable and supportive housing options** appropriate for youth and **barriers to access** existing opportunities;
2. The **lack of job readiness**, education or experience;
3. **Gaps in child welfare** and protection services for youth who are 16 years of age and older and those aging out of the foster care system.
4. Many youth who are 16 and 17 years old are not eligible for **income assistance**. The eligibility criteria for income assistance for youth who are under 18 make it difficult for them to collect benefits.
5. **Gaps in social services** also exist for those with mental health problems, addictions and dual diagnoses;
6. Lack of **discharge planning** from correctional facilities.
7. Insufficient **non-profit capacity** to deal with the complex issues homeless and at risk youth present with.

Emergency beds are firstly extremely limited given the considerable size of the youth homeless population. Access is further limited based on age and child welfare status. As a result, youth between the ages of 18 and 24 must access emergency accommodation within the adult shelter system, which may not be the most appropriate situation based on their developmental stage.

A limited supply of transitional housing is available for youth without child intervention status or for youth that have transitioned out of the child intervention system. The majority of units are exclusively limited to youth under the age of 18 at time of intake. No housing is provided for specific populations such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer (GLBTQ) youth or those with concurrent mental health or addictions issues. No housing is available for youth that does not have a predetermined length of stay and the provision of voluntary support services in either a scattered site or congregate model. Youth are unable to access long-term, supportive housing options that allow them to gain the rights of and responsibilities of tenancy (United Way of Calgary & Area 2009)

	<b>Emergency Beds</b>	<b>Transitional Beds</b>
<b>Beds Available</b>	36 beds Avenue 15 (12), EXIT Youth Shelter (15) and Safe House (9)	66 beds Aspen Apartments (12), Haven's Way (6), Raido House (8), Windsor Park (9), Hope Homes (20), Wellington Place (4), Safe haven (7)
<b>Key Issues</b>	- only 13 are available for youth without Child Welfare status - limited to youth under the age of 18 - Avenue 15 and EXIT Youth Shelter are high-barrier shelters	- only 45 are available for youth without Child Welfare status - most have age limits (see below for details).

Key program access requirement for transitional housing include:

- Calgary John Howard Society Raido House (10 beds) for youth ages of 14 and 17. Many of these beds are accessed by youth leaving the Calgary Young Offender Centre or transitioning from one of the Calgary emergency shelters.

- Windsor Park, a 9-bed second stage transitional housing facility shifted its resident age of access limit from 17 to 22 years to fill an identified gap in housing available for youth over the age of 18 (United Way of Calgary & Area 2009).
- Wellington Place, operated by McMan Youth, Family and Community Services, provides 5 transitional beds in a congregate group living residence, including one bed reserved for emergency situations. Youth residents are between the ages of 16 and 21 but are required to be under the age of 18 at time of intake and are provided education and employment support.
- Hope Homes and Hope Homes for Aboriginal Youth program operated by McMan is the only scattered site transitional housing available for youth without child intervention status. It provides room and board support primarily in a host home model to 21 youth between the ages of 16 and 21. Youth must be under the age of 18 at time of intake.
- Additional scattered site transitional housing beds are available for youth over the age of 16 through such programs as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary Independent Living program; however, these programs are limited to youth with child intervention status (United Way of Calgary & Area 2009).

It is important to note that youth face considerable barriers to accessing social housing if they are less than 18 years of age. A lack of job stability, adequate income, and age-based discrimination, increase barriers to access market rentals. Those under 18 cannot enter into contracts and often youth do not have ID to support application for rental accommodation. Couples under-18 are especially hard to house (Hoffart & Cairns 2009).

When street involved youth were asked what they needed in order to leave the street in an open-ended question, they reported the following (Worthington et al., 2009):

- 26% financial assistance/ money
- 22% employment/ a good job
- 19% affordable housing/ rent
- 12% support/ incentive/
- 4% nothing
- 3% treatment for substance abuse problems

Youth are also limited in their capacity to access rent supports and the Homeless Eviction Prevention Fund if they are less than 18 years of age. Those eligible encounter significant barriers due to program requirements and difficulties accessing mainstream supports (Hoffart & Cairns 2009).

Calgary data shows that youth who have mental or physical illnesses, who have lower education levels than average (in this case, lower than grade 10), and who are female are likely to face increased barriers to employment. Recent research has indicated that unemployment is highly correlated with incarceration. Further, higher levels of unemployment are correlated with increased risk or re-offense. However, it may be particularly difficult and, in some cases, virtually impossible for homeless youth who have been incarcerated to become employed without stable housing and support to find and maintain suitable work (Gardiner & Cairns 2003).

Because of their early drop-out rates, youth lack the skills needed to compete for well-paid jobs. This impacts their capacity to exit homelessness and entrenches them in street-life further as many rely on informal income generating activities.

The lack of adequate discharge planning for youth aging out of or leaving foster care or group homes also renders them vulnerable to homelessness. Because Child Welfare status is granted to those perceived to face particular risks and not others, this creates a differential access to supports and leaves those under 18 and without status falling through gaps of ministerial responsibilities. They are unable to access supports from Alberta Works, Housing & Urban Affairs or social housing because of their age, yet cannot be assisted by Children and Youth services because they do not have child protection status.

Youth leaving correctional facilities also need considerable discharge planning and reintegration and stabilization support, which is currently a significant gap across Alberta communities. For those youth who hold a Child Welfare status, receive Child and Family Service Authorities (CFSAs) and Delegated First Nations Agencies (DFNAs) support including income assistance (Gough 2006). However, many youth who are on the street do not have status and are ineligible for supports. Others are not accessing the assistance even if they are eligible.

Given the complexity of their physical, emotional and mental health issues compounded with addictions and vulnerability as result of age, the shortage of key services, particularly in the areas of addictions (detox, residential treatment, transitional services), mental health treatment, and of supported housing programs is particularly critical.

## **Key Steps to End Youth Homelessness**

To end youth homelessness, our community needs a systematic re-focusing of the current homelessness and mainstream and systems on this task. The strategy must encompass both rehousing and prevention efforts tailored to youth's diverse needs.

Ending youth homelessness requires effective interventions that engage youth as early in the cycle of homelessness as possible and helps to stabilize them in appropriate, supportive environments.

It is absolutely imperative that intervention occurs quickly as critical stages can prevent significant entrenchment and recidivism. Thus, a structural re-focussing on Housing First across agencies and systems and prioritizing of youth is necessary.

## **Collaborative Community Response**

We are proposing that a collaborative approach is established to redesign the homeless youth service system led by the Ministry of Children & Youth Services and inclusive of involvement with Housing and Urban affairs to ensure that we close the gap between the ministries with regard to service provision to youth. To this end, the homeless youth service system must include the following key elements:

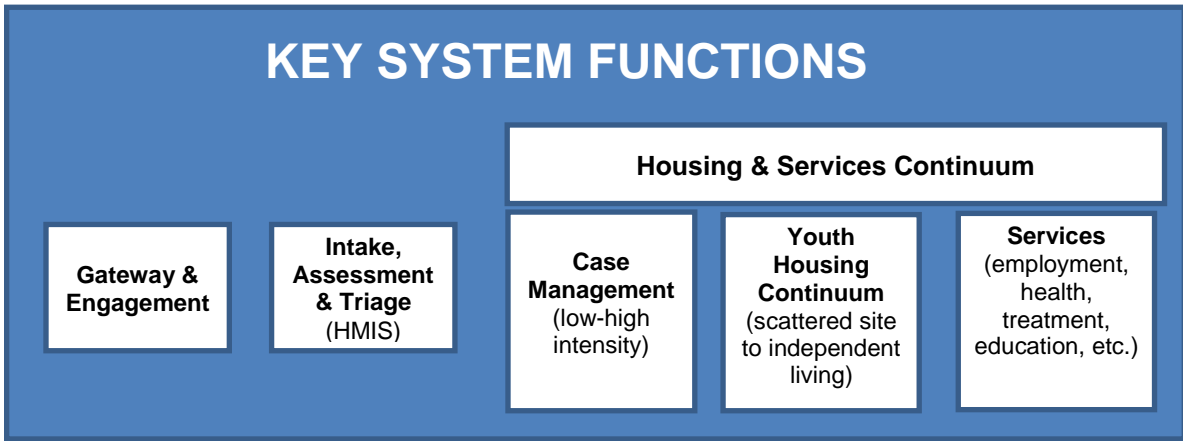
- Shared accountability and philosophy throughout the community for homeless youth service system and outcomes is developed.
- Community resources are acquired and mobilized to address homeless youth issues.
- Approaches are research and outcomes-based, integrated, accountable, measurable, comprehensive, and efficient (Kidd & Davidson 2006).
- Interventions engage youth as partners in planning and decision-making. Each youth should be seen as an individual and an adult-in-progress, with unique strengths and assets.
- The diversity of the 'at risk' and homeless population, particularly in ethnicity and sexual orientation, is appropriately addressed in program design and throughout service delivery.
- A holistic systems approach is focused on youth who are homeless and those who are at risk and incorporates rehousing and prevention efforts.

Therefore the clients may be:

- Street involved youth, using shelters, drop-ins, outreach or other street level services
- Youth in precarious housing situations, including couch surfing or at risk for homelessness
- Youth involved with Child Welfare or in foster care
- Youth involved with the justice system and/or in correctional facilities
- Youth displaying risk behaviors in educational settings
- Youth in families experiencing domestic violence, with Child Welfare involvement or at risk for homelessness

We are proposing that each community, one body leads a collaborative response to ending youth homelessness. Lead organizations can be CFSA's, DFNA's, community based agencies or collaborative partnerships under contract with Children & Youth Services. This organization will have the lead role in coordinating the response to prevention and rehousing and facilitating collaboration and coordination. Government and community partners must fulfill critical roles and assume leadership as well.

The lead agency will coordinate key system functions, depicted in the chart below, in the ending youth homelessness system. The services and programs will likely be delivered through the realignment and enhancement of existing programs or creation of new services.



Collaboration and partnership with government services are absolutely essential. Homeless youth have complex needs that require multi-governmental and ministerial engagement.

The Ministries outlined below play leading roles in the systems approach to ending youth homelessness in Alberta. Local key stakeholders also include municipalities, FCSS, United Way, Police Services, health authorities, school boards and the variety of poverty, youth and homeless serving agencies.



## **System Component 1: Gateway & Engagement Services**

There are no wrong doors; youth should be able to access the service continuum at multiple points of entry. Therefore, we are envisioning gateway and engagement services which target and seek out youth, and are also easily accessible to those seeking assistance for themselves or someone else. Gateway and engagement services can meet the urgent and basic needs of youth in an effort to gain their trust and can also be a point of contact to access a broader range of services.

### *Outreach*

Specialized outreach teams can target both youth who are homeless or at risk but also the systems that they might be engaged with at the time. There is a need to enhance outreach services to focus on rehousing. Outreach can provide basic system navigation given youth readiness for intervention as well. Outreach services can focus on engaging youth in the shelter system and on the street alongside other services providers.

The role of outreach as engagement extends to the systems that interact with youth as well. These include correctional, education, health and foster care settings. Outreach has a role in engaging stakeholders in these systems to enhance understanding of homelessness risk in their youth population and ensure appropriate assessments and referrals are implemented. This is particularly critical for prevention efforts as signs of mental illness, family instability and poverty are clear precursors to youth homelessness that can be identified early through the engagement of schools in interventions. Outreach services can increase awareness in these systems of warning signs and what actions could be taken to address them.

### *Shelters, Drop-Ins & Day Services - Youth Opportunity Centers*

Shelters provide essential services to youth. To end homelessness for youth, these services must focus efforts on engaging youth in the rehousing process. By employing the common intake HMIS process, they can ensure appropriate connections to case managers are made for youth experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

We envision that shelters will be enhanced to become barrier-free Opportunity Centers that supports homeless youth to move beyond their condition or protects them while homeless, regardless of age or status. Opportunity Centers are accessible primary points of contact for homeless youth and children to access a variety of supportive services that enables them to overcome the obstacles of homelessness. They can provide shelter and basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter and connect youth through networking arrangements with local social service providers to programs that address a variety of needs including: rehousing, legal, mental health counseling, medical care, employment counseling, child care, transportation, educational programs, computer literacy needs. A variety of Opportunity Centers can be developed to appropriately address the needs of youth

under and above 18, who are at different developmental stages and should not be co-located.

It is important to note that Opportunity Centers can also be virtual. We believe the 211 service operated by the Distress Center has an outstanding capacity to serve as a connector to interventions for homeless and at-risk youth and families. This service will also enhance preventative efforts` accessibility as a one-stop shop for information on services and referrals.

Priority needs for this component include:

- Creation of outreach teams focused on street-involved youth & homeless serving agencies.
- Development of Outreach team targeting early intervention in schools, child care settings, foster care and group homes, families of youth interacting with the justice system, families with children or youth at risk of homeless. These systems should in turn take leadership in implementing early intervention activities that streamline access to other system components.
- Increased emergency housing capacity, particularly for youth without child welfare status and ages of 18 to 24 to provide developmentally appropriate supports that are distinct from the adult system.
- Enhanced existing street services and shelters to take on Opportunity Centre roles focused on rehousing.
- Enhanced 211 capacities to function as virtual Opportunity Center for homeless and at risk youth.

## **System Component 2: Intake, Assessment & Triage**

The creation of a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is critical to this effort so that that data can be collected following the same standards across a community of care. Data can be analyzed to assess how long youth are homeless, what their needs are, what the causes of homelessness are, how people interact with mainstream systems of care, the effectiveness of interventions, and the number of homeless youth. An HMIS would ensure that the youth response is interconnected with the wider ending homelessness initiative underway.

The key elements of HMIS include common data elements, triage process, intervention matching, and shared outcomes. By collecting the same data from clients and assessing them using similar tools, both homeless and at risk youth can be better matched to rehousing or prevention interventions. The employment of a unique client identifier will also be extremely valuable in tracking the flow of individuals through systems, particularly as this will increase our capacity to tailor interventions for maximum impact.

This database system should be able accessible at various points in the system. At minimum, all outreach and shelters services should use the system. This process has to have a “backdoor”; in other words, it must be linked to available programs and their criteria for re-housing, counseling, treatment, employment, etc. The database should be able to match the client needs with appropriate intervention,

while taking into account program criteria and capacity. Therefore, HMIS will also be able to track system capacity to respond to homelessness demands.

A final element necessary is that of outcomes achieved. Common outcomes and indicators across the province are absolutely necessary to determine the efficacy of interventions and ensure an ongoing feedback loop to improve strategies.

By incorporating the basic data elements, a common prioritization process, intervention matching, and shared outcomes into the provincial HMIS, we can ensure that provincially wide system coordination is possible for maximum efficiencies and client outcomes.

In this case, the role of the lead agency is to monitor flow through the system, identify issues, trends, and system improvements which can be implemented at various points in the system. The role of partners is to implement HMIS and use its common intake and referral process.

HMIS components and capacities are outlined below.

<b>HMIS Components</b>	<b>Capacities</b>
1. Client Intake & Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client specific tracking of intake process</li> <li>• Demographic and basic assessment of needs</li> </ul>
2. Service Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services delivered by provider</li> <li>• Services received by clients</li> <li>• Ability to plan, schedule and follow-up on delivery of services</li> <li>• Assess gaps in service across the service and housing continuum</li> </ul>
3. Case Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to capture change over time</li> <li>• Goals and outcomes tracking</li> <li>• Ability to measure each client's progress in achieving goals</li> </ul>
4. Information and Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database of available resources</li> <li>• On-line referrals</li> <li>• Possible electronic submission of applications and benefits eligibility assessment</li> </ul>
5. Benefit Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calculate eligibility for programs</li> <li>• Provide list of programs to apply for with contact and application information</li> <li>• Printing application form</li> <li>• Printing of completed application</li> <li>• Submission of completed application</li> </ul>
6. Housing Locator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing affordability calculations to determine affordable rent payment</li> <li>• Housing search function: All units, Available units, Affordable units</li> </ul>

To successfully develop this system component, the following actions are necessary:

- Government of Alberta sets HMIS data, technical and privacy standards, determines the high level outcomes, makes HMIS participation mandatory for all provincially funded programs, ensures appropriate data sharing is in place across ministries and with agencies, and resources the effort on an ongoing basis.
- Calgary agencies collaborate to develop and implement HMIS locally led by the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

### **System Component 3: Housing and Services Continuum**

We know that youth face a multitude of barriers and issues and that no one solution fits all. We are therefore proposing that a range of case management supports, housing options and services area available to meet the particular needs of the youth.

#### ***A. Case Management***

The most critical component of the proposed system is that of case management. Case management has been used successfully with homeless families and adults (James, Smith, & Mann, 1991; Toro et al., 1997) and research suggests that it is effective with homeless youth as well (Paradise et al., 2001, Cauce et al. 1994).

The case manager is one individual or a team that essentially wraps around the client to support their stabilization in housing. The case manager might deliver services, like counseling or financial literacy themselves, or might connect the client with experts in the community who specialize in the service. The case manager is an expert system navigator; they are able to advocate for the client with systems including social housing, income supports or foster care to ensure clients' needs are met most efficiently and effectively.

Case management services receive referrals from a variety of sources including youth, systems (schools, Child Welfare, Corrections, Calgary Police Service, etc.), 211, outreach, shelters, etc. The case manager's work begins at the point where youth accept or request assistance. All youth, whether at risk or homeless, should be assigned a case manager who will be responsible for addressing the individual's housing and supports needs.

Case managers collaborate with shelters and outreach workers as well as a variety of other services to conduct needs assessments and develop case plans (Burt, Pearson, & Montgomery 2005). The case manager facilitates access to housing by collaborating with the housing locator teams and connects clients to clinical support (health, mental health, addictions treatment) and other services.

Through a common assessment, the acuity of youth will be established to determine the level of intensity needed in case management, housing and service needs. In certain cases, youth acuity could so severe, that a “Pathways for Youth” would be most appropriate to address complex needs of mental health, addictions, abuse and chronic homelessness. Pathways employs the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) approach and uses a multi-disciplinary team approach with low caseloads (about 10:1) to provide intensive supports that meet the clinical, housing and other rehabilitative supports of people who have mental illnesses. It has proven effective in reducing inpatients hospitalization, promoting continuity of care, and increasing community tenure and stability.

Some youth might only need limited supports for a shorter period of time; case management intensity can be adjusted to fit their situations.

Case management ensures that youth gain access to mainstream supports, such as Income Supports, health benefits, education, employment training, counseling, addiction and health treatment, legal assistance, employment, community reintegration, etc. based on their particular needs.

The case manager will also work with a specialized housing locator and landlord liaison team to secure appropriate housing placement for the youth. Based on their particular needs and capacities, youth will be rehoused in market apartments, non-market housing, permanent housing with supports, and congregate living arrangements. The case manager will work with rehoused youth to ensure community integration, stabilization, reconnection to schools, employment, family, etc. as appropriate is achieved.

The case manager ensures that the youth is able to access income supports to pay for housing and other costs. Funds for damage deposit, first month rent, furniture and other start up costs, ongoing rent supports and income assistance as well as homeless eviction prevention funds should be available to all youth, regardless of status or age. The case manager works with the housing locator to ensure these are in place for the youth.

For homeless youth who are under 18 at the time of intake, case managers connect with Child Welfare social workers to assist in assessing whether family reunification, care placement, group home or independent living are appropriate for the client.

### *Preventative Efforts*

Case managers do not limit their efforts to youth who are homeless. They can be effective intervention agents to prevent homelessness. For example, if outreach and a teach identify a youth whose family is facing eviction, the case manager can intervene to assist that family's stabilization by facilitating access to income supports and emergency eviction funds.

Case managers can also intervene in a preventative fashion in cases where young offenders are being released to their families. In this case, a case manager can work with the youth and the family to connect them to supports that facilitate stabilization and reduce future crime involvement, family conflict and homelessness. This can also be the case for families involved with Child Welfare as the case manager can collaborate with family enhancement services.

To ensure discharging from Corrections and Child Welfare, as well as Alberta Health Services (hospitals, mental health and addictions facilities), does not result in homelessness for youth, there is a need for these systems to collaborate with case managers to ensure discharge planning includes permanent housing with longer term supports. A common intake and prioritization system will ensure effective systems coordination and outcomes monitoring.

The long term case management support is critical to ensure successful transitions since many homeless youth lack basic life skills, including meal preparation, household cleaning, time management, and budgeting (Aviles & Helfrich 2004, Teare, Authier, & Peterson (1994). Such skills are essential if they are to successfully transition out of homelessness and into successful adult functioning.

### *Foster Care Discharging*

Youth aging out of foster care can greatly benefit from an intensive case management model that would involve the assessment of service needs across a number of domains, advocacy for the provision of services, coordination of service provision, and monitoring of service delivery. Small caseloads and frequent contact between case managers and youth would be important to keep youth who lack support from family members or other adults from falling through the cracks and because the quality of the client-case manager relationship is a key predictor of successful outcomes (Casey Family Programs, 2005; Thompson et al., 2006).

It is important to ensure funding is in place to help foster youth with their first month's rent, security deposits, and other assistance. Children and Youth Services can collaborate with the case management service to support foster youth living independently to partake in school, have access to employment training and have the income necessary to maintain housing. The Ministry should support initiative that ensure a continuum of housing options for foster youth is in place appropriate for their developmental stage. This includes group homes, transitional living apartments and independent living with supports. Emergency rental assistance, temporary rental subsidies, and furniture and appliances are critical to successful transitions as well.

### *Discharging from Corrections*

When youth become involved with the justice system, they can become trapped in a cycle of homelessness and incarceration. If they return to the streets after their release, there is a strong chance they will become involved in the same behaviors

that initially led to their arrest (NAEH 2002). Programs that assist youthful offenders to find housing and stay housed have the potential not only to prevent homelessness but also to reduce recidivism in the criminal justice system. Case managers can work with the young offender and Corrections staff to create an individualized wrap-around plan that addresses housing and other service needs. In some cases, this plan can involve reunification with parents or other family members.

Critical priorities to ensure this function is successful include:

- Creation of a “Pathways for Youth” multidisciplinary case management team for youth with complex addictions, mental health and health and social issues.
- Develop an intensive case management team for street-involved youth who do not have medium levels of acuity. Staff to client ratios should be low to ensure appropriate levels of supports.
- Develop a system navigator-case management team focused on early intervention in systems to stabilize youth in family settings able to deliver low to high intensity services. Teams should target youth and families through engagement with Corrections facilities, diversion programs, schools, child welfare services.
- Development of case management teams focused youth being discharged from corrections, foster care, and health facilities.
- Enhanced system collaboration for discharge planning between systems and case management teams.

## **B. Youth Housing Continuum**

Case managers will ensure that youth are supported to maintain housing. Best practices point to the need for the implementation of supports that follow the youth irrespective of their housing to meet diverse needs. The presence of a case manager, or case management team, assists youth to develop independent living skills by combining housing and services while affording residents the rights and responsibilities of tenancy.

The US National Alliance to End Homelessness notes that a Youth Housing Continuum should not set predetermined time limits and must allow youth to transition from one housing program to another according to their individual developmental stages. Based upon the needs and preferences of a given youth, such housing could take any number of forms from shared homes to scattered-site, independent apartments with or without roommates.

Youth should have the flexibility to move among housing programs as they gain greater independent living skills and economic stability, including the ability to re-enter housing programs and move back along the continuum if their current needs or abilities change. Responding to the needs of homeless youth and engaging them in determining their housing needs with developmentally appropriate housing models along a housing continuum will increase their future independence (NAEH 2006, 2007).

Youth housing can take a number of forms:

1. housing dispersed throughout a community and usually rented from a private landlord (i.e., scattered site);
2. single, multi-unit buildings dedicated to youth and young adults (i.e., single site or congregate); and
3. units or entire floors set-aside especially for youth and young adults in affordable housing developments (i.e., set-aside units).

### *Housing Locators and Landlord Liaisons*

The role of housing locators and landlord liaisons is to secure non-market and market housing for youth transitioning to independence or to assist them and their families to obtain appropriate and affordable housing if they are at risk of becoming homeless or homeles. The Rapid Exit Families program operated by CUPS uses this model successfully for homeless families. It can be modified and expanded to target youth and families at risk.

This process includes longer term engagement with landlords to ensure positive relations and dispute resolution. The locators and liaisons create partnerships and collaborative relationships with landlords, public housing authorities and other housing providers to increase the supply and availability of apartments and other housing options for youth. Youth who are living on their own but are under 18 should have access to social and market housing opportunities.

Housing locators should ensure their inventory includes a continuum of housing options for youth: scattered-site apartments, supervised apartments, shared homes (for four or five youth), host homes, and boarding homes. Youth move from more structured to less restrictive living arrangements, depending on the level of support and services they need. Housing should be in communities where they will have access to employment opportunities, social services, transportation and social support systems that will help increase the odds for success.

Priority needs for this component include:

- Development of a specialized Rapid Exit Youth program.
- Enhanced Rapid Exit program or new program to support at risk families and youth.
- Increased access of income and rent supports as well as access to social housing for youth, including those under 18.
- Increased housing opportunities appropriate to a diversity of youth needs including scattered site apartments and group homes that ensure greater levels of self-sufficiency as youth transition to independence.
- Funds for damage deposit, first month rent, furniture and other start up costs, ongoing rent supports and income assistance as well as homeless eviction prevention funds should be available to all youth, regardless of status or age.

### **C. Services**

Youth need a range of services to be successful in their transition to adulthood. This includes access to mainstream supports, such as Income Supports, health services, education, employment training, counseling, addiction and health

treatment, legal assistance, employment, community reintegration, etc. based on their particular needs.

The role of the case manager is critical to ensure that the right connections are made with available resources. By assisting youth with system navigation, case managers are able to advocate for clients and make informed referrals.

The complex needs of youth require additional addictions treatment and detox facilities targeted for youth. Several policy changes must also be undertaken to ensure youth have access to various services particularly those provided by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Housing and Urban Affairs and Employment and Immigration. These are outlined in the recommendations section.

### *Family & School Based Interventions*

Given the established fact that family dynamics and conflict lead young people into homelessness, most promising interventions most directly relevant to youth at high risk of homelessness, include family interventions to prevent child abuse and neglect, reduce juvenile violence, and support successful transitions. Programs that can improve family relationships, and thus prevent youth from becoming homeless, include:

- for parents, parenting skills classes, and teaching conflict resolution skills.
- for youth (e.g., crisis counseling, mentoring) to enable them to continue to live at home by improving relationships with parents/caregivers
- for youth to live outside the home if the home is deemed an unsafe or unsupportive environment

School-based programs have the potential to prevent homelessness in adolescents at risk to run away by providing pro-social niches outside the home where they may be less vulnerable to influences of deviant peers (Johanson, Duffy, & Anthony, 1996). Youth may have more opportunity to develop positive social bonds that discourage deviant behavior often associated with family conflict (Hirschi, 1969). In-school and after-school prevention programs have shown to be effective in reducing the risk of youth delinquency and substance abuse (Crank, Crank, & Christensen, 2003; Pierce & Shields, 1998), and thus, may be extended to reductions of homelessness.

Schools can ensure teachers and support staff are trained in recognizing mental illness, family violence, and homelessness risk in youth and children. If intervention through family supports and diagnosis are completed early enough, homelessness could be prevented. This requires cooperation between health, mental health, education, children's services, justice and parents and family wrap-around supports. While some programs are in place in the school system, a focused strategy must be developed to ensure a consistent assessment, referral, and intervention is in place for those who need it. We know that families engaged with Child Welfare, living in poverty, and single-parent led face a higher risk of both becoming homeless or with children that could become homeless.

Alberta Learning can explore:

- Increasing educational opportunities for street-involved youth and increased programs that target early school leavers;
- Developing flexible programs to assist youth complete high school;
- Conducting comprehensive mental health screening and intervention with at-risk children using tested interventions.

### *Employment*

Although preventing homelessness is usually not a primary goal of employment programs, it stands to reason that youth and young adults are less likely to become homeless if they are self-sufficient and stably employed. A number of other workforce development and support services can help prevent homelessness among at-risk youth.

Job Corps is the largest and most comprehensive residential vocational training and education program for at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Youth aging out of foster care and runaway or homeless youth are among the target populations of Job Corps. In a multi-year evaluation of the program, eligible youth were randomly assigned to a treatment group that received Job Corps services or a control group that did not. They were interviewed at the time of enrollment and then again at 12, 30, and 48 months after random assignment. The researchers did not look specifically at homelessness. However, Job Corps participation was related to independent living at the 48-month interview. A slightly smaller percentage of program group members were living with their parents, and a slightly larger percentage were living with a partner and reported being the head of the household (Schochet, Burghardt & Glazerman 2001).

Federal and provincial ministries can collaborate to develop similar programs for at risk youth in Calgary.

### *Court Diversion*

The Ministry of Justice should continue to work towards diverting youth from incarceration into appropriate programs to address their needs, including addictions treatment, mental and physical health care, education and employment skills. In fact, such efforts should be enhanced.

When young people cannot be diverted from incarceration, agreed upon protocols with judicial facilities to facilitate the successful reintegration of Youth into the community after incarceration are necessary.

## Priority Recommendations

Homeless youth have complex needs and are extremely vulnerable to exploitation, violence and abuse, addictions, mental illness, health issues, criminal involvement etc. This section focuses on the particular role of the Government of Alberta in ending youth homelessness.

**1. Children & Youth Services leads a provincial effort to end youth homelessness.** The Government of Alberta has the mandate to assist children at risk and youth transitioning to adulthood. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services provides leadership to promote the well-being of children, youth, and families. It also promotes greater capacity in community services to support children in reaching their potential and supports the delivery of quality services focused on improving outcomes for children, youth and families (Children and Youth Services Business Plan 2008-2011, Gough 2006).

Children and Youth Services should work with municipalities, community groups and agencies, as well as other ministries (Alberta Learning, Employment & Immigration, Housing & Urban Affairs, Health Services, Justice, Secretariat for Action on Homelessness and Safe Communities Secretariat) to develop a Ten Year Plan to End Youth Homelessness, which follows the tenets set out by the Alberta Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and the Housing First principle. Implementation of the plans in Alberta communities should engage key stakeholder in a collaborative response model under the system planning leadership of a community based organization or Child and Family Service Authorities. Critical attention should be given in tailoring the plan to the needs for diverse and newcomer communities, Aboriginal people, youth with disabilities, and GLBTQ youth (Trocme, Knoke & Blackstock 2004, Chan et al 2005).

**2. The Government of Alberta should adopt an inclusive definition of youth homelessness.** Given the diverse developmental stages of youth, the following definition of a homeless youth should be considered:

“A homeless youth is an unaccompanied person under the age of 24 lacking a permanent nighttime residence. They can be living on the street, in shelters, couch surfing, in unsafe and insecure housing, and living in abusive situations. They may also be about to be discharged without the security of a regular nighttime residence from a care, correction, health, or any other facility.”

**3. Increase access to Children & Youth Services supports for homeless youth under the age of 18.** Any youth under the age of 18 who is homeless is at extreme risk for abuse, criminal involvement, exploitation, poverty, and health issues. Therefore, any homeless youth under the age of majority (18) should be the responsibility of Children & Youth Services, regardless of their past involvement with this ministry or their Child Welfare intervention status. The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* should be amended to ensure that any youth

under the age of 18 has equal access to services and supports available to youth with Child Welfare Status.

**4. Enhance access to transitions to independence supports for older youth up to the age of 24.** The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* contains provisions to support youth in planning for a successful transition to adulthood. Caseworkers are required to work with the youth, caregivers and other professionals in preparing a *Transition to Independence Plan*. The plan is to help youth make a successful transition to adulthood by supporting them in developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities. *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Regulation S.6* further specifies the services that can be provided from ages 18 to 22 years that include living accommodation, financial assistance to meet the necessities of life, and any other services required to assist the person to achieve independence. Unfortunately not all you have the benefit of these services and supports as these are not available to those who did not have child intervention status before the age of 18.

Given the evidence of risk and the developmental stages of youth as old as 24, the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* should be amended to ensure that any youth up to the age of 24 has equal access to services and supports available to youth with Child Welfare Status if they are experiencing or have experienced homelessness.

**5. Adopt a zero discharge into homelessness policy in foster care, group homes, health and correctional facilities and develop housing stability outcomes to ensure implementation.** We know that what gets measured gets done. It is critical that mainstream systems are held accountable to the successful implementation of permanent housing upon discharging youth. We strongly encourage the development of cross-ministry outcomes measuring the successful placement of discharges in permanent housing with supports and long term housing stability (i.e. target of 85% of clients remain stably housed one year post-intervention).

**6. Increase the accessibility and availability of a continuum of housing for homeless and 'at risk' youth.** Permanent housing and supports are critical to ending youth homelessness. The Government of Alberta should ensure that a youth housing continuum is available based on the needs of clients which includes a range of options such as:

- scattered site housing dispersed throughout a community (usually rental market);
- single, multi-unit buildings dedicated to youth that are single site or congregate (such as the Residential Facilities operated under the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*; and
- units or entire floors set-aside especially for youth adults in affordable housing developments

The Government of Alberta should undertake a review of current capacity to provide youth with permanent housing and wrap-around supports to maintain housing stability. A capital plan to create new units dedicated to youth should be

developed based on province-wide assessment. In Calgary, immediate action (2009-2010) should target a minimum of 300 units of youth-specific congregate living (i.e. group homes with supports on site) to accommodate pent up demand from those homeless under 18 and an additional 300 scattered-site units without on-site supervision are required for more mature youth at developmental stages appropriate for independent living.

**7. Ensure all youth have access to street level supports and youth emergency shelters.** In particular, the current gap in youth shelters for those ages 18 to 24 must be addressed. In addition, all homeless youth under 18 should have equal access to youth emergency and transitional housing regardless of their Child Welfare intervention status.

**8. Ensure supports for homeless and at risk youth are adequately resourced and qualified to service complex, high acuity clients.** Clearly, the homeless youth population is extremely vulnerable and complex. Many present with concurrent mental illness, health, and addiction issues superimposed on experiences of abuse, exploitation and criminal involvement. It is critical that the supports and services we provide for these youth are appropriately resourced to do the job. Professional teams with appropriate expertise are required to effectively assist these clients. Current compensation in the non-profit sector agencies dealing with this population do not allow for such expertise to be available for those most in need. If we expect the non-profit sector to take on these cases, we must ensure they are resourced and trained to do so. A full review of wages in the non-profit agencies serving the homeless youth population should be undertaken; compensation and competencies should be benchmarked with Child and Family Service Authorities staff serving similar client groups.

**10. Prioritize the creation of addictions treatment and detox facilities targeted for youth.** Given the high acuity youth present with, and the co-occurrence of multiple issues with addictions, services specialized in assisting youth are critical. Youth need safe spaces in which to deal with such issues apart from adults. Segmentation of treatment should ensure younger youth (under 18) have access to separate services from older youth.

**11. Streamline access to income and rent supports for youth transitioning to independence.**

Youth under the age 18 who are homeless should be able to access income supports from Children's Services. If it is determined that the youth does not need intervention, but the family and youth believe that the youth cannot return home, the family is asked to make private arrangements for the youth to live with another adult. If the parent cannot or will not provide financial support but approves of the adult caregiver, the adult caregiver can apply for Child and Youth Support benefits. It is critical that all youth under 18 who are homeless are also eligible to receive these supports, even if they are not residing with a parent-approved guardian. Given that many youth are homeless due to family instability, access to income supports for those for whom independent living is appropriate is critical to obtain housing is critical to ending their homelessness especially as this income is used to obtain and maintain housing. A full review of the current gaps in the income

assistance system, which includes rent supports and the Homeless Eviction Prevention Fund should be undertaken to ensure all homeless youth have ready access to the resources they need.

**12. Ensure appropriate case management supports are available for youth to prevent and end homelessness, particularly focused on discharge points.**

Clearly, there is a gap in the continuum of services for youth at risk and homeless in the area of case management. The following are recommended approaches to filling this gap:

- Creation of a “Pathways for Youth” multidisciplinary case management team applying the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) approach for youth with complex addictions, mental health and health and social issues.
- Development of an intensive case management team for street-involved youth with medium levels of acuity. Staff to client ratios should be low to ensure appropriate levels of supports.
- Development a system navigator-case management team focused on early intervention in systems to stabilize youth in family settings with the ability to deliver low to high intensity services. Teams should target youth and families through engagement with Corrections facilities, diversion programs, schools, child welfare services.
- Ensure collaborative discharge planning between systems and case management teams focused on youth being discharged from corrections, foster care, and health facilities should be

**13. Implement and resource of Homeless Management Information System to facilitate the development of common intake and assessment processes for all youth.**

This measure will ensure common standards for data collection; facilitate system planning and outcomes measurement to improve interventions. By employing a common HMIS throughout homeless serving agencies, we will ensure appropriate communication across system and services which may not be specifically focused on youth as well.

**14. Enhance gateway and engagement services.** Particular services that should be enhanced include:

- outreach teams focused on street-involved youth & homeless serving agencies;
- outreach teams targeting early intervention in schools, child care settings, foster care and group homes, families of youth interacting with the justice system, families with children or youth at risk of homeless;
- existing street services and shelters to take on Opportunity Centre roles focused on rehousing and 211 capacity to function as virtual one-stop shop for homeless and at risk youth.

**13. Develop youth-focused Housing Locators and Landlord Liaisons initiatives.**

Programs can include the development of a specialized Rapid Exit Youth program and/or enhancement of Rapid Exit program or new program to support at risk families and youth. Clients of such initiatives should have ready access funds for damage deposit, first month rent, furniture and other start up costs, ongoing rent supports and homeless eviction prevention funds are available to all youth, regardless of status or age.

## The Ten Essentials

The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness has developed the following essentials as a guide to help communities identify the minimum requirements for an effective permanent solution to prevent and end youth homelessness (NAEH 2006). Using this framework, Calgary can develop an ending youth homelessness plan and identify key roles for the Government of Alberta.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>1. PLAN</b></p> <p>Your community has a set of strategies focused on ending youth homelessness. A wide range of players, such as government programs, elected officials, homeless providers, etc. have made funding and implementation commitments to these strategies.</p>		<p>Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness</p> <p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services</p>

### Potential Strategies

- Ensure strategies focused on youth are implemented as part of the Plan.
- Coordinate policy change at senior levels.
- Support community initiatives through dissemination of research, best practices and training on youth homelessness.
- Support and encourage service providers and systems commitment and planning to coordinate a systems approach to ending youth homelessness through prevention and rehousing efforts
- Youth should be engaged in meaningful ways, shifting their role as a recipient of service to that of a leader and decision maker in program development, delivery and evaluation, organizational management, and advocacy.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>2. DATA</b></p> <p>Your community has a homelessness management information system (HMIS) that can be analyzed to assess how long youth are homeless, what their needs are, what the causes of homelessness are, how people interact with mainstream systems of care, the effectiveness of</p>	<p>- FOIP/PIPPA</p> <p>- Social Services (AISH, Income support databases)</p> <p>- Health Records</p> <p>- Shelter Standards</p> <p>- Corrections Records</p>	<p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p> <p>Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness</p> <p>Privacy Commissioner</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellness</p> <p>Solicitor General</p>

interventions, and the number of homeless youth.		Employment, Immigration & Industry  Seniors & Community Supports  Advanced Education & Technology
--	--	---

**Potential Strategies**

Implement HMIS throughout Alberta.

- Develop HMIS data, technical and privacy standards, high level outcomes,
- Make HMIS mandatory for all provincially funded programs,
- Ensure appropriate data sharing is in place across ministries and with agencies,
- Resources the HMIS effort on an ongoing basis.
- Support research on homelessness that addresses at risk youth-specific research questions and support aims of Calgary’s 3 Year Research Agenda to End Homelessness.
- Support research collaborations between academic, community based organizations and the public sector.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>3. EMERGENCY PREVENTION</b></p> <p>Your community has in place an emergency homelessness prevention program that includes crisis counseling, family reunification services, rent assistance, and landlord intervention.</p>	<p>Employment &amp; Immigration            - Income Supports            - Health benefits - National Child Benefit            - Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Fund</p> <p>Seniors &amp; Community Supports            - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped            - Persons with Developmental Disabilities</p> <p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs            - Rent supplement programs</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services            - Child Care Subsidies</p>	<p>Service Alberta</p> <p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p> <p>Seniors &amp; Community Supports</p> <p>Employment &amp; Immigration</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellness</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services</p> <p>Education</p>

**Potential Strategies**

- Review current benefits and financial assistance to assess their adequacy and accessibility to youth and families.
- Streamline benefits administration and improve access for youth.
- Ensure youth under 18 are able to access Income Support, the HEP fund and rent supplement if independent living is appropriate.
- Address barriers for homeless individuals to obtain access to these benefits due to lack of permanent address, bank account and/or identification.
- Ensure funds for damage deposit, first month rent, furniture and other start up costs, ongoing rent supports and income assistance as well as homeless eviction prevention funds should be available to all youth, regardless of status or age.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>4. SYSTEM PREVENTION</b></p> <p>Mainstream programs, like child welfare, juvenile corrections, mental health, etc. that provide care and services to youth, consistently assess and respond to their housing needs. Discharge planning includes placement in stable housing for all young people being released from public institutions.</p>	<p>- Correctional &amp; Rehabilitation Programs, Policing, Courts</p> <p>- Alberta Health Services Board – AADAC, AMHB, Health Regions</p> <p>- Child and Family Services Authorities</p>	<p>Solicitor General &amp; Public Security</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellness</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth</p> <p>Alberta Health Services Board – AADAC, AMHB, Health Regions</p> <p>Justice</p>

#### Potential Strategies

- Review current discharging practices and impact on youth homelessness.
- Set homelessness zero discharge into homelessness targets from foster care, corrections, and health services.
- Set clear deadlines to ensure implementation of zero discharge policies and procedures.
- Develop zero discharging pilots for youth leaving care, those awaiting release from jails.
- Develop a system navigator-case management team focused on early intervention in systems to stabilize youth in family settings able to deliver low to high intensity services. Teams should target youth and families through engagement with Corrections facilities, diversion programs, schools, child welfare services.
- Develop case management teams focused youth being discharged from corrections, foster care, and health facilities.
- Enhance family interventions to prevent youth from becoming homeless, including
  - for parents, parenting skills classes, and teaching conflict resolution skills.
  - for youth (e.g., crisis counselling, mentoring) to enable them to continue to live at home by improving relationships with parents/caregivers.
  - for youth to live outside the home if the home is deemed an unsafe or unsupportive environment.
- Develop flexible programs to assist youth complete high school;
- Conduct comprehensive mental health screening and intervention with at-risk children using tested interventions.
- Enhance incarceration diversion for youth into appropriate programs to address their needs, including addictions treatment, mental and physical health care, and education and employment skills.

- Increase educational opportunities for street-involved youth and increase programs that target early school leavers.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>5. OUTREACH</b></p> <p>Your community has an outreach and engagement system designed to reduce barriers and encourage homeless youth to enter appropriate housing linked with appropriate services.</p>	<p>Emergency Medical Services            Police Services            Alberta Learning            Corrections Services            Primary Health Care Services            Child and Family Services Authorities and Delegated First Nation Agencies            Alberta Employment &amp; Immigration Service Centers</p>	<p>Employment &amp; Immigration            Seniors &amp; Community Supports            Health &amp; Wellness            Solicitor General &amp; Public Security</p>

**Potential Strategies**

- Resource existing street services and shelters to take on Opportunity Centre roles focused on rehousing and 211 capacity to function as virtual Opportunity Center for homeless and at risk youth.
- Assess relevant departments to establish the nature and key points of interface with homeless youth and at-risk populations.
- Create a one-stop point of access to Alberta services and integrate this with Opportunity Centres.
- Fund development of outreach teams focused on street-involved youth & homeless serving agencies.
- Fund outreach initiatives targeting early intervention in schools, child care settings, foster care and group homes, families of youth interacting with the justice system, families with children or youth at risk of homeless.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>6. SHORTEN HOMELESSNESS</b></p> <p>The shelter and transitional housing system in your community is organized to reduce or minimize the length of time people remain homeless, and the number of times they become homeless. Outcome measures will be key to this effort.</p>		<p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs            Children &amp; Youth Services</p>

**Potential Strategies**

- Introduce performance based contracting for shelters that funds agencies to successfully move people out of homelessness and into stable permanent housing as quickly as possible. Set capacity, re-housing, service quality, housing retention targets and create a financial incentive for performance.
- Increased emergency housing capacity, particularly for youth without child welfare status and ages of 18 to 24 to provide developmentally appropriate supports that are distinct from the adult system.
- Require shelters to engage in re-housing through performance based contracting.
- Fund the development of a specialized Rapid Exit Youth program and enhancement of the Rapid Exit for Families program or new program to support at risk families and youth.
- Fund the creation of a “Pathways for Youth” multidisciplinary case management team for youth with complex addictions, mental health and health and social issues.
- Fund the development of an intensive case management team for street-involved youth who do not have medium levels of acuity.

<b>10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan</b>	<b>Provincial Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Relevant Departments</b>
<p><b>7. SERVICES</b></p> <p>When youth are housed, they have rapid access to funded services, and mainstream programs provide the bulk of these services. They should have direct access to public programs and services for health, mental health, substance use disorders, parenting classes, life skills training, etc. just as any member of the general public.</p>	<p>Alberta Health Services Board (AADAC, AMHB)</p> <p>Employment &amp; Immigration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Income Supports</li> <li>- Health benefits</li> <li>- Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Fund</li> </ul> <p>Seniors &amp; Community Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped</li> <li>- Persons with Developmental Disabilities</li> </ul>	<p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p> <p>Seniors &amp; Community Supports</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellness</p> <p>Culture &amp; Community Spirit</p> <p>Employment &amp; Immigration</p> <p>Finance &amp; Enterprise</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services</p>

**Potential Strategies**

- Review Provincial capacity to provide addictions and mental health treatment.
- Develop additional addictions treatment and detox facilities targeted for youth.

- Reinforce homeless serving agencies by reviewing funding formulas, the administrative burden placed on agencies and implementing competitive salary standards.
- Implement comprehensive training program for workers in key sectors interfacing with homelessness - i.e. housing first strategies and ensure focus on understanding diverse and complex needs of youth (Aboriginal, immigrant, GLBTQ).

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>8. PERMANENT HOUSING &amp; YOUTH HOUSING CONTINUUM</b></p> <p>The youth shelter and transitional housing system in your community is organized to reduce or minimize the length of time youth remain homeless, and the number of times they become homeless. Outcome measures will be key to this effort. Your community has skilled housing search and housing placement services available for homeless youth and young adults who cannot be reunified with their families.</p> <p>Your community has a sufficient supply of permanent supportive housing to meet the needs of all chronically homeless youth. Your community is implementing a plan to fully address the permanent housing needs of extremely low-income young people.</p>	<p>Municipal Government Act</p> <p>Alberta Housing Act</p> <p>Alberta Social Housing Corporation</p>	<p>Municipal Affairs</p> <p>Aboriginal Relations</p> <p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p>

**Potential Strategies**

- Fund permanent housing options for youth in a variety of forms including scattered site market apartments, group homes, and improved access to non-market housing.
- Streamline access to social housing for youth, and enhance access to those under 18 when appropriate.
- Increase housing opportunities appropriate to a diversity of youth needs including scattered site apartments and group homes that ensure greater levels of self-sufficiency as youth transition to independence.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
---------------------------------	-------------------------	----------------------

<p><b>9. INCOME</b></p> <p>When it is necessary in order to obtain housing, your community assists homeless youth to secure enough income to afford rent, by rapidly linking them with employment and/or benefits. It also connects them to opportunities for increasing their incomes through educational and vocational programs.</p>	<p>Income Supports</p> <p>AISH</p> <p>Tax benefits</p> <p>Child Care subsidies</p> <p>Health benefits</p>	<p>Finance &amp; Enterprise</p> <p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services</p> <p>Seniors &amp; Community Supports</p> <p>Employment &amp; Immigration</p>
---	---	---

**Potential Strategies**

Review availability, adequacy & accessibility for youth at risk and homeless of:

- Homelessness & Eviction Prevention Fund
- Rent supplements
- Income supports & AISH
- Employability incentives for recipients of Income Supports (Not Expected to Work & Temporarily Unable to Work) and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Caregiver, infirm dependant and disability supplement non-refundable tax credit amounts, Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit.
- Child care subsidies to support employment
- Health benefits for low income Albertans
- Collaborate with federal ministries to develop employment programs for at risk youth in Calgary.

10 Essentials of a 10 Year Plan	Provincial Jurisdiction	Relevant Departments
<p><b>10. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>To better serve youth, agencies and providers engage youth in meaningful ways, shifting their role as a recipient of service to that of a leader and decision maker in program development, delivery and evaluation, organizational management, and advocacy.</p> <p>Critical attention should be given in tailoring approaches appropriate for diverse and newcomer communities, Aboriginal people, youth with disabilities, and GLBTQ youth.</p>		<p>Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness</p> <p>Safe Communities Secretariat</p> <p>Finance &amp; Enterprise</p> <p>Housing &amp; Urban Affairs</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services</p> <p>Seniors &amp; Community Supports</p> <p>Employment &amp; Immigration</p> <p>Aboriginal Relations</p> <p>Municipal Affairs</p> <p>Children &amp; Youth Services</p> <p>Culture &amp; Community Spirit</p>

		Health & Wellness Seniors & Community Supports Justice
--	--	--

## Works Cited

Boesky, L., Toro, P., & Bukowski, P. A. 1997. Differences in psychosocial factors among older and younger homeless adolescents found in youth shelters. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 15(2), 19-36.

Burt, M., Pearson, C., & Montgomery, A. 2005. Strategies for preventing homelessness. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Available online at: [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1000874\\_preventing\\_homelessness.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1000874_preventing_homelessness.pdf).

City of Calgary. 2008. 2008 Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary. Available online at: [http://www.calgaryvitalsigns.ca/documents/2008\\_count\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.calgaryvitalsigns.ca/documents/2008_count_full_report.pdf).

City of Calgary. 2008. Fast Facts 4 – Affordable Housing and Homelessness. Available online at: [http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/cns/homelessness/ff\\_04\\_affordable\\_housing\\_homelessness\\_calgary.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/cns/homelessness/ff_04_affordable_housing_homelessness_calgary.pdf)

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC). 2001. Environmental Scan on Youth Homelessness. Available online at: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/b2c/b2c/init.do?language=en&shop=Z01EN&areaID=0000000034&productID=00000000340000000010>.

Cauce, A. et al. 2000. The characteristics and mental health of homeless adolescents: Age and gender differences. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8(4), 230-239.

Cohen, M. 1998. "The Monetary Value of Saving a High-Risk Youth." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 14(1): 5- 33.

Cauce, A., & Morgan, C.. 1994. Effectiveness of intensive case management for homeless adolescents: Results of a 3-month follow-up. *Journal of Emotional and behavioral Disorders*, 2(4).

Chan, S. et al. 2005. The profile of absolute and relative homelessness among immigrants, refugees, and refugee claimants in the GVRD: Final report. Vancouver: MOSAIC. Available online at: [http://www.mosaicbc.com/PDF\\_files/The\\_Profile\\_of\\_Absolute\\_and\\_Relative\\_Homelessness.pdf](http://www.mosaicbc.com/PDF_files/The_Profile_of_Absolute_and_Relative_Homelessness.pdf).

DeMatteo D., et al. 1999. Toronto street youth and HIV/AIDS: prevalence, demographics, and risks. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 25(5):358-366.

Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). n.d. Promising Strategies to End Youth Homelessness – Report to Congress. Available online at: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/docs/reporttocongress\\_youthhomelessness.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/docs/reporttocongress_youthhomelessness.pdf).

Farrow, J. et al. 1992. Health and health needs of homeless and runaway youth. A position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 13, 717-726.

Frankish, J., Hwang S., & Quantz D. 2005. Homelessness and Health in Canada – Research Lessons and Priorities. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, March/April 2005, Vol.96, Supplement 2.

Gardiner H. & Cairns K. 2003. Calgary Homelessness Study 2 - Youth Sector Report. Available online at:  
<http://www.calgaryhomeless.com/files/pdf/Calgary%20Homelessness%20Study%2002-Youth.pdf>.

Gough, P. 2006. Alberta's Child Welfare Systems. Centers for Excellence for Children's Wellbeing. Available online at: <http://www.cecw-cepb.ca/files/file/en/Altachildwelfaresystem46E.pdf>.

Greenblatt, M., & Robertson, M. 1993. Homeless adolescents: Lifestyle, survival strategies and sexual behaviors. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 44, 1177-1180.

Haber, M., & Toro, P. A. 2004. Homelessness among families, children and adolescents: An ecological-developmental perspective. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 7, 123-164.

Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D. & Sedlak, A. 2002. Runaway/Thrownaway children: National estimates and characteristics. *National Incident Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Available online at:  
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/nismart/04/>.

Hoffart I. & Cairns K. 2009. Brief Report on Calgary Youth OIP Projects. Prepared for the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

James, W., Smith, A., & Mann, R. 1991. Educating homeless children: Interprofessional case management. *Childhood Education*, 67(5), 305–308.

Kidd, S. and Davidson L. 2006. Youth Homelessness – A Call for Partnerships between Research and Policy. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, November/December 2006, Vol.97, No.6.

McCaskill, P., Toro, P., & Wolfe, S. 1998. Homeless and matched housed adolescents: A comparative study of psychopathology. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 27, 306-319.

McLean, L. 2005. Seeking Sanctuary - An Exploration of the Realities of Youth Homelessness in Calgary, Summary Report. Available online at:

<http://www.calgaryhomeless.com/files/pdf/Seeking%20Sanctuary%20-%20Youth%20Homelessness.pdf>.

Ministry of Children & Youth Services. 2008. Children & Youth Services Business Plan 2008-2011. Available online at:  
<http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2008/child.pdf>.

Ministry of Children & Youth Services. 2009. Enhancement Policy Manual. Available online at:  
[http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/documents/publications/Enhancement\\_Act\\_Policy\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/documents/publications/Enhancement_Act_Policy_Manual.pdf).

National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2007. Fact Checker - Youth Homelessness. Available at  
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1659/>.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2006. Fundamental Issues to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness. Available online at:  
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1058/>.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2002. Project SAFE, Everett, WA. Available online at: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1114>.

Toro p., Dworsky A. & Fowler P. 2007. Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches. Available online at:  
<http://www.huduser.org/publications/homeless/p6.html>.

Toro, P. et al. 1997. Evaluating an intervention for homeless persons: Results of a field experiment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65, 476–484.

Paradise, M., et al. 2001. The role of relationships in developmental trajectories of homeless and runaway youth. In B. Sarason & S. Duck (Eds.), *Personal relationships: Implications for clinical and community psychology* (pp. 159–179). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Public Health Agency of Canada. 2006. Street Youth in Canada - Findings from Enhanced Surveillance of Canadian Street Youth, 1999–2003. Available online at:  
[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/reports\\_06/pdf/street\\_youth\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/reports_06/pdf/street_youth_e.pdf).

Public Health Agency of Canada. 2006. Sexually Transmitted Infections in Canadian Street Youth - Findings from Enhanced Surveillance of Canadian Street Youth, 1999–2003. Available online at: [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/reports\\_06/pdf/street\\_youth\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/reports_06/pdf/street_youth_e.pdf).

Ray N. 2006. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth – An Epidemic in Homelessness. Prepare for the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force. Available online at:  
<http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/HomelessYouth.pdf>.

Schochet, P., Burghardt, J., & Glazerman, S. 2001. National Job Corps Study: The impacts of Job Corps on participants' employment and related outcomes. Princeton, N.J.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Available online at: [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED457358&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=ED457358](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED457358&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED457358).

Toro, P. & Goldstein, M. 2000. Outcomes among homeless and matched housed adolescents: A longitudinal comparison. Presented at the 108th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Trocme N., Knoke D., & Blackstock, C. 2004. Pathways to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in Canada's child welfare system. *Social Service Review*, Dec. 2004.

United Way of Calgary & Area. 2009. Foundation for the Future – Profile of Promising Approaches to Housing Homeless Youth.

Worthington, C., MacLaurin, B., Huffey, N., Dittmann, D., Kitt, O., Patten, S., & Leech, J.(2009), *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street – Final Report*. Calgary: University of Calgary.