



HOME

TOGETHER, WE CAN DO MORE

Calgary Plan
to Prevent and End
Youth Homelessness
– 2017 Refresh

Prepared for the
Calgary Youth Sector
Refresh Steering Committee

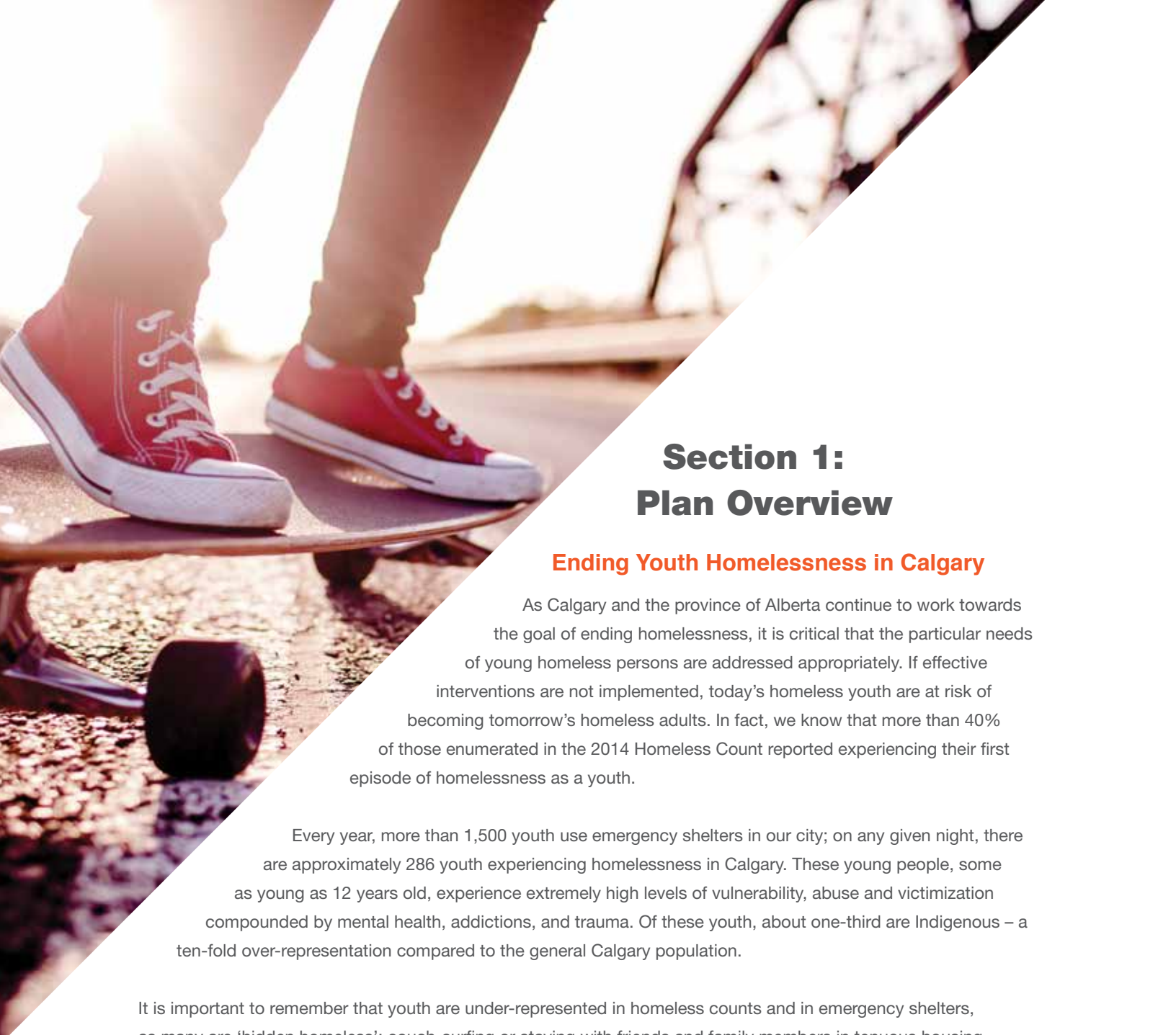


“Instead of our young people feeling inadequate, we must instill in them the understanding that they have the seeds of greatness within them.”

MANMEET BHULLAR

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Section 1: Plan Overview

Ending Youth Homelessness in Calgary

As Calgary and the province of Alberta continue to work towards the goal of ending homelessness, 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. In fact, we know that more than 40% of those enumerated in the 2014 Homeless Count reported experiencing their first episode of homelessness as a youth.

Every year, more than 1,500 youth use emergency shelters in our city; on any given night, there are approximately 286 youth experiencing homelessness in Calgary. These young people, some as young as 12 years old, experience extremely high levels of vulnerability, abuse and victimization compounded by mental health, addictions, and trauma. Of these youth, about one-third are Indigenous – a ten-fold over-representation compared to the general Calgary population.

It is important to remember that youth are under-represented in homeless counts and in emergency shelters, as many are 'hidden homeless': couch-surfing or staying with friends and family members in tenuous housing arrangements, increasing their vulnerability.

Defining Youth Homelessness

Considerable work has been done on defining youth homelessness at a national level consistently. This Plan adopts the national definition of youth homelessness advanced by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness as stated below.

Youth homelessness refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 25 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, and do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable or consistent residence.

In addition to experiencing economic deprivation and a lack of secure housing, young people experiencing homelessness, like all young people, are in the throes of significant developmental (social, physical, emotional and cognitive) changes. As a result, they may not have the education, resources, social supports, personal experience or life skills necessary to foster a safe and nurturing transition to adulthood and independence. Youth homelessness is a complex social issue because as a society we have failed to provide young people and their families with the necessary and adequate supports that will enable them to move forward in their lives in a safe and planned way. Few young people choose to be homeless, wish to be defined by their homelessness, and the experience is generally negative and stressful.

The Opportunity for a Plan ‘Refresh’

In 2011, Calgary became the first jurisdiction in Canada to launch a strategic plan to end youth homelessness. The Calgary Plan to End Youth Homelessness was launched as a collaborative endeavor between the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) and the Youth Sector. The document set out key priorities and innovative measures to move our collective efforts forward at a systems and intervention level; the Plan was the first of its kind in Canada.

Over the past four years since the Plan was launched, considerable changes have ensued. These include the launch of Alberta’s provincial Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness (2015), which sets provincial policy direction and is driving new dollars to community to respond to the issue, as well as the renewed Updated Calgary Plan to End Homelessness (2015). Both of these plans emphasize the critical role community ownership and joint accountability play in order to fully implement priority actions on homelessness.

The change in political leadership presents a unique opportunity to inform a new course for the province around social policy that advances an end to youth homelessness. The provincial youth plan signals a new level of openness in government around policy and practice changes to advance common objectives, particularly relevant in our work with Child Intervention Services and Corrections.

Over the past eight months, key stakeholders have engaged in a process to review and ‘refresh’ the 2011 Calgary Plan to End Youth Homelessness. The Refresh process builds on success and learnings to date, while aligning the Calgary Youth Plan with provincial direction and best practices. For more details on the Refresh process, see Appendix 7. More recently, the Alberta government’s Valuing Our Mental Health (2016) report sets out a new direction for the province focused on prevention and enhanced policy and service integration.¹

It is of further note that we are keenly attuned to the changes in our broader macro-economic environment: Calgary, and the province of Alberta, are in the midst of continuing economic downturn resulting from the oil price declines that began to take hold in 2014. The reality of the current situation has tremendous implications for our approach to ending youth homelessness; this refreshed Plan provides us an opportunity to adjust our strategy in real-time in response to these dynamics.

¹ Appendix 1 provides a summary of policy directions relevant to this Plan.

Shifting our Focus

Since Housing First was introduced in 2008 by the Calgary Plan to End Homelessness, key shifts in our approach have taken root: whereas youth experiencing homelessness were expected to address the issues leading to their homelessness, such as mental health issues or addictions, before being housed - with Housing First, the priority is to quickly move youth experiencing homelessness into appropriate housing aligned with supports as needed, where they are better able to work on the issues contributing to their homelessness.

While notable progress has been made in our community, we recognize that to truly end homelessness, we must address the primary pathways into youth homelessness, including poverty, family conflict, abuse and addictions whilst re-structuring public systems and service interventions to focus on preventing youth homelessness in the first place.

Youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness require multi-faceted, tailored models of support, which includes diverse housing models with wrap-around supports including counselling, education, skills training and employment, health services, mentorship and much more. The integration of all these elements is critical at the service delivery and system levels with a focus on prevention. Again, the design and delivery of these interventions must be youth-centered: the needs of young people are very different from those of adults.

While this Youth Plan sets out the direction for all youth at risk and experiencing homelessness, we recognize as a community that specific groups experience homelessness, as well as other forms of social exclusion, at a higher prevalence and require particular interventions at the policy, supports and housing levels to be tailored to account for these unique circumstances. The Plan calls for the application of a youth-centered lens across all our work. While proposing a special focus on Indigenous and LGBTQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, and 2-spirited) youth given their consistent over-representation amongst those experiencing homelessness in our community, it does not exclude other unique populations within its response.

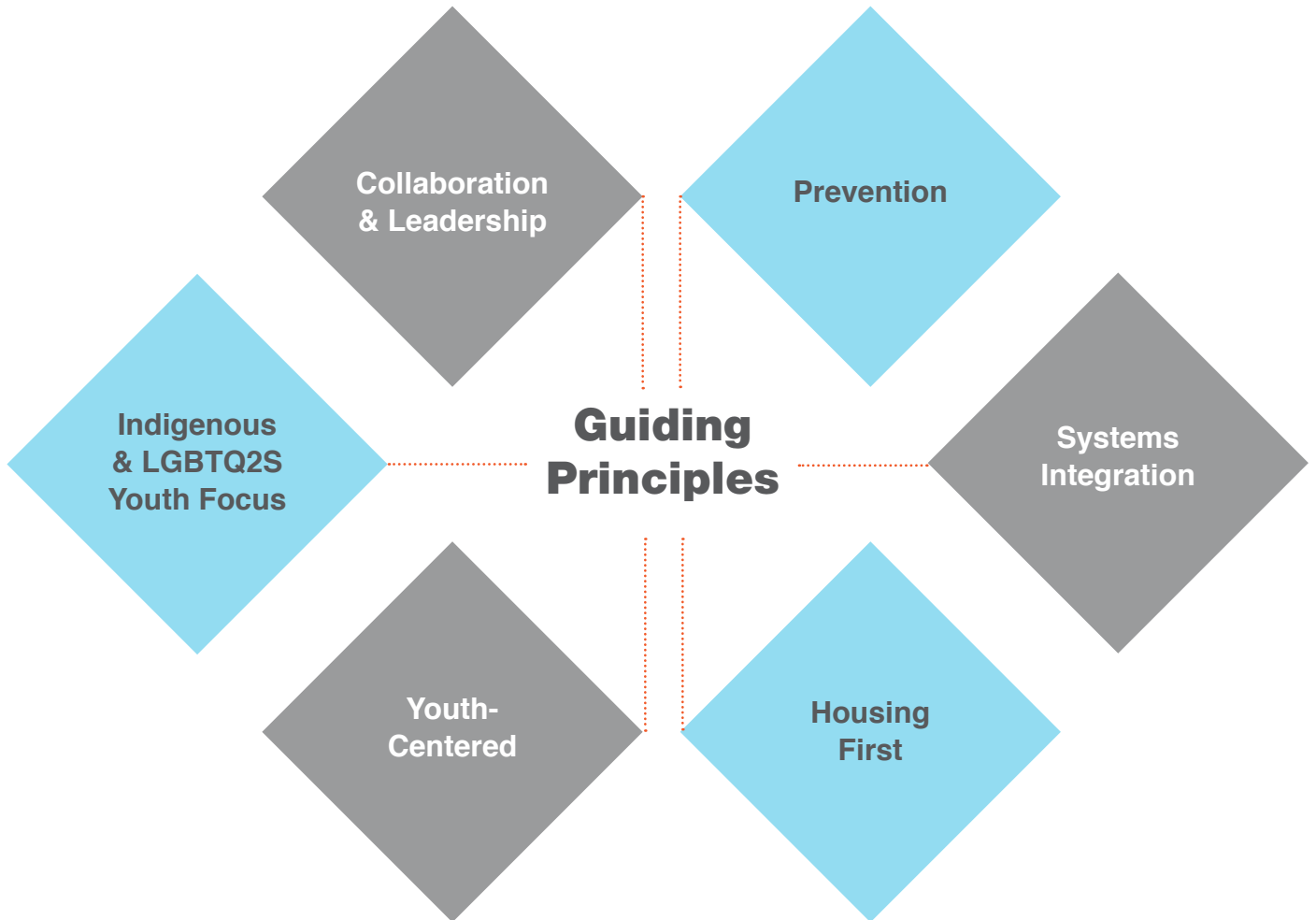
The Plan also recognizes youth as part of families and networks of natural supports; our interventions must strive, where possible, towards family reunification and strengthening these social supports from a youth-led perspective. This means our practice shifts as well; we recognize that relationship-focused, strengths-based and proactive approaches to working with youth become the norm across services, whether delivered by the non-profit or public sector.

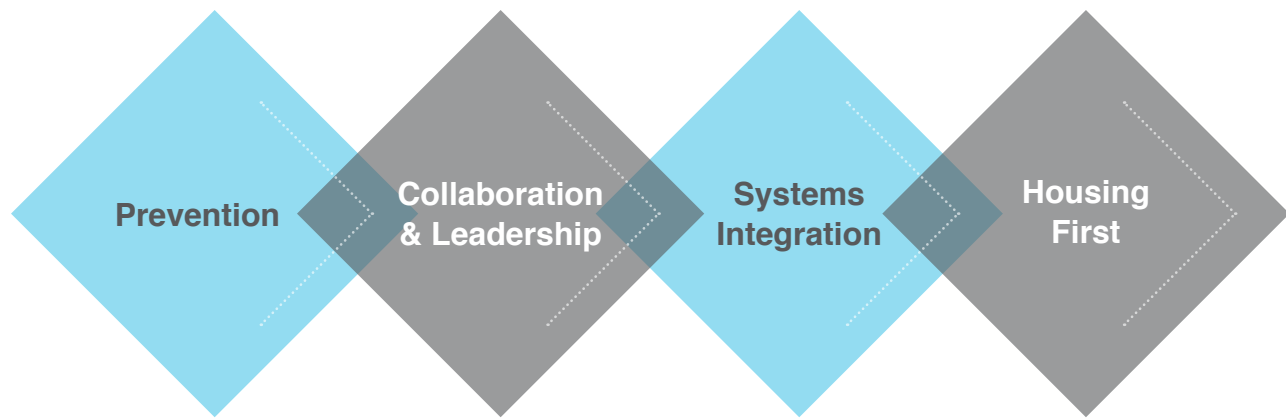
OUR VISION

A Calgary where all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.

MISSION

To reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness in Calgary and prevent further youth from becoming homeless by ensuring youth and their families have the services and supports they need.





Ending Youth Homelessness

Plan Priorities & Objectives in Brief

The Plan has four key priorities as outlined below, with 22 supporting objectives. These are expanded upon in the remainder of the Plan in Section 4.

Priority 1: Prevention

- 1.1 Initiate public education and awareness efforts.
- 1.2 Enhance youth's access to mainstream supports.
- 1.3 Explore innovative models of peer-based support and mentorship.
- 1.4 Enhance school-based addiction and mental health programs across the province.
- 1.5 Engage schools in youth homelessness prevention.
- 1.6 Enhance and increase employment and education supports for youth.

Priority 2: Leadership & Engagement

- 2.1 Advance a strategic Policy Agenda and advocacy effort to champion an end to youth homelessness.
- 2.2 Develop private sector partnerships to support Plan goals.
- 2.3 Develop a Plan governance and implementation strategy.
- 2.4 Identify and advance research priorities critical to ending youth homelessness.
- 2.5 Support youth engagement and leadership in Plan implementation.
- 2.6 Enhance funding coordination.

Priority 3: Systems

- 3.1 Develop an integrated system of care to improve system and service coordination.
- 3.2 Develop strategies to support youth transitions from and between systems.
- 3.3 Develop a multi-system information sharing approach.
- 3.4 Increase access to addiction and mental health supports and treatment.

Priority 4: Housing

- 4.1 Advance youth-centered approaches to housing and supports.
- 4.2 Support youth and families/natural supports throughout service delivery.
- 4.3 Increase affordable housing and supports options for youth.
- 4.4 Secure resources to enhance housing and programs for youth.
- 4.5 Revision and enhance the role of emergency homeless services and transitional housing for youth.

The Plan proposes the following targets towards our vision.

1. Calgary organizations serving youth will work in an integrated manner to ensure youth experiencing or at-risk of homelessness receive timely and appropriate supports by March 31, 2018.
2. The capacity of addiction and mental health support and treatment services to respond to youth in crisis will be increased by March 31, 2018.
3. By March 31, 2019, capital and operations funds to advance Plan measures will have been secured.
4. As of March 31, 2019, no youth who transitions from systems of care (Child Intervention, Justice, Mental Health and Addiction programming) will experience homelessness.
5. The average length of stay of youth in emergency shelters will be less than 7 days as of March 31, 2019.
6. Housing options will be increased and/or refined to distinctly address the needs of LGBTQ2S, Indigenous and Immigrant youth by March 31, 2019.
7. By March 31, 2020, youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness will have access to targeted housing and services including:
 - a. 90 place-based Supportive Housing units (Foyer model, Permanent Supportive Housing, Host Homes, etc.).
 - b. 125 affordable housing units specifically for youth.
 - c. 840 rent supplements dedicated to independent youth/youth in families.
 - d. 170 scattered-site Housing First for Youth program spaces of which 100 would target high acuity youth and 70 would be designed for low-moderate acuity youth.
 - e. 760 Rapid Rehousing for Youth and Homelessness Prevention program spaces for independent youth/youth in families that include family reunification, financial support to maintain housing and wrap-around supports focused on mitigating homelessness risk.
8. An integrated and unified homelessness prevention response will be in place by March 31, 2020, that emphasises early intervention, awareness-raising, and programs for children, youth, and families.

Measuring Progress: What does an end to youth homelessness look like?

“Everyone has a home and everyone’s satisfied and happy in their own way and everyone can keep their own peace instead of up in everyone else’s business. Everyone would be happy and maybe I wouldn’t into drugs and maybe none all my bad would have happened if I had my own place just once. I wouldn’t judge I would help more and even if they weren’t asking, I would related and know what I look for, and there wouldn’t be an Exit or kids all on their own in the streets gathered all in the place they are during the night hours”.

(Youth Consultation Participant)

“The result of the changes would be positive because we are taking steps and moving forward to end youth homelessness in Calgary. We should aim for all youth off the streets and give them the resources and supports they need to keep them off the streets. If you were successful all the youth would have a home”.

(Youth Consultation Participant)

As we work towards our ultimate vision where we have “A Calgary where all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home,” we will need to track progress and agree on a set of outcomes and indicators that will allow us to gauge progress. To this end, we will work to ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience for youth and their families.

We will know we have ended youth homelessness when youth lead stable, self-sufficient, and healthy lives with access to the right supports, at the right time to prevent homelessness and vulnerability in the first place. We also know we are making real strides towards an end to youth homelessness, when: the number of youth at risk of or in shelter/rough sleeping is decreasing, less youth become homeless without support from public systems or as result of family conflict, and when youth and their families themselves tell us they have what they need to lead healthy, stable lives.

Moving forward, we propose a number of indicators be tracked in Plan implementation towards proposed priorities. To achieve an optimal system that is achieving an end to youth homelessness, we need indicators of progress that monitor shifting landscape that impacts the drivers into youth homelessness, as well as our capacity to respond to emerging and current needs.

We have identified some high-level targets and a number of indicators we should be monitoring on a go-forward basis. These are described below to start the conversation in community – they are not set in stone. We have selected the following indicators based on existing evidence in alignment with our vision. These indicators are very specific and build on each other and provide a way for diverse stakeholders to track progress towards common objectives and help us articulate what we mean by ending youth homelessness. Note that the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is working to develop a national definition of an end to homelessness that will help us refine these indicators in implementation.

OUTCOME: Youth lead stable, self-sufficient and healthy lives; as a result, youth homelessness no longer exists.

PROGRESS: As we work towards this outcome, we will define progress as homelessness is increasingly a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience for youth and their families

INDICATORS OF OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT	INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOME	TIMELINES
The total number of youth experiencing homelessness (rough sleeping/shelter) will be zero at any point-in-time.	<p>The average length of stay in shelters/ on the street for youth is decreasing towards 7 days or less on a consistent basis.</p> <p>No youth who exit homelessness through housing and support programs return to homelessness.</p>	<p>2019</p> <p>2020</p>
The incidence of youth exiting public systems (Corrections, Child Intervention, Mental Health and Addiction, etc.) who become homeless is completely eliminated.	The incidence of youth exiting public systems (Corrections, Child Intervention, Mental Health and Addiction, etc.) who become homeless is consistently decreasing.	2019
Youth and their families have immediate access to the right supports they need in major life areas (housing, life skills, family conflict, violence, social networks and relationships, drug and alcohol use, physical health, emotional and mental health), at the right time so that they do not experience housing instability in the first place.	<p>Turnover rate and occupancy levels across service systems allow access to appropriate housing and supports to youth and their families experiencing homelessness and/at imminent risk within 10 days or less consistently.</p> <p>The capacity of addiction and mental health support and treatment services to respond to youth in crisis will be increased.</p> <p>Capital and operations funds to advance Plan measures will have been secured.</p> <p>Housing options will be increased and/or refined to distinctly address the needs of LGBTQ2S, Indigenous and Immigrant youth.</p> <p>Youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness will have access to targeted new housing and supports including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 place-based Supportive Housing units (Foyer model, Permanent Supportive Housing, Host Homes, etc.). • 125 affordable housing units specifically for youth. • 840 rent supplements dedicated to independent youth/youth in families. • 170 scattered-site Housing First for Youth program spaces of which 100 would target high acuity youth and 70 would be designed for low-moderate acuity youth. • 760 Rapid Rehousing for Youth and Homelessness Prevention program spaces for independent youth/youth in families that include family reunification, financial support to maintain housing and wrap-around supports focused on mitigating homelessness risk. 	<p>2018</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2019</p> <p>2019</p> <p>2020</p>
An integrated and unified homelessness prevention response will be in place that emphasizes early intervention, awareness-raising, housing and supports for children, youth, and families that are timely, accessible, appropriate, effective and integrated.	<p>Youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness and their families served across systems of care report increasingly high satisfaction nearing 100% with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing quality, security of tenure affordability and safety • access to tailored responses appropriate to their diverse needs (LGBTQ2S, Indigenous, immigrant youth, etc.) • access to effective supports to address family conflict, violence, personal relationships, etc. • supported Healthy Transitions to Adulthood and planned discharges from Corrections, Child Intervention, treatment facilities, etc. • access to education, income assistance, employment, life skill development supports • connection to positive family and natural supports • accessing mainstream public systems to address addiction, trauma, mental and physical health issues, etc. • effective processes of coordinated access and referral into programs and housing • perception of quality of life, including sense of belonging, participation in community activities, connection with friends and family, and sense of self-efficacy. 	2020

We know ending youth homelessness will mean we need to restructure and revision the way we deliver services and implement policy. We know that in some instances, additional resources will be needed to advance the proposed measures. Yet, without a commitment to address youth homelessness, the associated health care, criminal justice, social services and emergency shelter costs will continue to mount. This makes no economic sense: it costs us about half the amount to provide housing and supports to youth as it does to keep them in shelters; this is a fifth of what a year in detention would be.

An estimated \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year is needed 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.² These costs do not account for the long-term cost implications of youth homelessness over the course of a youth's lifetime – loss of wages, productivity, costs of public system involvement with corrections, health, etc. Comparatively, providing housing and supports to youth in Housing First scattered-site programs costs \$18,500 per youth per year; supportive housing ranges from \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year.

It simply makes no moral or economic sense that we accept youth homelessness. Investing strategically in youth by providing critical supports to their transition to adulthood builds a positive pathway towards independence and self-sufficiency as contributing members of society. This kind of investment in youth makes sound economic and moral sense.

Section 3: The Current Context

Why is youth homelessness distinct?

Research has consistently pointed to the fact that the causes and impacts of youth homelessness are distinct from adult homelessness. Thus the plans and interventions we advance must be correspondingly distinct and tailored to youth. Youth experience homelessness in distinct ways; they are often less visible on the street, and more likely to 'couch surf'.

Youth homelessness exists within a broad and complex spectrum of circumstances. Youth experiencing homelessness are precariously housed; couch surfing, staying in youth and adult shelters, sleeping rough and are often discharged into homelessness from public institutions and systems, including youth aging out of care.

The causes of youth homelessness are distinct and primarily underlined by family conflict; youth are often reported to be homeless as a result of abuse in the home, which leads to notable movement and transience as they sought a safe place to live outside of their familial home.³

² 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).

³ See A Way Home's Youth Homelessness Community Planning Toolkit, prepared by Dr. Alina Turner.

Thus, homelessness for youth goes beyond a loss of stable housing: it is the loss of a home in which they are embedded in relations of dependence. This creates an interruption and potential rupture in social relations with parents and caregivers, family members, friends, neighbours and community. A high percentage of homeless youth were also in the care of child protection services, making system responses a priority in any efforts to end youth homelessness.

Youth are extremely vulnerable because they are at an early life-stage, still developing cognitively, physically, emotionally and socially. For many young people who experience homelessness, these challenges are often complicated by the fact that they are simultaneously dealing with life-altering events such as recent trauma and/or violence.

As the Homeless Hub⁴ notes, youth often lack the experience and skills necessary to live independently, particularly those under the age of majority. Youth's physical, mental, social and emotional development impacts their needs and the type of interventions best suited to house and support them further. One cannot assume the needs of a 13-year old are equivalent to those of a 24-year old, for instance.

What's Different about Youth Homelessness?⁵

- Youth are in the process of developing physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.
- Youth homelessness stems in large part from problems or conflict in families and homes.
- Youth under the age of majority have distinct legal entitlements and restrictions.
- Many youth entering homelessness are leaving lives that were previously governed by adult caregivers.
- Youth are served by a distinct infrastructure involving separate systems of justice, education, health, and child protection/welfare.
- Many youth enter homelessness with little or no work experience.
- Youth are in the process of transitioning toward adulthood and may not have acquired personal, social and life skills that make independent living possible.
- Youth tend to seek, access and respond to services and supports differently than other homeless individuals.
- Youth often avoid the homeless-serving system out of fear of authorities.
- For youth under age of 18, the situation is complicated by the obligation of families and/or the government to care for them and provide for their basic needs.
- Many youth are forced to abandon their education because of homelessness.
- Homeless youth experience high levels of criminal victimization.
- For youth involved with Child Intervention System, these issues are further magnified if healthy transitions are not prioritized.

⁴ Available online on the Homeless Hub: <http://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/youth>

⁵ See Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Calgary (2011) available online at: <http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Youth-Plan-2011.pdf> and Alberta Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness (2015) available online at: <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/plan-to-prevent-and-reduce-youth-homelessness.pdf>.

A Portrait of Youth Homelessness in Calgary

Homeless youth follow key pathways into homelessness. Worthington et al. (2009) report the following findings from their study with street-involved youth:

- **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% 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 INTERVENTION SERVICES** - 62% of youth surveyed in the Calgary Youth, Health and the Street Study (CYHSS) reported that their family had a history of Child Intervention Services 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.

Youth experience high levels of vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Many present complex health, mental health and addictions issues, as Worthington et al. (2009) report:

- **High levels of violence while homeless.** In fact, 75% of those surveyed reported being the victim of violence on the street and 62% reported they had been violent towards others while on the street (Worthington et al., 2009).
- **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).

Indigenous and LGBTQ2S Youth

In some communities, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S, immigrant and visible minority individuals experiencing homelessness are over-represented. Youth who identify as LGBTQ2S make up 25-40% of the youth homeless population, compared to only 5-10% of the general population.

As aforementioned, targeted consultations with LGBTQ2S and Indigenous youth were completed as part of the Refresh process. Key themes emerging are detailed in Appendix 6. Youth's recommendations have been integrated throughout the Plan.

LGBTQ2S youth experience the additional layer of challenges faced by those with sexual orientations and gender identities that are different from the mainstream. Though data is scant, results from the City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment confirms that 20% of youth in the shelter system identify as LGBTQ2S, which is more than double the rate for other age groups (Social Planning Toronto, 2013). It is likely that these numbers may further underestimate the actual prevalence of LGBTQ2S youth, as many youth may choose not to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to researchers.

LGBTQ2S youth experience additional risk factors to housing instability and homelessness, including early age of sexual orientation development, which may be intimately linked with familial rejection (Cull, Platzer, & Balloch, 2006; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2012). LGBTQ2S homeless youth also report histories of physical and sexual abuse, homo/bi/transphobic bullying, and substance misuse (Cull, Platzer & Balloch, 2006).

With respect to Indigenous youth, the interrelated issues of poverty, domestic, violence, trauma and abuse and ongoing discrimination and lack of cultural connections further exacerbate the experience of housing stress. It is important to acknowledge the experience of Indigenous people in Canada if we are to truly end youth homelessness, particularly in light of the consistent over-representation in vulnerable populations. Indigenous homelessness is notably different; the structural and systemic determinants associated with colonialism, the Indian Act, treaty making, residential schools and the Sixties Scoop have resulted in considerable discriminatory impacts that are in fact intergenerational.⁶

It is further important to highlight that the sense of being homeless can be experienced from diverse perspectives: cultural, spiritual, or emotional. It is more than a loss of housing. The impact of colonization, residential schooling, intergenerational trauma, ongoing discrimination and racism in Canadian society has contributed to the ongoing systematic marginalization of Indigenous people, including Indigenous youth.⁷

This is particularly evident in the higher than average proportion of Indigenous peoples experiencing poverty, violence, core housing need, low educational attainment, poor access to services and housing. As Indigenous peoples move into cities from reserves, their settlement and cultural reconnection needs must be addressed, along with the jurisdictional vacuums that impact their significantly reduced access to basic services both on and off-reserve. This is notably relevant to Indigenous youth as well.

⁶ From the Plan to End Aboriginal Homelessness in Calgary (2012), p.1 – available online at: <http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Aboriginal-Plan-2012.pdf>

⁷ From the Calgary's Updated Plan to End Homelessness (2015), p. 23 - available online at: http://www.ihearthomeyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Update_to_Calgary_Plan_March_4.pdf

Indigenous people's economic, spiritual, and social development has been and continues to be negatively impacted by government policies and practices at the local, provincial, territorial and federal levels. In particular, the establishment of residential schools, reserves and the Indian Act resulted in a widespread and intergenerational loss of culture, language, community, and identity still impacting today's Indigenous people.⁸

Some Indigenous youth respond to the many negative connotations of being Indigenous by distancing themselves from this part of their identity. Other have had the opportunity to experience or develop a strong cultural identity due to the loss of teachings and traditions within their families or communities.⁹ This is especially so for many urban Indigenous youth as well as those growing up in the child welfare system.¹⁰

As a result of the significant over representation of Indigenous people among homeless populations in Canada, Indigenous communities should play a major role in all efforts to address youth homelessness. The planning process can create new opportunities for meaningful collaboration between mainstream and Indigenous communities, enabling diverse groups to come together to better understand the needs and experiences of marginalized community members.

Another point to note here is that on-reserve Indigenous people may see rural and urban places as an extension of their traditional territories; as such, when considering approaches one can't simply assume we are assisting 'migrant' Indigenous youth not otherwise connected to urban centres. In reality, Indigenous people may not be 'migrating' to the city, "but rather returning to a place that they have always known, historically, economically and spiritually" (Albert McLeod, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg).¹

Further, we have to also be cognizant that the paradigm from which youth-serving agencies approach their work remains grounded in Western post-colonial legislation and policy. In other words, don't assume that the established organizations that play a key role in addressing youth homelessness is necessarily aligned with Indigenous infrastructures, relations with governments; economic development on and on-reserve; and urban reserve development, etc.

⁸ From the Youth Engagement Toolkit Guide, p. 41, available online at: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth_engagement/pdf/yet_resource_guide.pdf.

⁹ From the Youth Engagement Toolkit Guide, p. 41, available online at: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth_engagement/pdf/yet_resource_guide.pdf.

¹⁰ See A Way Home's Youth Homelessness Community Planning Toolkit, prepared by Dr. Alina Turner.

The 2016 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count enumerated a total of 377 unaccompanied youth. Notably, youth are really over-represented in systems (jail and hospital) and unsheltered. For systems, only 7 were in hospital – the other 43 were in jail.

Of further note, 172 (46%) of youth enumerated were in adult facilities; a further 38 or 10% were in family facilities. Only 23% were in youth-specific shelters or short term supportive housing.

AGE	YOUTH SHELTER	YOUTH SHORT TERM SUPPORTIVE HOUSING	FAMILY SHELTER	FAMILY STS HOUSING	ADULT SHELTER	ADULTS SHORT TERM SUPPORTIVE HOUSING	SYSTEMS	ROUGH SLEEPING	TOTAL YOUTH
13-17 years	18	7	9	6	6	27	4	0	77
18-24 years	0	59	12	11	70	71	47	30	300
ALL	18	66	21	17	76	98	51	30	377

In looking at trends over time, notably, we see a 32% increase from the October 2014 to October 2016 homeless count - a total of 91 more youth. This impacted the proportion of youth among the total enumerated in the homeless count as well – jumping from 8% to 12%.

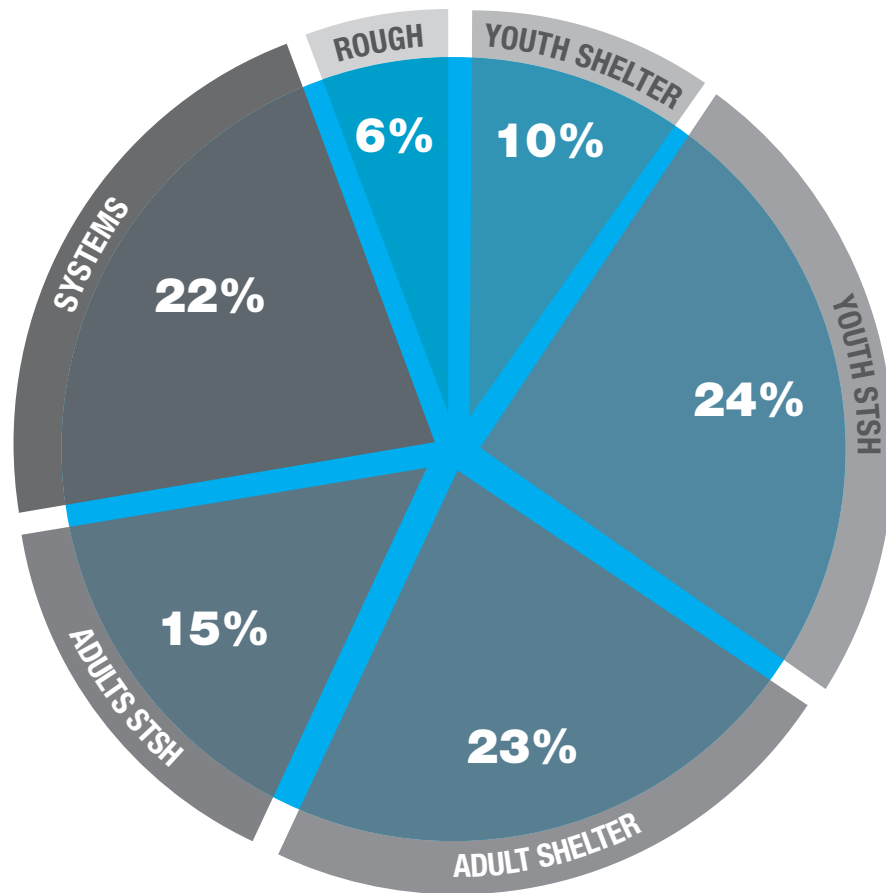
YEAR/MONTH	TOTAL YOUTH	% YOUTH TOTAL	TOTAL COUNT
2012 – January	294	9%	3190
2014 – January	326	9%	3533
2014 – October	286	8%	3555
2016 – October	377	12%	3222

Looking in more depth, it is notable that the number of 13-17 year olds decreased by 35 (31%) while the number of 18-24 year olds increased by 29 (11%) from when we compare the 2016 to 2014 counts.

	2014	2016	CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
13-17	112	77	-35	-31%
18-24	271	300	29	11%

More youth were enumerated in adult shelters and short term supportive housing facilities than in youth-specific ones. The 2015 Homeless Point-in-Time Count enumerated a total of 286 unaccompanied youth.

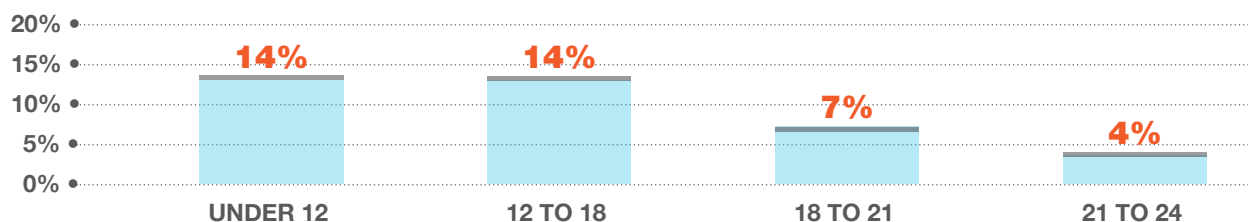
2014 PIT COUNT RESULTS – % OF YOUTH ENUMERATED ACROSS SITES



Of the 286 unaccompanied youth enumerated, 98 (34%) were counted in youth-specific shelters or short-term supportive housing. A further 109 (38%) were in adult shelters and short term supportive housing facilities.

About 4 out of 10 people experiencing homelessness reported their first homelessness episode to have occurred as a youth. Homeless PIT Count survey respondents were asked about the age at which they experienced their first episode of homelessness. About 28% in Calgary reported being homeless before the age of 18; 39% reported this to be the case before the age of 24. This is an important question to help understand preventative measures and confirms the need to prioritize ending youth homelessness long-term. Note that short term supportive housing facilities and youth shelters did not do any surveys, impacting results to this question significantly.

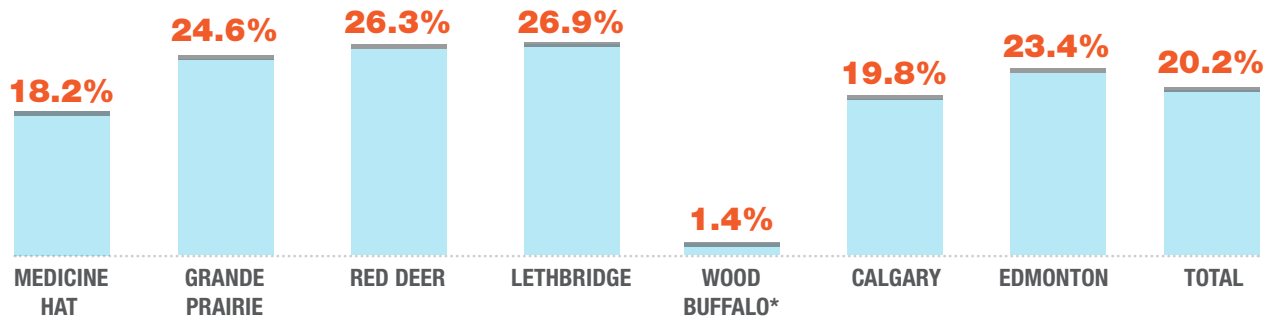
2014 CALGARY HOMELESS PIT COUNT – AGE FIRST HOMELESS (n=437)



AGE OF FIRST HOMELESSNESS	TOTAL	PERCENT
Under 12	61	14%
12 to 18	61	14%
18 to 21	29	7%
21 to 24	18	4%
24 to 35	81	19%
35 to 45	86	20%
45 to 55	70	16%
55 to 65	27	6%
65 to 75	3	1%
75 to 85	0	0%
Greater than 85	0	0%
No Data	1	0%
TOTAL	437	100%

Calgary's rate of youth homelessness is the second lowest in Alberta. The number of youth up to the age of 24 represented about a fifth of the total enumerated in the 2016 Homeless Count. This varied across Alberta's seven

YOUTH (UP TO 24 YRS) (WITH ADMIN DATA)

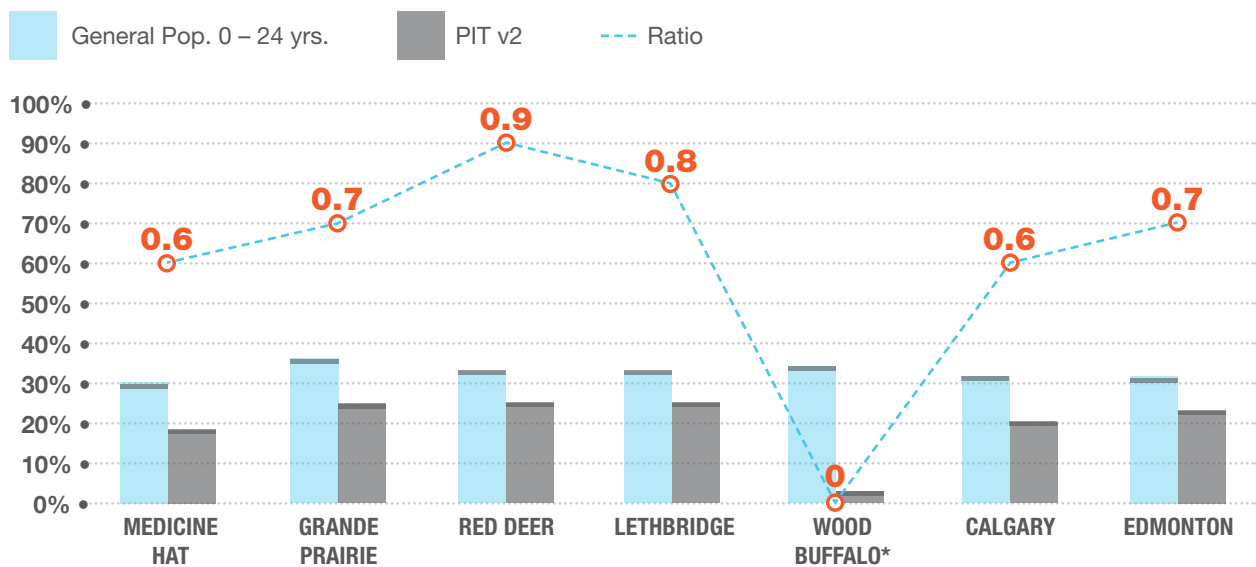


cities who participated in count, with the second lowest being Calgary at 20%.

*Wood Buffalo's age ranges for responses allowed us to only categorize survey respondents under 16 years of age as youth. As no information was available on accompanying minors, this is also missing from their total. These factors result in the under-representation of youth in their results.

Youth are generally underrepresented in homeless counts across Alberta. It is important to note that the count inherently under-counts homelessness, particularly among youth who are known to be likelier to avoid shelters and facilities where enumeration tends to focus. Notably, Calgary and Medicine Hat have the lowest discrepancies between the proportions of youth in their enumerated homeless population compared to the general population, though youth remain under-represented.

YOUTH RELATIVE TO GENERAL POPULATION (ADMIN DATA)



Shelter Use among Calgary Youth

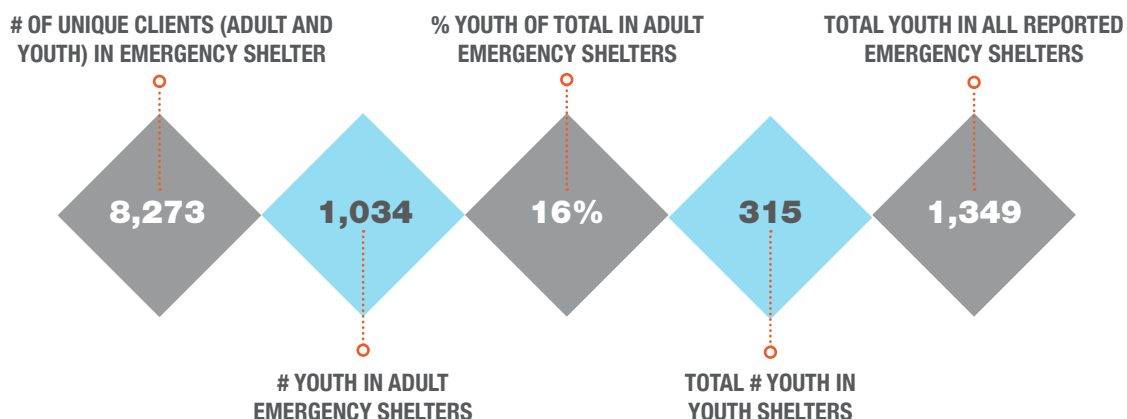
Given the limitations of homeless counts, it is important to complement findings with data from facilities, particularly shelters and short term supportive housing facilities and public systems. Unfortunately, we were limited in the data sources available, as well as their integration, and thus are only able to present a fragmented picture of youth homelessness in Calgary.

Alberta Human Services generated data on key demographics of youth staying in adult emergency shelters in 2015 (January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015). To summarize, there were 8,764 unique clients served during the timeframe across these facilities, of which 1,049 (12%) were between the ages of 18 and 24. This seems to echo the homeless count data and proportions of about 8-9% who are youth of the total counts. An additional 248 youth were reported in youth-specific emergency shelters where they made up 100% of the clients served during the same time-period.¹¹

It is of note that not all facilities are reported in this analysis, in particular only one of two family emergency shelters and only two short term facilities are included. It is unclear which of the Mary Dover beds included are emergency versus short term supportive housing in the report. In either case, Mary Dover and the Dream Centre represent a small fraction of the 1,349 units of short term supportive housing in the city, which means that our analysis is limited on youth homelessness trends in such facilities at this time.

Looking at emergency shelters only, the data provided from adult shelters together with the reports from youth-specific shelters, amount to about an 89% coverage of the 1,703 emergency shelter spaces in the city (not including the Kerby Centre's spaces for seniors). This makes the analysis of trends from these emergency shelters more reliable. However, we still do not know if there were any youth under 18 in any of the adult facilities or to what extent there is duplication across facilities, particularly those not included in the provincial data analysis.

About 1,530 youth used emergency shelters in 2015, representing about 16% of all emergency shelter users. Despite aforementioned data limitations, assuming the same proportions of unique clients and youth across 1,703 emergency shelter beds, we estimate about 1,530 unique youth used these facilities during the course of 2015. This again, assumes the provincial data collection accounted for duplication of records in analysis and misses any under 18-year olds in adult systems. As data collection improves, this analysis should be re-evaluated and updated. Overall, across the emergency shelters we have data for, about 16% of clients are youth – notably higher than the proportion reported in the homeless count.



¹¹ See Appendix 3 for a full breakdown of youth shelter and facility numbers provided by Alberta Human Services.

Indigenous youth are over-represented in the population of young people who access emergency shelters. Of these youth, about 29% were Indigenous youth, compared to about 2.8% of Calgary's general population according to the Statistics Canada's National Household Survey (2011).

NAME	GENERAL			INDIGENOUS		MALE		FEMALE		OTHER	
	TOTAL CLIENTS	TOTAL YOUTH	% YOUTH	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
YOUTH SHELTERS (14-19 YRS)											
Calgary Boys & Girls Club Ave. 15 Link/Launch/Safe house	86	86	100%	26	30%	51	59%	31	36%	4	5%
Calgary Boys & Girls Club Ave 15 Loft	162	160	99%	32	20%	100	63%	56	35%	6	4%
Calgary Wood's Homes	69	69	100%	11	16%	48	70%	21	30%	0	0%
ADULT SHELTERS (18-24 YRS)											
Alpha House & Mustard Seed Shelters	4,497	471	10%	190	40%	341	72%	130	28%	0	0%
Calgary Drop In & Rehab Centre	3,716	551	15%	121	22%	422	77%	129	23%	0	0%
Brenda's House	60	12	20%	8	67%	0	0%	12	100%	0	0%
TOTAL	8,590	1,349	16%	388	29%	962	71%	379	28%	10	1%

*Percent of Youth 14-19 for youth shelters or 18-24 for adult shelters only.

Males are over-represented in the youth who use emergency shelters. There were about 71% males in the sample, compared to 28% female and 1% were 'other' - this is very likely an under-representation given that we know LGBTQ2S youth are over-represented among the population experiencing homelessness as a result of homophobia and transphobia in the home and across the service and housing systems.¹²

We also know that women may be likelier to avoid shelters and may be more likely to experience housing instability in the form of couch surfing, living in unaffordable or inappropriate housing, or unsafe situations. Often, lone-parent households led by women – who may still be youth - have to manage housing instability with limited incomes and the need to balance childcare needs. There is a further connection between domestic violence and homelessness. The exploitation of girls and young women remains a reality in our community, as is their disproportionate experience of gender-based violence.

¹² Available online: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-transsexual-queer>

Youth Program Performance

This section outlines findings from data provided by the Calgary Homeless Foundation as part of the Refresh process to assess the current levels of services and housing available through its funded portfolio. Data was provided for housing programs for youth from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2015.

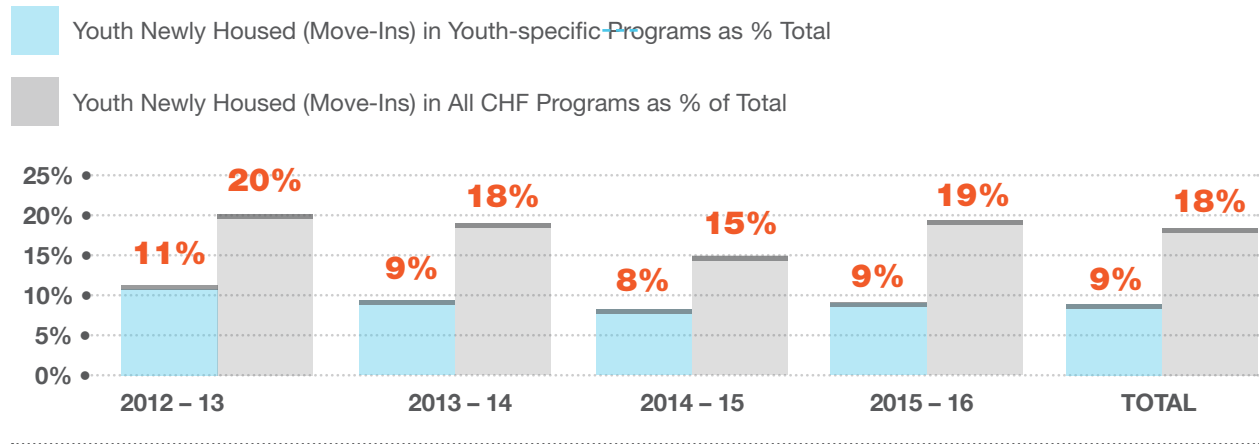
Note that this data only represents a fraction of services for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness available in community – for instance, Family & Community Support Services (FCSS), United Way of Calgary and Area, and Child and Family Services are major funders of youth supports which we do not have any figures for at this time. We strongly recommend that future efforts strive to develop performance indicators across funders to assess progress against common objectives, including ending youth homelessness to address this gap.

Note that this data does not include information on any youth under 24 who may be being served in single and family programs, which would likely impact the demographics across the funded programs.

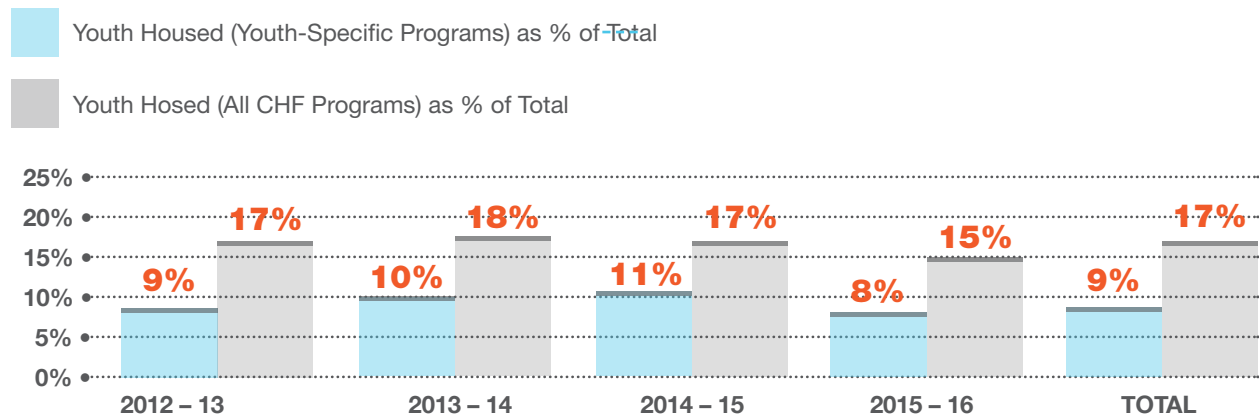
As is evident from the table below, the proportion of youth housed was about 9% over the three years of data available. Again, this is not fully representative of all youth served across CHF funded agencies, but rather of programs tailored to youth. Nevertheless, it does point to the need for better information about youth housing efforts across the system and the level of data we need to have across systems. Currently, with only a partial view, though important, this data paints a limited picture of the services available and accessed by youth in our city. Enhanced data and information collection, integration, and analysis is essential and would require a new level of sharing between youth funding and service provision organizations.

It is important to differentiate the CHF-funded program spaces specific to youth, versus those across its portfolio that are accessed by youth. As evident below, a significantly higher proportion of youth make up the overall percent of newly housed and housed spaces in CHF programs. In 2015/16, for instance, 19% of all newly housed clients were youth and 15% of total housed in CHF programs. This suggests CHF programs are in fact delivering services proportional to youth in the homeless population. We do not have similar data on other funders however, to assess, for instance the accessibility of prevention supports as CHF focused investment on those experiencing longer term homelessness.

NEWLY HOUSED (MOVE-INS)



HOUSED CLIENTS (OCCUPIED SPACES)



As evident, of the total number of youth housed in 2015-16, about 36% were Indigenous, and 5% were not Canadian-born. The gender breakdown was fairly even.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH IN 2015 – 16		
CHARACTERISTICS	UNIQUE NO.	NO.
Total number of housed clients in 2015 – 16	408	374
ETHNICITY OF YOUTH		
Caucasians	179	48%
Indigenous	136	36%
Others	59	16%
GENDER OF YOUTH		
Male	150	40%
Female	218	58%
Transgender	6	2%
IMMIGRATION STATUS OF YOUTH		
Canadian Citizens	354	95%
Others	20	5%

In terms of program performance, CHF funds 6 place-based and scattered-site supportive housing programs specific for youth, of which 5 had data available for 2015-16 analysis. The data provided by CHF provides a snapshot of performance against contracted key performance indicators over the most recent fiscal year (April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016).

As is evident, the programs maintain relatively high occupancy overall, with 74% of youth exiting to positive housing destinations after staying an average of 626 days. Looking at system use, a decrease of 47% was reported.





Section 4: Plan Priorities and Objectives

Guiding Principles to Ending Youth Homelessness

The following principles articulate the underpinnings of the Youth Plan, shaping our actions and decision-making in this work. These principles resonate with our community’s envisioned response to youth homelessness, align with broader initiatives including the provincial and Calgary plans to end homelessness, the Alberta Youth Plan and the existing body of evidence on effective responses to youth homelessness reviewed.

Prevention

This Plan focuses our efforts on prevention, as opposed to emergency responses. This supports a new way of thinking about youth homelessness, which may challenge the prevailing norms. Rather than ‘managing’ homelessness through emergency services, we are proposing that a strategic focus to prevention will be more effective long-term.

A strong prevention approach requires a coordinated and strategic systems approach, and must engage, include and mandate action from mainstream systems and departments of government, as well as the homeless sector. No solution to end homelessness can or should depend only on the efforts of those in the homeless sector.

Systems Integration

The response to youth homelessness must be coordinated among the diverse agencies, governmental bodies, and systems that youth need and/or access. System planning proposes that we build intervention responses to homelessness in a coordinated fashion to ensure best outcomes at system-level, versus program-by-program basis. Because the homeless-serving system cannot solve youth homelessness on its own, a Youth Plan must necessarily address the roles of mainstream services in an integrated fashion, such as child welfare, education, health care, housing services, and corrections. Similarly, integration at the policy level must be re-aligned to meet ending youth homelessness objectives.

A prevention-focused system planning and integration approach to youth homelessness focuses on measures within the homeless-serving and mainstream systems at the service and policy levels to ensure that youth do not become homeless in the first place. When it does occur, responses are in place to ensure homelessness is as brief as possible and non-occurring. Preventing youth homelessness has better long-term outcomes for youth, families and the community and is a more cost-effective approach than reacting to the problem as it exists.

Housing First

Housing First as a philosophy emphasizes that everyone has the right to safe, secure and stable housing without any preconditions of readiness, with access to the supports needed to maintain it. As a programmatic intervention, Housing First is an effective intervention for youth through appropriate adaptations focused on life skills development, meaningful engagement, access to education and employment, and strengthening social relations. This belief holds regardless of the level or intensity of individual and structural issues that led to their homeless state. Philosophically, it prioritizes housing as the first and most primary need to address for people experiencing homelessness. Other barriers, illnesses or challenges can be addressed once a person has been housed and the chaos of homelessness has been eliminated from their life. As a systems approach, Housing First can be embedded across the homeless-serving system, where each service or agency uses Housing First in support of the larger system of services for people experiencing homelessness.

Helping people experiencing homelessness is ethically “the right thing to do,” but research also proves in many cases it costs less to provide people experiencing homelessness with appropriate housing and support compared with them using short-term and/or ongoing emergency and other institutional services.

Youth-Centered

Ending youth homelessness requires youth participation and shared decision-making. The perspectives and voices of youth must shape proposed solutions. As such, youth should be engaged throughout all levels of planning, implementation, and evaluation in a meaningful and productive manner.

Proposed interventions should be individualized, culturally appropriate, flexible, and adaptable in response to the changing needs of youth. Young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness are not a homogeneous group; their diverse, complex and unique identities need to be recognized throughout. This includes the needs of Indigenous, immigrant and LGBTQ2S youth, youth with developmental disabilities, mental health and/or addictions issues.

Rather than simply moving young people toward independence, our approach should be tailored to their needs, preferences and developmental circumstances. Youth and their families must be supported and connected to ensure that whenever possible youth are able to stay with their families or with a caring, safe and nurturing adult. A comprehensive approach supports youth to empower themselves, form meaningful relationships with adults, build skills, develop leadership and contribute to their community as they transition to adulthood. As a strength-based perspective, relationship-focused approach concentrates on enhancing the social, cognitive, psychological and physical wellbeing of young people.

This recognizes youth rather than labels or presenting issues and aims to build on their unique strengths and capacities in the context of community life rather than depending on systems or service providers. This approach inherently values the voice of the youth in accounting for their history, present circumstances, and desirable changes.¹³

Services and housing provided under this approach are culturally competent and safe, and are offered as choices rather than prescribed. These supports are flexible to meet changing needs and circumstances as well. Formal services also leverage informal community supports, as well as peer support and mentoring. To apply the approach at a system level, structures and processes must be aligned to respect youth choice, respond to cultural difference, foster community connection, and promote flexibility, portability and accessibility. Ultimately, the end result of youth-centered policy and service is measurable positive quality of life outcomes valued by those they intend to serve.¹⁴

Indigenous & LGBTQ2S Youth Focus

This Plan calls for the application of a person-centered lens across all our work, recognizing the unique needs of youth. However, there are particular groups we highlight because of their over-representation among those experiencing homelessness in our community: Indigenous Peoples and LGBTQ2S youth.

We know that this is not an exclusive list, and future work will delve further into the needs of other groups, such as newcomers and visible minority youth. We recognize key issues intersect across these youth populations, particularly family violence, mental health issues, addictions, trauma, and physical health issues. Systemic factors, including poverty, colonialism, intergenerational trauma, racism and discrimination further compound to impact the individual experience of housing stability and homelessness.

Collaboration & Leadership

Ending youth homelessness is a collective responsibility achieved through collaborative action and solutions. Youth, government, academia, private, non-profit, and faith sectors are directly impacted by youth homelessness and share responsibility for addressing it.

Cross-sectoral collaboration and leadership will be essential to any sustained effort to address youth homelessness. By acknowledging good work already being done, and building on existing knowledge, expertise, effective practices, partnerships and resources we can foster cross-sectoral collaboration further. Strong linkages and alignment with relevant policy levers can further system-level solutions with government as well.

¹³ This approach aligns with the call for person-centered policy and interventions outlined in Calgary's Updated Plan to End Homelessness (2015), p. 23 - available online at: http://www.ihearthomeyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Update_to_Calgary_Plan_March_4.pdf

¹⁴ This approach aligns with the call for person-centered policy and interventions outlined in Calgary's Updated Plan to End Homelessness (2015).



Plan Priorities & Objectives in Detail

The Plan has four key priorities as outlined in this section, with 22 supporting objectives.

Ending Youth Homelessness



Priority 1: Prevention

The Plan proposes a refocusing of our efforts on prevention, as opposed to emergency supports. This represents a new way of thinking about youth homelessness. Dr. Stephen Gaetz argues that ending youth homelessness is not simply assuming that youth will never need emergency services again, but rather that we develop strategies to resolve a broad social problem that traps young people in an ongoing state of homelessness. When young people come to depend on emergency services without access to permanent and age-appropriate housing and necessary supports, this leads to declining health and well-being and most certainly to an uncertain future. An alternative is to look at approaches that emphasize prevention and/or interventions that lead to appropriate housing options with supports.¹⁵

A focus on prevention requires a coordinated and strategic systems approach, and must necessarily engage, include and mandate action from mainstream systems and departments of government, as well as the homelessness sector. No solution to end homelessness can or should depend only on the efforts of those in the homelessness sector, as the root causes of housing instability often lie outside the homeless-serving system itself.

Prevention means working upstream to prevent new cases through identifying and reducing risks that may increase the likelihood that individuals and families become homeless. Primary prevention strategies can be aimed at youth, families or whole communities and can include broad, population-based approaches intended to address risk factors well before they have an impact. This includes poverty reduction, ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing, addressing interpersonal violence and anti-discrimination work. At a systems level, aims to stem the flow of individuals and families leaving institutional care settings and falling into homelessness such as Child Intervention Services, Corrections and mental health inpatient facilities.

Targeted prevention-focused interventions can also be designed for groups that are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness. These strategies are intended to address risk factors such as income precariousness, family conflict and violence, mental health or addictions, criminal involvement or dropping out of school, for instance. Interventions are targeted to those broadly at risk (but not necessarily imminently at risk) and can include school-based early intervention programs, Family First supports, conflict mediation, etc. that are usually delivered in the community.

¹⁵ See Dr. Steve Gaetz's report *Coming of Age: Re-imagining our response to Youth Homelessness in Canada* (2014), p.2, available online at: http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/ComingOfAgeHH_0.pdf.

Initiate public education and awareness efforts.

A focus on prevention requires enhanced public education and awareness. While there are myths and stereotypes about youth experiencing homelessness or at risk that we need to help dispel, these are enhanced for Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth.

This is where we can connect with schools to develop materials for teachers, but also ensuring educators and administrators have access to professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of homelessness risk and options for support. Similar approaches can be explored with Primary Health Care Networks and family physicians to enhance early identification of homelessness risk and interventions.

During the Indigenous youth consultations, all of those interviewed had normalized unsafe, unstable or temporary housing and/or family instability in general as not at-risk of homelessness. Our efforts will need to be aimed at enhancing youth and families' understanding of intergenerational impacts and normalization of unstable housing. We can also enhance youth's understanding of their roles as tenants, particularly those living on their own or with roommates to enhance the likelihood they remain housed as well.

During the consultation process, youth noted there was a need to enhance communication about services available and how to access these. Several suggested the creation of a virtual one-stop shop, as well as updating the Calgary Youth Services Guide. Others noted the opportunity to leverage social media to connect youth to support more effectively. These options should be explored as relatively low-hanging fruit with considerable potential for impact enhancing knowledge among those at risk and their natural supports.

We know that discrimination limits access to housing for Indigenous people, immigrants and racialized communities, low income families, particularly those with children. We have to educate and inform Calgarians that affordable housing contributes to our overall community well-being, while enhancing their understanding of youth homelessness within the broader context of family conflict and abuse, poverty and discrimination. Working with landlords to mitigate negative stereotypes of youth and Indigenous youth in particular will be critical.

Societal homo/bi/transphobia is a risk factor for a number of the negative experiences that LGBTQ2S youth face, including homelessness. Action should be taken to reduce the prevalence of social stigma and discrimination as a prevention mechanism. Possible actions could include investing in a social media campaign aimed at reducing structural homo/bi/transphobia in Calgary.

“If they were just okay with the gay thing then this wouldn't have happened to me”.

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

Enhance youth's access to mainstream supports.



“I have had a case worker since I was two months old and have been in and out of mom’s house six times, foster homes between six and nine times in my life and I am only 16”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

The recommendations of the Valuing Our Mental Health report identify the need to enhance access to appropriate treatment and supports for those facing addictions and mental health issues. The creation of addictions treatment and detox facilities targeted for youth is needed. Given the high acuity youth present with, and the co-occurrence of multiple issues with addictions, services specialized in assisting youth are critical following a flexible, harm reduction model. Youth need safe spaces in which to deal with such issues apart from adults. As part of implementing the Valuing our Mental Health Report, we need to advance the inclusion of a targeted response for youth with complex needs (addiction, mental health, FASD, disabilities).

For youth experiencing housing instability in community, we need to also ensure they have access to available social housing and rent subsidy supports, as well as income assistance to maintain housing stability. This is an issue for youth ages 16 and 17 who are homeless and are unable to access income support services and given their circumstances aren’t eligible for traditional support from Child and Family Services. Ultimately, all youth (16-24) experiencing homeless or involved in Child and Family Services (CFS) need ready access to appropriate levels of income supports.

Explore innovative models of peer-based support and mentorship.

Youth engaged in Plan development recommended exploring the role of peer supports across program areas. Those with lived experience can contribute as peer mentors with some support and training. There is considerable potential for expanding a peer-led approach to housing where matching peer mentors with vulnerable youth can be encouraged and supported.

Indigenous youth recommended the creation of peer System Navigators to establish relationships and supports that may increase the sharing of stories, expression of challenges, needs identification, and lead to enhanced access to appropriate supports.

A similar recommendation emerged from LGBTQ2S youth; one youth commented on a desire for a peer-mentor, with one youth citing “Big Brothers, Big Sisters” as a potential model. Research suggests that both social supports and positive LGBTQ2S identity development are essential for youth’s well-being (see, for example Higa et al., 2012). Testaments from some youth about the value they received from accessing LGBTQ2S support or social groups align with this position.

Considering the lack of static relationships and the diminished natural supports experienced by many of the youth, there is good reason to pursue such opportunities to positively impact youths’ social supports and identity development.

Enhance school-based addiction and mental health programs.

Improved integration and coordination of mental health and addiction services for youth at risk will prevent many of them from ever experiencing homelessness and shorten the experience for many others. By leveraging the priorities identified in Valuing Mental Health report that align with the Youth Plan will see the enhancement of school-based programs and better outcomes for youth.

Throughout the consultations for the Youth Plan, youth, service providers and mainstream supports identified the need for early prevention efforts for mental health and addictions to be enhanced in schools. Education and awareness can lead to early detection and improve both mental health and education outcomes for vulnerable youth. With the early onset of most mental illness occurring during adolescence, schools can provide an early entry point for supports.

Engage schools in youth homelessness prevention.

During Plan consultations, a number of the youth shared how they disclosed their circumstances of being at-risk for homelessness to officials within their schools, and that their schools were unable to provide or redirect to support. These are missed opportunities for prevention.

We need to build on the work of the United Way of Calgary’s All in for Youth initiative, focused on school completion. The initiative aims to reduce the high school dropout rate in Calgary by 50% by 2017 by providing vulnerable youth with access to mentors and other resources to remove barriers to school attendance; these could be leveraged to mitigate housing instability as well.

Targeted prevention strategies can work with schools to identify and provide wrap-around supports, including housing, to youth at risk of or experiencing youth homelessness and their families. Actions should be taken to increase coordination between the school system, particularly teachers and guidance counsellors and the homeless-serving sector. We can support schools to educate youth about homelessness and available supports. Gay-Straight Alliances can also be leveraged as outreach vehicles for public education and outreach for LGBTQ2S youth at risk of or experiencing youth homelessness.

Enhance and increase education and employment supports for youth.

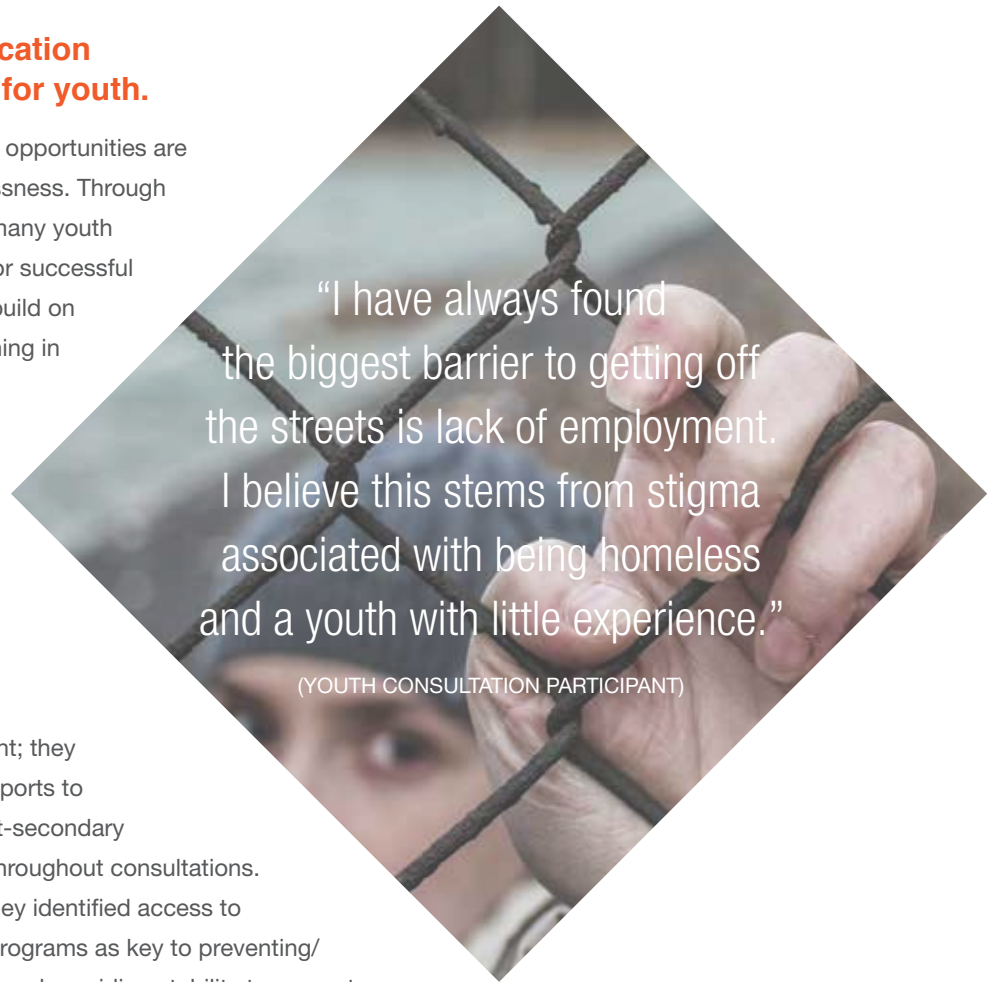
Access to education and employment opportunities are essential in addressing youth homelessness. Through education and training opportunities many youth develop necessary life skills needed for successful transitions to adulthood. We need to build on current program and supports happening in our community. Education and employment opportunities for youth experiencing homelessness need to take into account the many barriers that already exist for them. Supports should be flexible, youth-led and integrated throughout the system of care.

Youth value education and employment; they consistently expressed accessing supports to facilitate their education, training, post-secondary education and job skill development throughout consultations.

Throughout the youth consultations they identified access to education, employment and training programs as key to preventing/shortening episodes of homelessness and providing stability to prevent future experiences with homelessness. We need to ensure such supports are not only accessible but also inclusive of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Funds to assist youth with upgrading when they are not eligible for traditional supports such as Advancing Futures Bursary or Income Assistance/Learner Benefits, can go a long way towards enhancing their long-term stability.

This priority must recognize that training alone would not likely work for this youth population. These young people lack more than a high school diploma, and may have addictions and/or mental health issues. The needs of these difficult to serve youth are met with a comprehensive, youth-centered approach that combines employment training with several other necessary components: housing, education, and intensive personal support. There are many examples of how training, education and housing can work collectively to not only improve the lives of the young people who participate, with many obtaining their high school diploma, learning a skill or trade, gaining and maintaining housing, and, in general, moving towards adulthood with confidence and stability.



Priority 2: Leadership & Engagement

Leadership and engagement will ultimately be needed to achieve the Youth Plan’s vision. This includes funding, the organizational infrastructure to provide backbone functions for the Plan, champions to promote the solutions to diverse audiences, and shared accountability among stakeholders for ending youth homelessness.

Building on public education measures to raise awareness about youth homelessness, we will need research efforts to enhance knowledge about the issue will be required, along with the advancement of a policy and funding agenda to various levels of government.

Advance a strategic Policy Agenda and advocacy effort to champion an end to youth homelessness.

Considerable efforts are already underway at the national levels to support an end to youth homelessness led by organizations including A Way Home, Raising the Roof, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Calgary stakeholders have been key players in advancing the work of these efforts nationally, and will continue to do so moving forward. It is critical that advocacy for youth homelessness is coordinated and strategic to enhance impact. Given the prevalence of youth homelessness across the country, such efforts should continue to be a priority for Calgary as well.

In addition, the Youth Plan implementation should be further aligned with the Alberta provincial effort to end youth homelessness. Key initiatives have already emerged in response to the Alberta Youth Plan, including the creation of an interdepartmental committee working on implementation. It will be critical that Calgary stakeholders driving implementation are fully engaged in provincial activities as appropriate to ensure local needs and perspectives are accounted for at the table; vice versa, ensuring that government is aware and engaged in local Plan implementation should be a priority.

A higher level of policy coordination will be essential to end youth homelessness; this requires continued government leadership to align areas of accountability such as child intervention, homeless supports, education, income assistance, infrastructure, health, family violence, corrections, and affordable housing/rent supports. At the federal level, accountabilities relevant to youth homelessness include Indigenous Peoples, immigration and settlement, housing and homelessness, as well as economic development. At the municipal level, the areas are zoning, affordable housing development and operation, policing, youth probation, economic development, prevention and poverty reduction require meaningful integration as well. An immediate priority will be to review all relevant policies, regulations and legislation that impact youth homelessness to identify existing measures that promote and strengthen prevention, as well as recommendations from the gaps identified.

“If I were in charge I would have more funding for youth, more food, bigger space, higher quality of food”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

There are additional initiatives underway that we need to ensure the Youth Plan aligns with moving forward, particularly the Valuing our Mental Health report recently released, as well as United Way's All in For Youth initiative, the Calgary Housing Affordability Collective, Enough for All (Vibrant Communities Calgary) and FCSS' development of a new investment strategy in coming years. The Plan can further build on the preventative measures outlined in the provincial Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta (2014) as well as Together We Raise Tomorrow: An Alberta to Early Childhood Development (2013) to support youth and families.

We need to continue championing an end to youth homelessness throughout these initiatives and engage in strategic conversations around how the needs of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness can be met within these efforts. Finding similar opportunities and policy levers within public systems, particularly with Child Intervention Services and Corrections can help ensure ending youth homelessness stays on the agenda for diverse stakeholder groups.

A priority implementation action to this end is to develop a comprehensive policy agenda to advance the Plan's objectives. This agenda will need to fully scope out key policy asks, and develop advocacy plans for each to be driven forward by key stakeholders within the context of Plan implementation.

Develop private sector partnerships to support Plan goals.

To implement the Plan, diverse stakeholder groups' efforts will be needed to enhance collective impact on youth homelessness. This includes the development of private sector partnerships to support Plan goals. The private sector can provide leadership, skills training and employment opportunities, alongside charitable and philanthropic giving.

To date, the private sector has not been engaged to its fullest potential in the Youth Plan – despite promising advancements other communities have made in this regard. For instance, in Kamloops, businesses 'adopt' rental units for youth and cover costs, dove-tailing available public funding. The work of the Home Depot Foundation across communities has been at the forefront of ending youth homelessness efforts that incorporate housing and employment while driving for systemic change.

Consultations with youth and key stakeholders in the non-profit and public sectors consistently noted the need for meaningful employment opportunities for youth to stabilize long term, reaffirming the key role employers can play in the Youth Plan. There was emphasis from the consultations with Indigenous youth that work was needed with landlords to reduce the discrimination in the rental market particularly for those with Indigenous surnames. A priority implementation action is to develop an engagement strategy for the private sector as employers, landlords and philanthropists to support the plan.

Develop a Plan governance and implementation strategy.

In the 2011 Plan, the Calgary Homeless Foundation assumed the lead role on the Youth Plan implementation in collaboration with the Youth Sector. Since then, we have realized that the endeavor is better approached from a Collective Impact lens, where diverse stakeholders come together to work towards shared objectives as partners with shared accountabilities. We will nevertheless need to ensure backbone supports are in place and develop the infrastructure and governance necessary to implement the Plan. The connection with the broader Calgary Plan to End Homelessness and the newly formed Calgary Council To End Homelessness will need to be clearly articulated as well.

It will be critical that a pathway to implementation is developed for the Youth Plan, including identified key partners and their accountabilities, backbone supports and governance model. Whether the Youth Sector, the CHF or another organization take on the backbone supports for the Plan and how these 'fit' within the governance of the broader Calgary Plan are critical issues that will need urgent resolution for the Youth Plan to take hold in community.

As part of this work, we will need to reflect and refocus the current Youth Sector table to act as a bold strategic and practice change catalyst beyond its current information sharing and advisory capacity.

This also means we need to have the right people at the table – strategic thinkers in decision-making roles across government, private and non-profit sectors, as well as youth and academia are among possible member sources for a revamped Youth Sector. We will need to reach beyond youth-serving agencies in our recruitment, given that many youth experiencing homelessness are accessing adult services.

Given the Plan recommendation for the introduction of a Youth Systems Working Group (see Priority 2), it will be critical that the Youth Sector consider how these functions relate to its future state and operations as well.

Identify and advance research priorities critical to ending youth homelessness.

Calgary is a recognized national leader in research focused on ending homelessness. Our city was the first to develop a Research Agenda and Network to bring together academia, service providers and government to address common priority research questions in support of the broader Calgary Plan. We are also part of a network working to mobilize research to end homelessness nationally through the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and provincial efforts to align data collection and analysis.

We know however, that current research and data collection efforts need to consider the unique circumstances impacting youth. We need to advance research questions specific to youth homelessness, answering critical uncertainties that inhibit the effective implementation of the Plan. We need to prioritize our knowledge on unique sub-populations of youth who are experiencing homelessness at disproportionate rates, particular immigrant youth. We have strong links with academia we can leverage to this end, but will need to identify our research priorities to move these into research. We also need to address ongoing challenges with the Homeless Point-in-Time Count, which inherently under-represents youth, and points towards the need to develop improved strategies of enumeration of hidden homelessness.




Support youth engagement and leadership in Plan implementation.

Supporting youth's meaningful engagement in Plan development and implementation is a foundational principle for this initiative. Youth need authentic opportunities to shape the implementation of the Youth Plan at the programmatic and system levels. More than providing feedback, youth can be active forces: youth can co-develop interventions and provide support to other youth in peer-based approaches. We have to be open and promote youth's creative and innovative solutions to end homelessness that may involve social enterprises leveraging social media for awareness, or even employment in service provision.

There are significant initiatives underway led by youth that we can build on as we implement the Plan using a community development approach; our immediate priority will be to identify such natural youth mobilization instances that can be part of leading our Plan's implementation.

Youth can and should play a key role in the governance of the Plan as well – they should have a seat as partners and as Youth Plan champions and be provided with meaningful leadership opportunities. Many youth with lived experience wish to give back as a means of acknowledging the support they had access to in times of need, but also as a means of further self-development and empowerment.

The Youth Advisory Table can be further developed and supported to become a Youth Leadership Council on Homelessness and enhance opportunities for youth to “share my voice and ideas on youth homelessness” (Participant youth consultation). The Youth Leadership Council can connect service providers, funders, the community and other support systems to real information and lived experience. As an example from St. John's Choices for Youth, the Youth Leadership Council is an intentional process of involving youth in the decision-making process and program design. Youth can also deliver workshops and advance awareness about topics like self-injury and sexual identity to diverse audiences. In this manner youth are empowered to realize their goals in breaking down barriers for other youth.



“I think the youth need to be the voice of youth homelessness but we need the City, Government, family, friends and youth agencies that work with youth at-risk of being homeless and they need to be advocates”.

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

Enhance funding coordination.

We know that the impact of disparate funding streams has led to notable service gaps for youth in practice, particularly those without child intervention status. Yet, notable investments are being made to support vulnerable youth in our community. By enhancing the coordination of diverse funding sources, we can maximize impact on youth homelessness.

For instance, provincial funding can be cross-ministerial and cross-departmental to support a person-centered approach in practice that treats each youth as unique individual, rather than compartmentalizing their needs according to program mandates. Youth homelessness funding (based on acuity) can be addressed through blended budgets from Income Supports and Child and Family Services. Similarly, there are funders at the community levels whose efforts can be better aligned in support of Plan goals – such as the United Way, FCSS, and the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

We can explore advancing youth as a priority for existing funding tables to advance an end to youth homelessness as a community, ensuring that resources are invested for maximum impact. This will require that funders adopt a set of outcomes from the Youth Plan as their own, and performance manage accordingly. This can support enhanced harmonization of reporting and outcomes measurement for agencies with multiple funding sources, decreasing their administrative burden.

Priority 3: Systems

The Youth Plan shifts our focus to prevention as opposed to emergency responses. To have a strong prevention approach the response must include an integrated system of care to be coordinated throughout and across all systems youth access. The homeless-serving sector cannot solve youth homelessness on its own, it requires an integrated response by community agencies and mainstream services, such as child welfare, education, health care, housing, and justice, that youth at risk access. With an integrated cross-system approach, services will prevent youth from becoming homeless in the first place; if homelessness does occur, responses will ensure the experience is brief and non-occurring.

An integrated system response focused on preventing youth homelessness has better outcomes for youth, families and community and presents a more cost-effective approach than our current emphasis on emergency responses. Collaboration and integration across agencies, government bodies and mainstream services will require coordination for prevention efforts, transition from systems, improved access to mental health and addiction supports across the continuum of care, and multi-system approach to information sharing. This will necessarily require that accountability for youth homelessness and prevention are accepted and actioned upon by these systems.

Develop an intergrated system of care to improve system and service integration.

A prevention-focused approach to ending youth homelessness requires both an approach to systems coordination (coordinated intake, shared information management systems) as well as specific case management interventions designed to avoid the experience of homelessness and reduce the time spent homeless. We need to ensure the diverse services accessed by at risk and homeless youth have well-articulated roles in a broader system of care focused on prevention. Their respective roles, target population, eligibility criteria, and outcomes should be clear and transparent, whether delivered by non-profit or public sector. These services should have the capacity to discern their performance and accessibility to youth, whether they target youth or not.


We have introduced several measures to enhance service integration, such as the Coordinated Access and Assessment. However, we can improve integration within and between youth-serving, homeless-serving and key public systems, including child intervention, domestic violence, education, corrections, police, probation, and health to implement the Plan.

As we move forward, we can explore the creation of a Youth Systems Table to provide the coordinated case planning and stakeholder coordination infrastructure to implement on-the-ground changes advancing the Plan's directions. This table can explore means to reduce barriers to youth's access to services, including less and simpler paperwork, fewer appointments, shorter waiting lists and less rules.

The Youth Systems Table can bring these stakeholders together to develop:

1. Collective vision and guiding principles
2. Collaborative case planning processes
3. Coordinated access and assessment processes
4. Data and information sharing, including use of common information system
5. Performance management and quality assurance approaches
6. Capacity building and training.

Consistent concerns from youth and other stakeholders were voiced regarding issues with the CAA around the prioritization of high acuity youth without supports available for those with lower Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) scores creating access barriers to housing for youth. Other coordination issues concerned barriers created through eligibility criteria that resulted in youth being 'bounced between CFS and the homeless sector'. The Youth System Working Group can explore such issues to suggest improvement on an ongoing basis with all key stakeholders at the table as partners.



"I wasn't bad enough.
I didn't screw up enough
to get them to help me."

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

“I have dealt with child services my whole life since the age of 8 until I ran away at 16. I have a three year old son now that is not with me but with family services and he was with my dad and I was with him last year but then went to jail so I can't see him anymore until I am sober.

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

Develop strategies to support youth transitions from and between systems.

When youth leave systems of care, including Child Intervention, Family Supports for Children with Disabilities, Justice, and Mental Health, they should be engaged in proactive, youth-centered planning processes that address housing, programming, education and employment supports required to ensure a healthy transition to adulthood. We need to enhance effective supports available for youth aging out of government care; these should include appropriate housing placements that support transitions to adulthood.

At a minimum level, these systems can begin to shift practice internally to mitigate discharging youth into homelessness. A Youth Systems Table can be established to enhance coordinated case planning processes to make a notable difference at the service delivery levels. This can be enhanced by training for staff across systems on appropriate procedures to mitigate youth homelessness risk and the tracking of outcomes to improve the approach.

The homeless-serving system can be resourced to take pieces of this work on, but it cannot simply replace the role of these systems. Child intervention, human services, health, and corrections, can contribute resources to address the needs of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The consultations with youth and stakeholders, as well as available research reaffirm the critical role Child Intervention Services play in the lives of young people experiencing homelessness and those at risk. At the same time, the experiences of youth resound that the ways services are being delivered needs to shift towards an enhanced person-centered, low barrier approach. In the Indigenous youth consultation, youth with high levels of child intervention involvement recommended that more ‘home-like’ or ‘family-like’ environments be developed in child intervention system with caring and consistent adults who enjoy working with youth and provide a supportive and safe environment.

In light of the consistent reports of family conflict and abuse precipitating pathways into homelessness for youth, we need to enhance the integration of homelessness responses with those in domestic violence prevention and intervention as well. The Plan can build on the preventative measures outlined in the provincial Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta (2014) particularly its strategic priorities on strengthening efforts to prevent family violence across the lifespan and enhance services, supports and the justice response for victims and offenders of family violence.

We can do more to ensure the justice system is engaged as well: Instead of incarcerating youth with addictions or mental health, more programs, such as restorative justice programs, can be made available that they could be probated to. Probation orders and conditions can be revamped to decriminalize youth homelessness and youth can be assisted to navigate the legal system to avoid future involvement as well.

The homeless and youth-serving systems can be part of the solution, but it cannot be expected to take this on alone. Provincial and federal corrections systems will have to contribute to the development of housing stock and supports specific to the needs of shared complex service participants with housing instability.

Develop a multi-system information sharing approach.

Another common challenge that inhibits effective service integration relates to information sharing. Ongoing challenges around privacy prevent providers in the public and non-profit sectors from providing wrap-around services that allow for seamless and rapid transitions. While some agencies have common data collection that can be accessed and shared between organizations through HMIS, others are not integrated in this manner. The Youth Systems Table can explore this issue further and develop strategies to remove information sharing barriers.

With respect to HMIS, while important information is being collected through the system locally and at the provincial level, the sharing of this data in practice to ensure continuous strategy refinement is lacking. To implement the Plan successfully, access to such data and its analysis will be critical. Further, not all agencies are able to contribute to or access shared information systems at this time, decreasing the visibility of youth homelessness trends across services. Moving forward, we need to find ways to enhance data collection and analysis across services regardless of funders – which will necessarily include adult services being accessed by youth as well. Connecting with provincial efforts around aligning data collection in homeless supports will be an immediate priority to this end.

Increase access to addiction and mental health supports.

Access to mental health and addiction supports throughout the system of care and across mainstream systems is essential in preventing youth homelessness and improving housing stability for youth who experience homelessness. Youth, throughout the consultation process identified information and access to mental health and addiction services as an essential element to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Integration of addiction and mental health supports across multiple systems will improve access points for young people. Youth identified multiple points throughout their life where improved access could have impacted their health and housing stability, these included foster care, school, family, employment and housing and shelter programs.

We need to do more to ensure that youth and families with complex needs are supported in accessing services that meet their needs. Enhancement to current services should ensure they are youth-centered and tailored to meet developmental needs and flexible to meet the unique challenges young people experiencing homelessness face. Building on the existing efforts of key policies and strategies in province (10 Year Plan, Alberta's Youth Plan, Social Policy Framework, and Valuing Our Mental Health), the Youth Plan calls for an integrated and coordinated response for youth accessing addiction and mental health services across the continuum. "Youth" specific mental health and addiction supports must be designed in particular for the homeless population. An understanding of their needs, an understanding of the importance of quick and effective interventions and an understanding of the reduced lifelong costs per individual must be considered when designing this integrated response.

Priority 4: Housing

A network of services and accommodation options are necessary to end homelessness for youth; diverse and appropriate housing and supports (case management, income assistance, education, health care, etc.) ensure that once rehoused, youth do not fall back into homelessness.

We need to ensure services are in place that support young people who have experienced homelessness to exit this situation as quickly as possible and not return to homelessness. Strategies should be designed to provide stability, reduce the risk of future homelessness, and help ensure a safe and nurturing transition to adulthood and independence.

To achieve this, expansion of particular program types will be needed and in some instances, the introduction of new program models and housing stock. Service delivery and practices will need revisioning as well.

It is important to highlight that during consultations, both youth and service providers felt that the existing landscape of services met their fundamental needs. What was missing was capacity within the existing network of supports given demand for services and housing. When given the option, almost all of the youth and providers preferred the idea of increasing the capacity of existing services rather than developing and implementing new, additional services. There were nonetheless key gaps identified for lower acuity youth because of the emphasis on high acuity at the Coordinated Access and Assessment table, as such lower acuity youth reported higher barriers to access services and housing.

Advance youth-centered approaches to housing and supports.

Whatever the housing and support models are in place, ensuring approaches are youth-centered, low barrier, and strengths-based will be critical. Such approaches need to also prioritize family/natural supports regardless of program or housing type. Our services must be trauma-informed to support youth and families across the housing and support continuum.

There is strong agreement among stakeholders on the need for flexible, relationship-based and individualized supports for youth. This was confirmed by the youth consultation participants who consistently noted that the capacity of service providers to build rapport and trust was a key strength, and primary motivator for their participation in services. Youth want support to accomplish their self-identified goals, in a flexible, non-judgmental manner. Youth appreciate the ability to access supports as needed, with the knowledge that they can return for help at any point.

Our housing and supports interventions will have to be tailored to meet the needs of diverse youth groups, including Indigenous, LGBTQ2S, immigrant, parenting, sexually exploited youth, and youth with developmental disabilities, mental health and/or addiction issues.

“It would help if they understood where I’ve been if they want to help where I’m going”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

“Being Indigenous has not influenced my decision to access agencies or services but I am always going to the Aboriginal agencies first because they understand where and what Indigenous are and they are more sympathetic. I think there could be cultural training for non-Indigenous staff, access to Elders, a place to smudge, a place to learn Blackfoot and traditions”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)



Currently there are few separate, targeted services for LGBTQ2S youth despite their disproportionately high representation amongst the homeless youth population. While there is a need to increase the number of targeted service offerings, there is also a need to improve the safety, security, and accommodation of LGBTQ2S youth who are accessing existing services. For instance, LGBTQ2S supportive housing and shelter options should be increased that are separate services from mainstream youth for those who want this option. At the same time, organizations and systems serving youth should have enhanced capacity to deliver supports to LGBTQ2S youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This will require training and targeted awareness building in the sector and systems, but also enhanced funder rigor around expectation for such services through formalized standards and monitoring.

With respect to Indigenous youth, we need a better understanding of the impacts of Intergenerational Trauma as a root cause that creates housing instability and homelessness. We need to embed a 'healing' approach into housing and supports. Youth should have access to spaces to allow for smudging, powwows and sweats and Elders that they can seek guidance and support from.

Indigenous youth consistently seek access to supports and housing that are culturally safe; they want the choice to access both mainstream supports that are culturally safe, as well as Indigenous-specific service delivered through a cultural lens. Again, this will require providers to improve their understanding of Indigenous youth needs within youth serving and adult-serving systems, and for standards of practice to be reinforced by the sector and funders.

Our response for immigrant youth is currently minimal. We need to increase our knowledge of the causes and experiences that lead to their housing instability. We need to engage the immigrant youth and community in understanding their reality and co-creating solutions that are tailored to meet their unique needs.

Frontline training and capacity building efforts will be needed to support this shift in practice across public and non-profit providers. This includes training for adult-serving agencies on recognizing youth needs and enhancing their integration with youth-serving organization. We can explore whether it is possible that current adult programs can be transitioned to serve youth with the right training and support.

Support with training will be needed regarding trauma, brain development, mental health, and addictions as well shifting towards a youth-centered approach that incorporates natural supports/family work. Ensuring staff receive cultural awareness training particularly with respect to the needs and experiences of Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth will continue to be a priority.

**Support youth and families/
natural supports throughout
service delivery.**

While some youth may be disconnected from their families, others are not, nor wish to be. From a prevention perspective, our goal is not to have young people avoid homelessness on their own ('bootstrap' their way up), but rather shore up their natural supports in the community to help them avoid entering and becoming entrenched in the homelessness 'system'.

Early intervention strategies should be enhanced to keep young people 'in place' in their communities where they have natural supports, divert them from emergency shelters and mainstream homelessness services, help them stay in school, and work with their families so that young people can safely remain or return home or move into their own accommodation in a safe and planned way. Working with youth as part of families and enhancing their natural supports will enhance housing stability, education and employment outcomes. This approach requires that the way youth work is being done shifts to family and natural supports work.

“Mom and me fight and she uses so that’s the reason we have personality conflicts and fight too much – I just can’t go home”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

“I need a family support system or person to check in on me at my house, have food, a stable job and a good roommate to help with my rent, bills and buy food”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

We can leverage the work of the United Way of Calgary’s Vulnerable Youth Strategy, focused on building community collaboration to improve peer, family and adult social supports for youth (15-24) who struggle to transition successfully to adulthood.

Yet, we have to be mindful that reunification with families is not always an option, particularly for Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth. The natural supports youth want support engaging with should be determined by youth, rather than preconceived notions about what families should look like.

The most common recommendation from consultation participants was the inclusion of provisions to support parents, particularly of LGBTQ2S youth. We need to invest in parenting support programs that address gender and sexual diversity, especially for new parents, and provide ongoing supports to families.

In many cases, youth are parents, and thus face additional challenges to secure affordable daycare and manage family conflict in some instances with their ex-partners. Youth with children appreciate the family-friendly environments and additional parenting supports. Ensuring supports are both open and supportive of youth as families and in families, and skilled in supporting their specific needs emerged as an essential learning for these pilots and future implementations.

By aligning the Youth Plan's work with that of Together We Raise Tomorrow: An Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development, we can prioritize the assistance of families experiencing periods of vulnerability; including poverty, homelessness, family violence or abuse to reduce their barriers to providing healthy, safe, nurturing experiences for their children and protect children who are not safe. The assistance of vulnerable families is a key leverage point given the high proportion of youth with child intervention experiences as well. The focus on maternal, infant and child health is well aligned with the Youth Plan focus on prevention and early intervention, as well as supporting youth and their families. For youth with children or pregnant, this is of further bearing along with building skills to support child development.

Increase affordable housing options and supports for youth.

We need to be mindful of the greater challenge our city faces with respect to housing affordability, despite recent shifts in the economy increasing vacancy rates. As the Calgary Plan outlines, there were about 15,600 renter households experiencing extreme core housing need in 2011 who were earning less than \$20,000 and spending 50% or more on shelter. While our proposed actions focus on a portion of these households that are youth, Calgary's broader housing affordability issue remains unresolved and precipitates risk for youth as well.

"I just want my own place and not having to communicate constantly with staff or other youth. I just want to be on my own. The new group homes are stopping me from going because of my past. Staff and youth are the reasons why I leave and go to jail I just don't want to live with other people and I want to come and go when I want to and I don't want to get in fights with other girls at the group home".

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

While social housing providers can certainly do more, we will ultimately need all levels of government and the private sector to step up as well. The Community Affordable Housing Strategy facilitated by the City of Calgary aims to bring all key stakeholders to the table to address the gap between the demand for affordable housing and the supply. Another key initiative is Calgary's RESOLVE Campaign - a collaboration among nine partners raising \$120 million from the private sector to build affordable and supporting housing for 3,000 vulnerable and homeless Calgarians.

Government, private and non-profit sector leadership will ultimately be needed to address the shortage of units for renter households in extreme core housing need. More rental supplements will also be needed to bridge the gap for these households and mitigate homelessness risk. Where new stock and rent supplements become available, we need to ensure these are appropriate for and accessible to youth.

A fulsome youth housing continuum should be in place with diverse options without predetermined time limits that allow transition according to individual developmental stages and needs. 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 housing can take a number of forms:

- housing dispersed throughout a community and usually rented from a private landlord (i.e. scattered-site housing with wrap-around supports, like Housing First for Youth).
- single, multi-unit buildings dedicated to youth and young adults (i.e., single site or congregate supportive housing, such as the Foyer model or Host Homes); and
- units or entire floors set-aside especially for youth and young adults in affordable housing developments (i.e., set-aside units with wrap-around supports).

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 models along a housing continuum will support their transition to adulthood. Whatever the housing form, youth must be connected with supports as well; this is not about housing only. Again, it will be essential to ensure that the options are tailored to the needs of Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth, as well as immigrant youth moving forward.

Youth-specific buildings with programming focused on addictions and mental health and life skills are needed for higher acuity youth, particularly younger youth who can benefit from supportive home-like environments. For moderate acuity youth, a focus on employment following the Foyer model can support long term transitions to adulthood. The focus on educational and employment can be complementary to the Housing First and supportive housing youth are receiving.

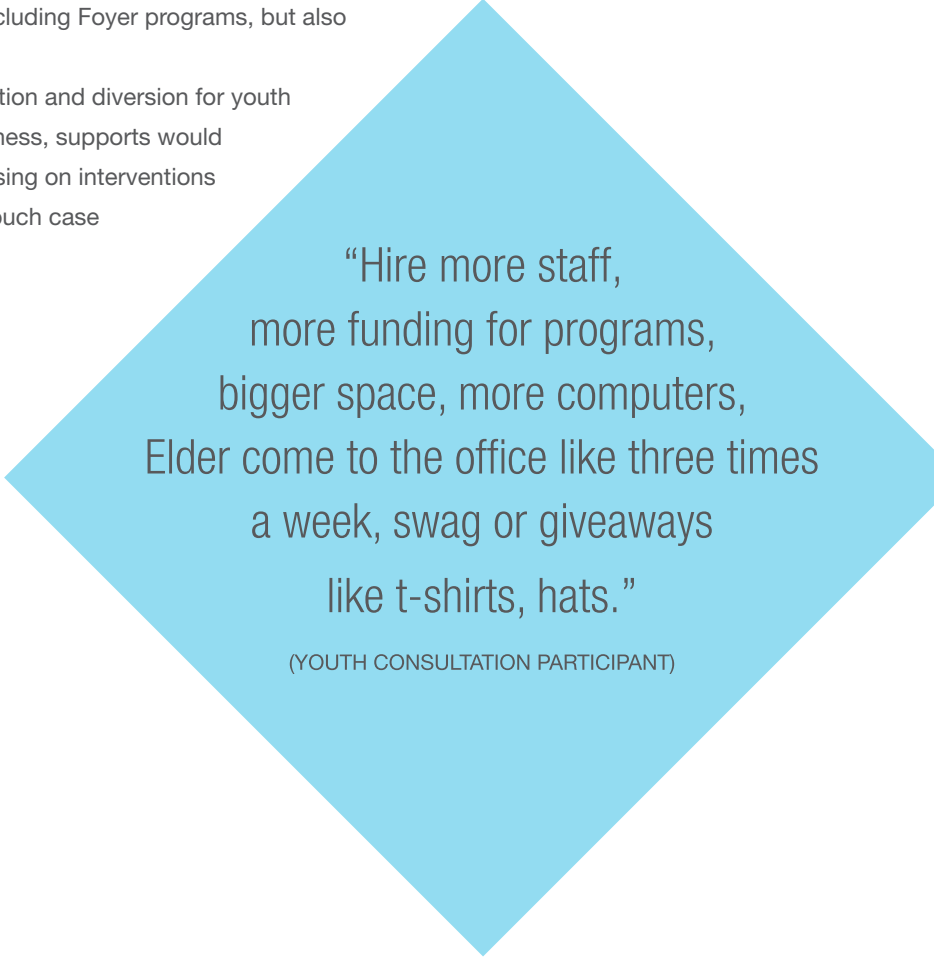
Scattered-site housing can be appropriate to a diversity of youth, with wrap-around supports that ensure greater levels of self-sufficiency as youth transition to independence. We may have an opportunity to capitalize on current rental market trends due to the economic downturn that has reduced rents and enhanced vacancy levels. Developing a targeted landlord recruitment strategy can help enhance youth's access to private rental units. These models can be adapted to meet the needs of Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth by designing specific supports for target groups, or accounting for these needs as part of broader projects. For instance, the addition of an Elder on staff as part of Housing First teams can ensure Indigenous youth have the option to access their support within the program.

We can explore the expansion and adaptability of such effective housing and support models, such as Housing First and Foyer/supportive housing, to other public systems serving youth, including corrections and child intervention. Further, we need to advance the inclusion of specific youth housing options and within broader Calgary Plan to End Homelessness, Alberta Housing & Supports Framework and Alberta Plan to End Homelessness.

Secure resources to enhance housing and programs for youth.

In order to end youth homelessness, new investments in diverse program types and housing will be needed appropriate to levels of need. Higher acuity youth with longer-term housing instability will benefit from supportive housing models, including Foyer programs, but also intensive case management and scattered-site supports. In terms of prevention and diversion for youth at risk of or experiencing transitional homelessness, supports would come in the form of tailored programming focusing on interventions like family reunification, rent supports, lighter-touch case management and system navigation.

The proposed measures would add a range of supports tailored to youth that are both place-based and scattered-site leveraging the rental market. Over the next four years, investments could bring on-stream significant program and housing spaces to help current service house almost 2,000 youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.



“Hire more staff,
more funding for programs,
bigger space, more computers,
Elder come to the office like three times
a week, swag or giveaways
like t-shirts, hats.”

(YOUTH CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT)

The measures proposed are as follows:

- Develop **90 place-based supportive housing units** (Foyer model, Permanent Supportive Housing, Host Homes, etc.).
- Develop **125 affordable housing units** specifically for youth.
- Create **170 scattered-site Housing First for Youth program spaces** of which 100 would target high acuity youth and 69 would be designed for low-moderate acuity youth.
- Provide **760** independent youth/youth in families with access to **Rapid Rehousing for Youth and Homelessness Prevention** supports including family reunification, financial support to maintain housing and wrap-around supports focused on mitigating homelessness risk.
- Serve **840** independent youth/youth in families with targeted **rent supports**.

Additional measures needed in other public systems, such as addiction treatment or mental health supports could be blended for an integrated response with the program and housing interventions noted below as well. We see investment to come from diverse funding streams in community, including government departments with a role in youth homelessness and prevention (Child Intervention Services, Income Assistance, Homeless Supports, Corrections, Employment and Training, and Education), as well as community funders, such as the United Way, FCSS and Calgary Homeless Foundation, as well as philanthropists.

We are keenly aware that bringing in resources in this economic climate will be difficult and we will need to adjust our advocacy and implementation approach in real-time accordingly in light of progress towards these funding goals.

Revision and enhance the role of emergency homeless services and transitional housing for youth.

Emergency services and supports (shelters, day programs, soup kitchens etc.) are important community resources and can be considered preventive (early intervention) if they proactively assist young people through case management to return home, address family conflict, or move out of homelessness as quickly as possible. The way emergency shelters and transitional housing programs operate can be revamped to move youth into permanent housing quicker.

At the same time, we need to recognize that many youth access adult services. Youth accessing the adult shelters may be further victimized and experience higher vulnerabilities. This points to the need for enhanced integration between youth and adult systems, but also enhanced capacity among adult system providers to divert youth to age-appropriate services and enhance their in-house capacity to respond to young people.

There was an overwhelming suggestion from the LGBTQ2S youth consulted that there is a need for an LGBTQ2S-specific shelter. Many of the participants lamented how existing shelter services are organized based on a gender binary. The existing landscape of shelters are not currently equipped to support many LGBTQ2S youth. The recently launched Host Homes model provides a promising approach that can be expanded upon, and may be a vehicle for addressing the unique needs of Indigenous youth and older youth 18-24 as well who need shelter options that meet their developmental needs.

With respect to existing transitional housing (short-term supportive housing), we need to explore how best to leverage such programs system-wide. We can revision their role by ensuring longer-term supports are in place for youth who move out to assist with their transition to adulthood. We can also enhance their flexibility by moving towards more harm reduction models that are more accepting of youth making mistakes as part of their development. Youth can be supported at move out by staying connected to the program and having access to case management and system navigation supports. They should also be able to stay until they are ready to move out rather than on a pre-determined length of stay basis. This doesn't mean staff are not supporting youth towards independence, rather, we have a flexible youth-led approach to the transition and prepare them for it on their own terms.

There is also a need to enhance outreach services to provide basic system navigation given youth reports that they are unaware of and do not know how to access available resources. 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 would also extend to the systems that interact with youth as well as a means of implementing early intervention activities that streamline access to other system components.

Moving the Plan into Implementation

Implementation & Governance Strategy

As noted in Priority 2, there is a need to develop a fulsome implementation strategy for the Youth Plan with clarified accountabilities and timelines to move the work forward in community. During its development, Plan stakeholders acknowledged the need for a Collective Impact¹⁷ approach to implementation, yet this requires infrastructure to be in place to execute core functions for the constellation of individuals and organizations involved. One of the key pieces of work needed is to ensure adequate backbone supports, governance and leadership are identified for the Plan.

The Plan calls for youth participation and shared decision-making, the perspectives and voices of youth must shape the proposed solutions. As such, youth should be engaged and consulted throughout the implementation phase in a meaningful and productive manner.

We realize that conversations with key partners are still unfolding and it would be inappropriate to assume their buy-in into the Plan outright. We will encourage key partners to consider their roles in advancing the Plan and identify what contributions they can make towards these priorities. Ideally, key stakeholders would review the Plan internally, agree to endorse it in principle and outline the actions they can take towards its stated objectives.

Key stakeholder groups that need to be engaged in this process are listed below.

Youth

1. Youth Advisory Table

Indigenous Leadership

2. On and off-reserve Indigenous leadership & government
3. Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness

Non-Profit Sector

4. Youth Sector
5. Youth-serving agencies
6. Homeless-serving agencies

Funders

7. Calgary Homeless Foundation
8. Burns Memorial Fund
9. United Way of Calgary & Area
10. Calgary Foundation

System Partners

11. Calgary & Area Child & Family Services
12. Public & Separate Boards of Education
13. Correctional Services & Young offender programs
14. Alberta Health Services

City of Calgary

15. Community & Neighbourhood Services
16. Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)
17. Youth Justice Services
18. Land Servicing & Housing
19. Planning & Development
20. Calgary Housing Company
21. Calgary Police Service
22. Calgary Bylaw Service

Government of Alberta

23. Indigenous Relations
24. Culture & Tourism
25. Education
26. Health
27. Human Services (Interagency Council on Homelessness, child intervention services, domestic violence, homeless supports, income assistance, persons with disabilities)
28. Seniors & Housing
29. Advanced Education
30. Labour
31. Justice and Solicitor General
32. Status of Women

Government of Canada

33. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
34. Employment and Social Development Canada
35. Justice Canada
36. Public Health Agency of Canada

To kickstart implementation over the next year, the following key actions are proposed as immediate next steps following the launch of the Plan in October 2016.

ACTIONS	Key partners review and endorse the Youth Plan and identify actions/resources they can contribute to the Plan goals.	
TIMELINE	September – December 2016	
PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Sector • Youth serving agencies • Youth Advisory Table • Homeless serving system agencies • Child and Family Services • Alberta Human Services (child intervention services, domestic violence, homeless supports, income assistance, persons with disabilities) • Inter-agency Council on Homelessness • On and off-reserve Indigenous leadership & government • Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness • Alberta Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public & Separate Boards of Education • Seniors & Housing • Alberta Health • Alberta Health Services • Justice and Solicitor General • Status of Women • Indigenous Relations • City of Calgary • Correctional Services & Young offender programs • Government of Canada – Economic and Social Development • Homeless serving system • Funders (United Way, Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary FCSS)
ACTIONS	Revision the Youth Sector in light of Plan Refresh.	
TIMELINE	January – March 2017	
PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Sector with input from key partners 	
ACTIONS	Develop an implementation strategy with clarity around governance and backbone supports required.	
TIMELINE	March – September 2017	
PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisioned Youth Sector • Calgary Homeless Foundation • United Way • City of Calgary FCSS • Child and Family Services • Alberta Human Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Education • Public & Separate Boards of Education • Alberta Health • Justice and Solicitor General • Correctional Services & Young offender programs
ACTIONS	Develop a Policy and Funding Agenda to advance the measures proposed in the Plan to government and funders.	
TIMELINE	September – November 2017	
PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisioned Youth Sector/ Youth Plan BackboneSupports with input from key partners. 	
ACTIONS	Launch a Youth Systems Working Group.	
TIMELINE	November 2017	
PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisioned Youth Sector • Funders United Way, Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary FCSS • Calgary Homeless Foundation • Child and Family Services • Alberta Human Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Education • Public & Separate Boards of Education • Alberta Health • Justice and Solicitor General • Correctional Services & Young offender programs

Appendix 1- Policy & Key Initiatives Review

The table below summarizes the key policy and community initiative directions with relevance to the Youth Plan.

KEY POLICY/ STRATEGY DOCUMENT	DIRECTIONS RELEVANT TO YOUTH PLAN
Alberta Social Policy Framework	<p>SOCIAL POLICY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe – Youth live free from fear of abuse and violence. • Healthy – Achieve the highest attainable standards rehousing or family reunification. • Secure and Resilient – Youth support themselves and their households through safe work and career opportunities, with access to effective income supports when in financial need. • Lifelong Learners – Youth develop the knowledge, skills, and commitment to learning necessary to realize their potential and participate in society. • Included – Youth feel welcomed in the communities where they live, learn and work. • Active and Engaged – Youth have opportunities to participate in recreational activities and cultural experiences, and to engage in Albertan society.
A Plan for Alberta – Ending Homelessness in 10 years	<p>HOMELESSNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid re-housing - moving homeless youth from streets and shelters into permanent housing quickly. • Client-centered – help youth obtain the assistance they need to restore their stability and maintain their housing. • Prevent homelessness - emergency assistance and adequate and accessible government programs and services to youth stem flow into homelessness. • Better information – Collecting, researching and sharing essential information that focuses on outcomes. • Aggressive assistance – Making sure youth have the resources they need to secure and keep stable homes. • Coordinated systems – Ensuring governments, agencies, and communities work together in an integrated, efficient way towards shared objectives. • More housing options – Increasing the quantity and variety of housing options so that every youth has a home. • Effective policies – Implementing government policies that bring down barriers to re-housing and actively promote the goal of ending youth homelessness.
Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth have increased housing stability through rehousing and family reunification. • Increased resiliency in homeless youth and youth at risk to becoming homeless. • Prevention of youth homelessness through education and enhanced family and natural supports. • Healthy transitions to adulthood.

**KEY POLICY/
STRATEGY DOCUMENT**

DIRECTIONS RELEVANT TO YOUTH PLAN

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate - Youth Aging out of Care Special Report

CHILD PROTECTION

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate - Youth Aging out of Care Special Report

- Young people leaving care should have affordable, safe, and stable housing options and the financial resources to support themselves independently.
- Dedicated and trained caseworkers are in place to meet the unique needs of young people leaving care.
- Youth are effectively transitioned to the adult system to meet their service and support needs.
- Young people leaving care have access to counseling and/or mental health supports.
- Enhanced awareness of caseworkers, caregivers, and service providers about resources for young people leaving care and support young people to access them.
- Young people leaving care have supportive adult relationships.

Calgary Region Child and Family Services

- Partnering with communities to deliver right services at right time.
- Focus on preventative actions to enhance resiliency and reduce interventions.
- Recognize importance of relationship with families, communities and service delivery partners.
- Focus on supporting families using strength-based approach as best placement outcome for children. Family unit as essential to children's long-term outcomes. Five key outcomes:
 - 1.** Vulnerable children are supported to live successfully in the community.
 - 2.** Children in temporary care are reunited quickly with their family.
 - 3.** Children in permanent care are placed in permanent homes as quickly as possible.
 - 4.** Youth transition to adulthood successfully.
 - 5.** Indigenous children live in culturally appropriate placements

Child Intervention Practice Framework

Six practice principles:

- 1.** Aboriginal Experience
- 2.** Preserve Family
- 3.** Strengths-based
- 4.** Connection
- 5.** Collaboration
- 6.** Continuous Improvement

Permanency Framework

- Child- and youth-centered permanency planning as soon as family is engaged.
- All children and youth are entitled to a permanent family relationship.
- All permanency options for the child/youth are concurrently considered.
- The four domains of permanency planning (relationship, culture, legal and home) are honored.
- Meaningful permanency planning for every youth, regardless of age, is continuous.

Signs of Safety

Increasing safety and reducing risk and danger by focusing on a family's strengths, resources and networks.

Outcomes Based Service Delivery

- Collaborative practice.
- Flexible contracting and funding.
- Data about the outcomes of services provided.

**KEY POLICY/
STRATEGY DOCUMENT**

DIRECTIONS RELEVANT TO YOUTH PLAN

KEY POLICY/ STRATEGY DOCUMENT	DIRECTIONS RELEVANT TO YOUTH PLAN
FASD 10-Year Strategic Plan	OTHER <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals with FASD require improved access to housing – including places to live that are affordable and provide structure and support.• Improve access to services for individuals affected by FASD, including vulnerable populations who are not receiving the support they need, with a particular focus on youth in transition to adulthood.
2015 Revised School Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section 16.1. Specifically allows for organized activities that promote equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.
Valuing Our Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommendations that transitions between youth and adult services be improved, and health promotion, prevention, and long-term treatment must be made a priority. Schools, including post-secondary institutions, can help in these efforts.• Provide dedicated navigators for those who require additional support to access addiction and mental health services across the continuum to further coordinate support for children, youth and families, and those in government care who are at risk of harming themselves or others.• Improve mental health and educational outcomes for children and youth through: a. Providing enriched early childhood education programs; b. Enhancing school-based addiction and mental health programs across the province; and c. Requiring all programs to coordinate with each other and integrate with the community to provide a continuum of services.• Increase the ability of children, youth and families in crisis to obtain addiction and mental health support and treatment services by: a. Developing and increasing access to medical and social detox through the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, and strengthening linkages between mandated treatment and follow-up care; and b. Increasing the number of acute care and community transition beds with wraparound services provided in partnership with Alberta Health Services and community agencies.• Government of Alberta to collaborate with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and communities to advocate and appeal to the federal government to better meet the addiction and mental health needs of these communities by: Ensuring b) that children, youth, and adults do not experience denials, delays, or disruptions of services and supports.
Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Framework's proposes a prevention focus to addressing family violence using a whole-government approach, integrated services and policy. The strategic priorities on strengthening efforts to prevent family violence across the lifespan and enhance services, supports and the justice response for victims and offenders of family violence are particularly salient for youth.• In addition, the Framework calls for the improvement of the provision of basic needs, housing, education and employment supports for victims experiencing family violence – which would include youth.• The approach emphasises an integrated response to family violence that is reinforced by legislation, research and evaluation, and capacity building. It recognizes that housing stability is often interconnected with violence and thus includes homelessness within its purview of priorities for families experiencing violence.

**KEY POLICY/
STRATEGY DOCUMENT**

DIRECTIONS RELEVANT TO YOUTH PLAN

Together We Raise
Tomorrow, An Alberta
Approach to Early
Childhood Development

Together We Raise Tomorrow prioritizes:

- A healthy start for children
- Children realizing their full developmental potential when they enter school
- Parents providing nurturing and stable environments for their young children
- Safe, supportive communities for children to learn grow and thrive

Immediate work on the following is proposed:

- Improve maternal, infant and child health to support healthy pregnancies, reduce the number of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, optimize maternal mental health and provide early screening and follow up to support a child's development.
- Provide Alberta parents with access to leading edge early years information and practical tools that help support their child's development.
- Assist families experiencing periods of vulnerability to provide healthy, safe, nurturing experiences for their children and protect children who are not safe.

The focus on maternal, infant and child health is well aligned with the Youth Plan focus on prevention and early intervention, as well as supporting youth and their families. For youth with children or pregnant, this is of further bearing along with building skills to support child development.

The assistance of vulnerable families is a key leverage point given the high proportion of youth with child intervention experiences as well.

The report further notes that "We know that child poverty, homelessness, family violence and abuse cause some children to be more vulnerable than others." As a result, under Parenting Resources, the it specifically notes prioritizing the assistance of families experiencing periods of vulnerability; including poverty, homelessness, family violence or abuse to reduce their barriers to providing healthy, safe, nurturing experiences for their children and protect children who are not safe.

Appendix 2 – Progress to Date

The following summary of progress was developed by the CHF in March 2014 to outline the status of progress against the 2011 Plan. Note that the focus is on CHF actions in some cases. The update also excludes key changes prompted by the 2015 Updated Plan to End Homelessness in Calgary.

Strategy 1: Build a coordinated system to prevent and end youth homelessness in Calgary.

GOALS	STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Build system initiatives to prevent youth homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated Access and Assessment implementation; Youth Placement Committee. SPDAT being used as a common assessment tool. CAA Workers and Community Agencies providing preventive case management support. UW and FCSS funding prevention programs for vulnerable youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Ian Dejong feedback on the development of a youth SPDAT Youth Sector reviewed SPDAT and forwarded recommendations. New youth SPDAT to be launched this spring. CHF funding needed for prevention and diversion services RFP rolled out and awarded for prevention and diversion services. Enhance coordination of existing prevention and diversion services in the community meeting to be scheduled in June with various stakeholders to enhance coordination of existing services.
Zero discharge into homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roofs for Youth – CYOC. Youth Placement Committee collaboration between programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to establish working group with CACFSA, AHS and CYOC to reduce system discharge into homelessness (work has commenced and will continue).
Create innovative emergency outreach services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BGCC, WOODS , McMan, Doorway, Street Light, ALEX, CMHA, CJHS, Alpha House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to expand outreach services into schools, community-based programs and resource centers (spring 2015). Need to provide outreach services into adult shelter programs (spring 2015).
Develop services for youth who are episodically and chronically homeless t = 276 (9%).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHF Research Report completed on intervention and prevention services. CHF currently fund 10 housing programs and 1 support service for youth (\$4.1 m or 9%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to gain a better understanding of needs and supports for sub-populations (LGBTQ, parenting teens, immigrant, Aboriginal, etc.) LGBTQ program funded, Aboriginal program funded, training provided to sector on LGBTQ youth, Aboriginal Awareness, Cultural Competency. Meet with funded programs to review and enhance current system of care for youth. Community Consultation 2014, Youth Sharing and Learning Table, Youth Placement Committee discussions, Youth Sector.

GOALS	STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Encourage initiatives that support successful transitioning to independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHF funded programs currently focus on YTA supports, strategies and outcomes. CHF benchmark created specific for youth programs (education and employment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philosophical shift required from “providing housing” to supporting “transition to independence.” Agencies submitted contract renewals with program models that will better support YTA processes. Enhance CM training and supports to achieve better outcomes for successful YTA Youth specific training (Enhancing Natural Supports, Building Connections with Families, LGBTQ Youth, etc.) offered in 2014. Housing continuum must support positive YTA outcomes Introduction of Host Homes, Mental Health Supports, LGBTQ spaces, Aboriginal spaces will all enhance current continuum.

Strategy 2: Develop an adequate number of housing units and supportive homes dedicated to youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness

GOALS	STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Add housing for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CACHH Environmental Scan, PIT Count 2014 and YPC will help create better baseline of need. Current housing capacity is 142 spaces (BGCC, Woods, CJHS and McMan). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHF Housing includes 373 units – none designated for youth; need to continue to advocate for CHF housing specific for youth. Need to identify amount and type of housing required. Community consult completed and youth housing model identified. Need to better understand client flow in the system of care; challenges with youth client flow as a result of longer transitioning (YTA) processes.
Work with HS to create family-style homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Homes and Supportive Roommate models currently being implemented (McMan, CJHS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to define “family-style homes” (supported independent, foster care, host homes, etc.). Completed and Host Homes contract awarded. Need to explore opportunities to partner with CACFSA to provide family style homes; Ongoing and will be attending CACFSA triage table.

Appendix 3 – Calgary Shelter & Short Term Supportive Housing Statistics

ADULT SHELTERS

Alpha House and Mustard Seed Shelters

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	4,497	—
Unique # of clients between 18 to 24 years old	471	10%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	207	44%
Indigenous	190	40%
Others	74	16%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	341	72%
Female	130	28%

Calgary Drop In and Rehab Centre

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	3,716	—
Unique # of clients between 18 to 24 years old	551	15%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	285	52%
Indigenous	121	22%
Others	145	26%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	422	77%
Female	129	23%

Calgary Dream Center - Tower Shelters

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	405	—
Unique # of clients between 18 to 24 years old	10	2%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	9	90%
Indigenous	1	10%
Others	0	0%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	10	100%
Female	0	0%

Brenda's House

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	60	—
Unique # of clients between 18 to 24 years old	12	20%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	2	17%
Indigenous	8	67%
Others	2	17%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	0	0%
Female	12	100%

YWCA Mary Dover Shelters

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	86	—
Unique # of clients between 18 to 24 years old	5	6%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	3	60%
Indigenous	2	40%
Others	0	0%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	0	0%
Female	5	100%

Youth-Specific Shelters

Calgary Wood's Homes

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	69	—
Unique # of clients between 12 to 18 years old	69	100%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	46	67%
Indigenous	11	16%
Others	12	17%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	48	70%
Female	21	30%

Calgary Boys & Girls Club Ave 15 Link/Launch & Safehouse

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	86	—
Unique # of clients between 14 to 19 years old	86	100%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	49	57%
Indigenous	26	30%
Others	11	13%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	51	59%
Female	31	36%
Others	4	5%

Calgary Boys & Girls Club Ave 15 Loft

CHARACTERISTICS	NO.	%
Total number of unique clients served	162	—
Unique # of clients between 14 to 19 years old	160	99%
Ethnicity (What is your ethnicity?)		
Caucasians	41	25%
Indigenous	32	20%
Others	89	55%
Gender (What is your gender?)		
Male	100	62%
Female	56	35%
Others	6	4%

Appendix 4 – What is Collective Impact?

Collective Impact is a useful framework to help think through the essentials of building a movement to end youth homelessness. Building a Youth Plan is only a step in a Collective Impact initiative; Collective Impact is a much more complex, long-term cross-sectoral mobilization effort to bring about social change. Ending youth homelessness, rather than creating a Youth Plan, is the goal of Collective Impact. A Youth Plan can certainly contribute to such as effort, but it will not in and of itself bring about the desired social change.¹⁸

Key Conditions for Collective Impact Success & Relevance to Youth Plan¹⁹

1. Common Agenda

- all participants to have a shared vision for change
- common understanding of problem joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions differences discussed and resolved
- participants agree on the primary goals for the Collective Impact initiative as a whole
- funders play an important role in getting organizations to act in concert

The planning process can create opportunity for diverse stakeholders (youth, government, funders, service providers, researchers, private sector) to develop shared vision around ending youth homelessness, common understanding of the issue, and agree on a collaborative approach to solving it. The plan becomes the common agenda moving forward. A common agenda is about collective goals, rather than the interests of particular groups or individuals.

2. Shared Measurement Systems

- shared measurement system is essential to Collective Impact
- agreement on ways success will be measured and reported
- collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at community level across all participating organizations
- common systems for reporting performance and measuring outcomes

Plan development creates agreement across stakeholders on system-level metrics and key performance indicators for ending youth homelessness objectives, as well as the means of tracking and reporting progress and performance on an ongoing basis across stakeholders.

3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- diverse group of stakeholders working together
- coordination of their differentiated activities through mutually reinforcing plan of action
- each stakeholder takes on specific set of activities where they excel in way that supports/is coordinated with others

The plan development process brings diverse stakeholders together to define common objectives, as well as their particular roles in meeting these. Plan implementation guidance outlines necessary coordination infrastructure to execute the plan across diverse groups.

¹⁸ See A Way Home's Youth Homelessness Community Planning Toolkit, prepared by Dr. Alina Turner.

¹⁹ See online on the Stanford Social Innovation Review: http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

4. Continuous Communication

- trust among non-profits, corporations, and government agencies
- several years of regular meetings to build up enough experience with each other
- monthly or biweekly in-person meetings among the organizations' CEO-level leaders
- creating a common vocabulary takes time, essential to shared measurement systems
- time to see interests treated fairly, decisions made on evidence and best possible solution to problem, not to favoritism.

Plan development, done well, will create opportunities for diverse stakeholders to develop common language around youth homelessness, surface and/or resolve tensions, and enhance communication and mutual understanding. To create a plan, stakeholders rise above personal and organizational agendas to find best solutions. This helps build a foundation of trust and sets up essential coordinating infrastructure for implementation.

5. Backbone Support Organizations

- coordination requires supporting infrastructure
- separate organization/staff with specific set of skills
- ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, logistical and administrative details
- embody principles of adaptive leadership: focus people's attention, create a sense of urgency, apply pressure without overwhelming, frame issues as opportunities and difficulties, mediate conflict
- highly structured process that leads to effective decision making

Dedicated, highly capable human resources are essential to plan development. Plan development requires Backbone Supports to provide necessary administrative support to the development process, but also a Project Manager to quarterback the plan from start to launch, at minimum. Adaptive leadership from group of decision-makers representative of the key sectors involved guide the plan guides the overall direction of the plan and the work of the Project Manager. Plan champions (leaders who advance Plan goals) are engaged strategically to advance common objectives and external expertise is brought in as necessary. Don't underestimate the work required to build and sustain trust with plan champions.

Appendix 5 - Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal: A collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

First Nations (non-status): People who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the Government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the Indian Act, either because they are unable to prove their status or have lost their status rights. Many Indian people in Canada, especially women, lost their Indian status through discriminatory practices in the past. Non-Status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to Status Indians (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

First Nations (status): People who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act, which defines an Indian as “a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.” Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

Inuit: An Aboriginal people in Northern Canada, who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language — Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

Metis: People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

Absolute homelessness: Those living on the street with no physical shelter of their own, including those who spend their nights in emergency shelters (Systems Planning Framework).

Accessible: in reference to a type of housing unit, accessible refers to units that are designed to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This sometimes includes physical elements such as low height cupboards or light switches, wide doorways, and adapted bathrooms.²⁰

Acuity: An assessment of the level of complexity of a person’s experience. Acuity is used to determine the appropriate level, intensity, duration, and frequency of case managed supports to sustainably end a person’s or family’s homelessness (Systems Planning Framework).

²⁰ City of Calgary. (2011). 2011 Non Market Rental Survey. Calgary: City of Calgary, Community and Neighborhood Services, Social Policy and Planning Division.

Affordable housing: The Calgary City Council approved definition of affordable housing is housing that “adequately suits the needs of low- and moderate-income households at costs below those generally found in the Calgary market. It may take a number of forms that exist along a continuum” including various rental options through to entry-level home ownership. Affordable housing is targeted to households with 65 percent or less of the median household income in Calgary.²¹

Alberta Works: Alberta Works is the province of Alberta’s Income Support system. It is administered by Alberta Employment and Immigration and helps unemployed people find and keep jobs, helps employers meet their need for skilled workers and helps Albertans with low income cover their basic costs of living. There are four different components of Alberta Works: Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Child Support Services and Health Benefits (Government of Alberta, Human Services).

At-Risk of Homelessness: A person or family that is experiencing difficulty maintaining their housing and has no alternatives for obtaining subsequent housing. Circumstances that often contribute to becoming at-risk of homeless include: eviction; loss of income; unaffordable increase in the cost of housing; discharge from an institution without subsequent housing in place; irreparable damage or deterioration to residences; and fleeing from family violence (Systems Planning Framework). Best Practices: A best practice is an intervention, method or technique that has consistently been proven effective through the most rigorous scientific research (especially conducted by independent researchers) and which has been replicated across several cases or examples.²²

Case management: Case management for ending homelessness is a collaborative community based intervention that places the person at the centre of a holistic model of support necessary to secure housing and provide supports to sustain it while building independence (Case Management Standards of Practice)

Chronic homelessness: Those who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency homeless shelter. People experiencing chronic homelessness face long term and ongoing homelessness related to complex and persistent barriers related to health, mental health, and addictions (Systems Planning Framework).

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity, gender expression, and sex assigned at birth align with conventional expectations of male or female.

Cisnormativity: The assumption that all people are cisgender or that those assigned male at birth grow up to be men and those assigned female at birth grow up to be women. It may also refer to the oppression experienced by transgender people in a society that represents cisgender people as dominant, normal and superior.

²¹ City of Calgary (2012). Calgary Affordable Housing Needs Assessment. Office of Land Servicing and Housing. Available online: <http://www.calgary.ca/CS/OLSH/Documents/Affordable-housing/Housing%20Needs%20Assessment%20June%202012.pdf?noredirect=1>

Appendix II <http://www.calgary.ca/CS/OLSH/Documents/Affordable-housing/Housing%20Needs%20Assessment%20Appendix%20II%20-%20Calgary%20Housing%20Supply.pdf?noredirect=1>

²² Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2013): What Works and For Whom? A Hierarchy of Evidence for Promises Practices Research. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

Couch Surfing: Frequently sleeping on friends and/or family's couches on a regular or intermittent basis, moving from household to household (Plan to End Aboriginal Homelessness in Calgary).

Coordinated Access and Assessment (CAA): A single place or process for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and support services. It is a system-wide program designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable first and creates a more efficient homeless serving system by helping people move through the system faster, reducing new entries to homelessness, and improving data collection and quality to provide accurate information on client needs (Systems Planning Framework).

Core Housing Need: A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to access local housing that meets all three standards.

- Adequate housing are reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.
- Affordable dwellings costs less than 30% of total before-tax household income.
- Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation).

Dependent: For the purposes of homeless reporting, a dependent is defined as any person under the age of 18 years for whom the client is responsible (Homelessness Management Information System)

Domestic violence: the attempt, act, or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and/or exploit through neglect, intimidation, inducement of fear or by inflicting pain. Abusive behaviour can take many forms including: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual and economic, and the violation of rights. All forms of abusive behaviour are ways in which one human being is trying to have control and/or exploit or have power over another (Government of Alberta, A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta).

Emergency shelter: Any facility with the primary purpose of providing temporary accommodations and essential services for homeless individuals (Systems Planning Framework).

Episode: An episode of homelessness consists of a minimum of one (1) night of homelessness. Thirty consecutive days of non-homelessness must lapse before a new experience of homelessness is considered to be the start of a new episode of homelessness. Any stays that are separated by less than thirty days are considered to be part of a single episode (CHF Systems Planning Framework).

Episodic homelessness: A person who is homeless for less than a year and has fewer than four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Typically, those classified as episodically homeless have reoccurring episodes of homelessness as a result of complex issues such as addictions or family violence (CHF Systems Planning Framework).

Evidence-based: First developed in the sphere of medicine, this term is defined as the integration of best practice research evidence within clinical expertise and patient values. In the context of social programs, services and supports, evidence-based refers to the use of high-quality evidence (e.g. randomized control trials) to develop, test, and modify programs and services so that they are achieving intended outcomes (Government of Alberta, Results-Based Budgeting).

Extreme Core Housing Need: refers to extreme housing affordability and very low income issues for households who were earning less than \$20,000 per year and paying 50% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Family: In the context of homelessness, those who are homeless and are: parents with minor children; adults with legal custody of children; a couple in which one person is pregnant; multi-generational families; part of an adult interdependent partnership (Systems Planning Framework).

Family violence: the abuse of power within relationships of family, trust or dependency that endangers the survive, security or well-being of another person. It can take many forms including spouse abuse, senior abuse and neglect, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, parent abuse, and witnessing abuse of others in the family. Family violence may include some or all of the following behaviours: physical abuse, psychological abuse, criminal harassment/stalking, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, and spiritual abuse (Government of Alberta, A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta).

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS): is a joint municipal-provincial funding program established to support and fund preventive social services. The program, governed by the Family & Community Support Services Act since 1966, emphasizes prevention, volunteerism and enhanced local autonomy. The provincial and municipal governments share the cost of the program. The Province contributes up to 80 per cent of the program cost and the municipality is to cover a minimum of 20 percent. In Calgary, City Council has made a commitment to contribute more than the minimum requirement and allocated 30 per cent of the program cost for the 2012-2014 budget cycle.

Gay: A self-identifying term for a man attracted to men. Some women who are attracted to women also use this term while others might prefer lesbian. (also see: Lesbian)

Gender and Sexually Diverse: A term used to refer to people whose sexual or gender identities are not heterosexual or cisgender.

Gender Binary: The classification of gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected categories of masculine and feminine.

Gender Identity: A person's internal sense of being male or female or anything in between. (also see: Gender spectrum)

Gender Spectrum: An alternative system to the gender binary that explains gender as existing within a range between masculine and feminine.

Harm reduction: Refers to policies, programs, and practices that seek to reduce the adverse health, social, and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal substances and risky sexual activity. Harm reduction is a pragmatic response that focuses on keeping people safe and minimizing death, disease and injury associated with higher risk behavior, while recognizing that the behavior may continue despite the risks (Systems Planning Framework).

Heterosexism: Attitudes, biases, and discrimination in favor of those who are straight. (also see: Heteronormativity).
Homosexual: A self-identifying term for someone who is attracted to people of the same sex or gender. As this was once used as a medicalized term some people may find it disrespectful.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS): A locally administered, electronic data collection system that stores longitudinal client-level information about persons who access the social service system. Calgary's HMIS is administered through Bowman Systems ServicePoint software.

Homelessness: Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing.

Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a typology that includes 1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation; 2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence; 3) Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally, 4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards. It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.²³

Homeless Point-in-Time Count: Point-in-time homeless counts, which have been done in Calgary since 1992. These counts provide a snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness at a point in time. Basic demographic information is collected from emergency shelters and short term housing facilities, and a survey is done with those enumerated through a street count. Public systems, including health and corrections, provide numbers of those without fixed address on the night of the count as well.

Housing First: Adopting a Housing First approach means that permanent housing is provided directly from homelessness, along with needed support services, without the requirement of a transition period or of sobriety or abstinence. Support services may include intensive medical, psychiatric and case management services including life skills training, landlord liaison assistance and addictions counseling. Addressing these needs through support services helps people maintain their housing over the long term (Systems Planning Framework).

²³ Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca/CHRNhomelessdefinition/

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. It is most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context. This term came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations (UN). In the UN, “Indigenous” is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others.²⁴

Lesbian: A self-identifying term for a woman attracted to women.

LGBTQ2S: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, and 2-spirited (LGBTQ2). LGBTQ2 youth experience the additional layer of challenges faced by those with sexual orientations and gender identities that are different from the mainstream. LGBTQ youth are over-represented among the population experiencing homelessness as a result of homophobia and transphobia in the home and across the service and housing systems.²⁵

Length of stay in homelessness: The number of days in a homeless episode. The type of homelessness/shelter situation may vary significantly within the episode (Systems Planning Framework).

Market Rent: Market rent means the amount a unit could be rented for on a monthly basis in the private market, based on an appraisal.

Negative Reason for Leaving Program: include criminal activity/violence, disagreement with rules/persons, needs could not be met, non-compliance with program, non-payment of rent, reached maximum time allowed, unknown/disappeared, don't know or declined to answer.

Non-binary: A term used by people whose gender does not fit within the binary genders of man nor woman.

Occupancy: Represents the number of clients accepted into the housing program, based on Shelter Point. Occupancy does not refer to the number of people housed. For example, scattered-site programs accept clients and then begin the housing search. Thus, clients can be in a program and receiving case management while they remain in homelessness. For full programs, this population represents approximately 20-30% of their occupancy (Systems Planning Framework).

Outreach: Outreach programs provide basic services and referrals to chronically homeless persons living on the streets and can work to engage this population in re-housing (Systems Planning Framework).

Permanent supportive housing (PSH): Long term housing for people experiencing homelessness with deep disabilities (including cognitive disabilities) without a length of stay time limit. Support programs are made available, but the program does not require participation in these services to remain housed (Systems Planning Framework).
Place-based housing: Refers to physical housing with program supports for individuals typically with high acuity (Systems Planning Framework).

²⁴ Available online: <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/identity/terminology.html>

²⁵ Available online: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-transsexual-queer>

Positive reason for Leaving Program: include completed program, left for housing opportunity before completing program or referred to another program.

Prevention: refers to the activities, interventions and planning that prevents individuals and families from experiencing homelessness. Prevention can be broken into three different types:

Primary prevention: Interventions seek to reduce the risk of homelessness among the general population targeting those house in an effort to prevent new cases of homelessness. Measures involve broad housing policies including supply, accessibility, and affordability, as well as income supports, housing benefits and job protection.

Secondary prevention: Activities seek to identify and address conditions at their earliest stages, such as shelter entry. This includes people leaving institutional care or those in crisis situations including eviction or relationship breakdown, likely to impact homelessness risk. Interventions tend to reduce the total number of people affected at any one time, though they do not reduce the number of new cases of homelessness.

Tertiary prevention: Interventions attempt to slow the progress of or mitigate the negative effects of homelessness once it is established, targeting those who have been homeless for some time. Initiatives focus on harm reduction to minimize repeated homelessness.

Queer: A term used by people who are not heterosexual or cisgender. Although, historically used as a put down for people who were perceived to be outside the norm in regards to orientation/attraction or gender identity; for some, it has been reclaimed as a self-identifying term and symbol of pride.

Questioning: A self-identifying term for people who are in the process of exploring or discovering their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Rapid rehousing programs: Provide targeted and time-limited financial assistance, system navigation, and support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in order to facilitate their quick exit from shelter and obtain housing (Systems Planning Framework).

Recidivism: The rate in which a client receives a positive housing outcome and returns to shelter or rough sleeping (Systems Planning Framework).

Rehoused: Describes a situation where a client was previously housed in a permanent home and has been placed in a new home while remaining in the same Housing First Program (Government of Alberta, Human Services).

Relative homelessness: Those living in spaces that do not meet the basic health and safety standards including protection from the elements; access to safe water and sanitation; security of tenure and personal safety; affordability; access to employment, education and health care; and the provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding (Systems Planning Framework).

Rent Supplements: rent supplements assist households in need of affordable housing by providing rent subsidies. Rent supplements have multiple structures: some rent supplements are paid directly to the landlord, and others are paid directly to the tenant; some follow a rent-geared-to-income structure where the supplement “tops up” the amount payable by the tenant to the market rate, and others are a fixed amount. Rent supplements are also sometimes called rent subsidies.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI): refers to a rental structure in which the client pays a rental rate that represents 30% of their income. In some cases, additional rent supplements are used to bridge the gap between the client’s ability to pay and either break-even rents or market rents.

Sexism: Discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person’s sex. Sexism is most often experienced by women.

Sleeping rough: refers to people who are unsheltered, lacking housing and not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation. In most cases, people sleeping rough are staying in places not designed for or fit for human habitation, including: people living in public or private spaces without consent or contract (public space such as sidewalks, squares, parks or forests; and private space and vacant buildings, including squatting), or in places not intended for permanent human habitation (including cars or other vehicles, garages, attics, closets or buildings not designed for habitation, or in makeshift shelters, shacks or tents).²⁶

Scattered-site housing: A housing model that utilizes individual rental units located throughout the community, typically owned by private market landlords. Rent supplements are typically applied.

Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool (SPDAT): An assessment tool to determine client placement based on the level of need. The SPDAT looks at the following: self care and daily living skills; meaningful daily activity; social relationships and networks; mental health and wellness; physical health and wellness; substance use; medication; personal administration and money management; personal responsibility and motivation; risk of personal harm or harm to others; interaction with emergency services; involvement with high risk and/or exploitative situations; legal; history of homelessness and housing; and managing tenancy (Systems Planning Framework).

Social Housing: social housing encompasses housing that is made affordable through public and non-profit ownership of rental housing units and subsidies that allow low-income households to access housing in the private market.

Supportive Housing: Supportive Housing provides case management and housing supports to individuals and families who are considered moderate to high acuity. In Supportive Housing programs, the goal for the client is that over time and with case management support, the client(s) will be able to achieve housing stability and independence. While there is no maximum length of stay in Supportive Housing programs, the housing and supports are intended to be non-permanent as the goal is for the client to obtain the skills to live independently, at which point the client will transition out of the program and into the community, where they may be linked with less intensive community-based services or other supports (Systems Planning Framework).

²⁶ Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca/CHRNhomelessdefinition/

System of care: A local or regional system for helping people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. A system of care aims to coordinate resources to ensure community level results align with strategic goals and meet client needs effectively. Calgary's system of care is composed of eight program types: housing loss prevention, coordinated access & assessment, emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, supportive housing, permanent supportive housing, Graduated Rental Assistance Initiative, Affordable Housing (Systems Planning Framework).
System planning: Creating a system of navigation for accessing services from many different agencies, resulting in a system of care (Systems Planning Framework).

Transitional Homelessness: Homeless for the first time (usually for less than three months) or has had less than two episodes in the past three years. The transitionally homeless tend to enter into homelessness as a result of economic or housing challenges and require minimal and one time assistance (Systems Planning Framework).

Triaging: The process for determining the priority of clients based on the severity of their condition (Systems Planning Framework).

Trans/Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Two-spirit: A self-identifying term used by some Aboriginal people in place of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or transsexual. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures two-spirit people held positions of special status such as community leaders and medicine people.

Youth homelessness: Youth homelessness refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 25 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, and do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable or consistent residence. In addition to experiencing economic deprivation and a lack of secure housing, young people experiencing homelessness, like all young people, are in the throes of significant developmental (social, physical, emotional and cognitive) changes. As a result, they may not have the education, resources, social supports, personal experience or life skills necessary to foster a safe and nurturing transition to adulthood and independence. Youth homelessness is a complex social issue because as a society we have failed to provide young people and their families with the necessary and adequate supports that will enable them to move forward in their lives in a safe and planned way. Few young people choose to be homeless, wish to be defined by their homelessness, and the experience is generally negative and stressful.

Appendix 6 - Key Themes Emerging from Youth Consultation

Results from the consultations with Indigenous and LGBTQ²⁷ youth during the planning process confirmed a number of findings specific to the Calgary context.

LGBTQ2S YOUTH

Family Dis/Connections

A number of youth became homeless as a result of their gender identity or sexual orientation being rejected or denied by their families. While about half of the youth chose to leave their family home and “opt-in” to homelessness, the other half were ejected or “kicked out” by their families.

Youth described household environments that were characterized by some combination of one or more of the following: one or more parents/guardians abusing alcohol or drugs, parental neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or emotional abuse. It is worth noting that not all of the participants who were kicked out by their families had the aforementioned negative environmental conditions.

The notion of natural supports received mixed reviews from youth. Many of the young people’s pathways into homelessness are intimately connected to strained relationships with parents, and many of these relationships are strained because the youth is LGBTQ2S. When questioned about family reunification, many of the youth had a negative response, which is consistent with other studies that have demonstrated a fear, amongst LGBTQ2S youth, of victimization from family members.

The Supports Landscape

The consultations revealed that LGBTQ youth are divided into two groups, those who are heavy service users and those who access minimal services, and that there is significant variability between youth in terms of their awareness of the existing services available to them accordingly. Some were quick to acknowledge their own lack of knowledge about the landscape of existing supports.

LGBTQ youth reported seeking supports within the school system, particularly via guidance counselors. Yet, guidance counselors were often unaware of the landscape of youth-serving and homeless-serving organizations and may have been missed entry-points to services for youth who are at-risk of homelessness and still engaged in education.

A scan of program provider’s websites and reports from the youth revealed that the large majority of services are integrated (LGBTQ2S youth and heterosexual/gender conforming youth) and very few services provide targeted supports for LGBTQ2S youth. When youth reflected on their interactions with service providers, some noted they were fearful of being judged because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, regardless of whether that judgment becomes realized – making the case for enhanced competence in mainstream supports but also increasing availability of LGBTQ2S targeted services.

²⁷ Consultations were conducted with 12 LGBTQ youth from Calgary, Alberta. While efforts were made to include two-spirited youth in the consultation process, no two-spirited youth were able to be recruited within the project’s timeframe. Thus, where appropriate reference will be made to whether statements refers to perspectives of the LGBTQ youth or whether they refer to the broader scope of the Plan to LGBTQ2S youth.

It is important to highlight that all youth consistently commented on the demanding “homelessness schedule” placed upon youth who do not have stable housing, which leaves little time left in the day to secure work or attend school, let alone maintain it. This schedule revolved around services – their paperwork, locations, hours of operation, and demands on youth in order to receive supports.

Many youths mentioned being mis-gendered by service providers. Examples include: being called by the incorrect pronouns, being called by a legal name rather than the youth’s chosen name, or being assigned to a sleeping quarters based on the gender a service provider assumes the youth identifies with. The participants highlighted that the physical spaces (e.g., sleeping arrangements, showers, bathrooms) at integrated programs often are cisnormative and not designed to accommodate people with non-binary genders. In addition, some of the youth shared that the social environments at many integrated services are characterized by homo/bi/trans negativity, which is perpetuated by other youth accessing the services and the service providers themselves.

Relationships with Providers

Many of the youth discussed how, for them, relationships with the service providers were amongst the few stable relationships in their lives. This was explicated by one youth who discussed how their life was filled with a “revolving door of figures,” friends who come and go, peers at services who move on, family members who have disengaged, and this left the shelter staff as the one constant.

Numerous youth wished that the service providers they encountered had a better understanding of the youth’s own experience. When questioned about what they would like service providers to know, stories about trauma emerged. Many of the participants have histories of trauma, including rejection, bullying, sexual assault, physical and emotional abuses, some of which occurred prior to homelessness and others that occurred following homelessness, or both. As one participant said, “it would help if they understood where I’ve been if they want to help where I’m going.” It seems that an increased emphasis on trauma-informed service delivery may be an identified need. Without solicitation, two of the participants admitted to histories of self-harm, and three of the participants disclosed histories of suicide attempts. These findings are consistent with other studies looking at LGBTQ2S-youth populations (Marshal et al., 2011), which only further affirms the need for service providers who are knowledgeable about mental health.

The process of rehousing did not, however, address the issues that resulted in the youth’s homelessness in the first case, which extended from the family’s denial of the youth’s gender fluid identity and bisexual sexual orientation; this resulted in the youth’s re-victimization through experiences of emotional abuse, and the youth’s return to housing instability (namely, couch surfing).

Coordinated Access

For participants familiar with the Coordinated Access and Assessment (CAA) process, some highlighted that they experience difficulty accessing services because they are deemed to not be high enough risk. As one participant articulated, “I wasn’t bad enough. I didn’t screw up enough to get them to help me.” Amongst the participants there was a general sense that those individuals who came into conflict with law-enforcement and had been previously imprisoned, as well as those who were struggling with addictions, or those who were pregnant were the most likely to get housing and to access housing quickly. One participant commented, “If I got pregnant then I could have a place right away, but I don’t want to do that.”

In many cases, the youth shared how they felt that they were prepared for housing, but that they have encountered increased barriers as a result of their being “too good for support”. One of the participants articulated this reoccurring experience as being repeatedly victimizing, and for a few of the youth this was visibly upsetting. Social narratives have led them to believe that good behaviour is rewarded; however, their experience has proved the opposite, where their good behaviour has resulted in a diminished ability to access support and stabilize their housing situation.

According to a couple of the participants, some service providers have begun to institute their own work-arounds to the coordinated access and assessment system by encouraging youth to embellish their descriptions of hardship. For example, in one instance a youth who had briefly exited homelessness for a period (between 1-2 years) was discouraged from completing a new SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) upon returning to homelessness as it would reduce his likelihood of accessing services.

Housing and Supports

When asked about their plans to shift out of homelessness or reduce their risk of becoming/returning to homelessness, the most frequently identified need was independent, stable, long term housing aligned with the Core Principles of Housing First for Youth²⁸

Amongst the participants, those who were currently accessing a particular program, seemed to have the most confidence in their ability to maintain housing, which highlights the promise that the program has for helping youth exit homelessness. Following housing, the second most frequently identified need amongst the participants is meaningful employment that can independently support the housing they secure.

All of the youth commented about the lack of LGBTQ2S affirming services and spaces available to them with the appropriate social, emotional, and mental supports for queer-identity development.

With respect to family reunification and natural supports, in many cases the persons requiring the greatest behaviour and attitude change are the parents/guardians. As one youth said, “if they were just okay with the gay thing then this wouldn’t have happened to me.” Thus, supporting parents of LGBTQ2S children may be one important mechanism for prevention. Further, LGBTQ2S’ youth’s chosen natural supports may require a much more significant emphasis.

Indigenous Youth

With respect to Indigenous youth, the interrelated issues of poverty, domestic, violence, trauma and abuse and ongoing discrimination and lack of cultural connections further exacerbate the experience of housing stress. It is important to acknowledge the experience of Indigenous people in Canada if we are to truly end youth homelessness, particularly in light of the consistent over-representation in vulnerable populations. Indigenous homelessness is notably different; the structural and systemic determinants associated with colonialism, the Indian Act, treaty making, residential schools and the Sixties Scoop have resulted in considerable discriminatory impacts that are in fact intergenerational.²⁹

²⁸ Available online on the Homeless Hub: <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/safe-and-decent-place-live-towards-housing-first-framework-youth>

²⁹ From the Plan to End Aboriginal Homelessness in Calgary (2012), p.1 – available online at: <http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Aboriginal-Plan-2012.pdf>

It is further important to highlight that the sense of being homeless can be experienced from diverse perspectives: cultural, spiritual, or emotional. It is more than a loss of housing. The impact of colonization, residential schooling, intergenerational trauma, ongoing discrimination and racism in Canadian society has contributed to the ongoing systematic marginalization of Indigenous people, including Indigenous youth.³⁰

This is particularly evident in the higher than average proportion of Indigenous peoples experiencing poverty, violence, core housing need, low educational attainment, poor access to services and housing. As Indigenous peoples move into cities from reserves, their settlement and cultural reconnection needs must be addressed, along with the jurisdictional vacuums that impact their significantly reduced access to basic services both on and off-reserve. This is notably relevant to Indigenous youth as well.

Indigenous people's economic, spiritual, and social development has been and continues to be negatively impacted by government policies and practices at the local, provincial, territorial and federal levels. In particular, the establishment of residential schools, reserves and the Indian Act resulted in a widespread and intergenerational loss of culture, language, community, and identity still impacting today's Indigenous people.³¹

Some Indigenous youth respond to the many negative connotations of being Indigenous by distancing themselves from this part of their identity. Other have had the opportunity to experience or develop a strong cultural identity due to the loss of teachings and traditions within their families or communities.³² This is especially so for many urban Indigenous youth as well as those growing up in the child welfare system.³³

As a result of the significant over representation of Indigenous people among homeless populations in Canada, Indigenous communities should play a major role in all efforts to address youth homelessness. The planning process can create new opportunities for meaningful collaboration between mainstream and Indigenous communities, enabling diverse groups to come together to better understand the needs and experiences of marginalized community members.

Another point to note here is that on-reserve Indigenous people may see rural and urban places as an extension of their traditional territories; as such, when considering approaches, one can't simply assume we are assisting 'migrant' Indigenous youth not otherwise connected to urban centres. In reality, Indigenous people may not be 'migrating' to the city, "but rather returning to a place that they have always known, historically, economically and spiritually" (Albert McLeod, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg).¹

³⁰ From the Calgary's Updated Plan to End Homelessness (2015), p. 23 - available online at:

http://www.ihearthomeyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Update_to_Calgary_Plan_March_4.pdf

³¹ From the Youth Engagement Toolkit Guide, p. 41, available online at: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth_engagement/pdf/yet_resource_guide.pdf.

³² From the Youth Engagement Toolkit Guide, p. 41, available online at: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth_engagement/pdf/yet_resource_guide.pdf.

³³ See A Way Home's Youth Homelessness Community Planning Toolkit, prepared by Dr. Alina Turner.

Further, we have to also be cognizant that the paradigm from which youth-serving agencies approach their work remains grounded in Western post-colonial legislation and policy. In other words, don't assume that the established organizations that play a key role in addressing youth homelessness is necessarily aligned with Indigenous infrastructures, relations with governments; economic development on and on-reserve; and urban reserve development, etc.

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational Trauma refers to the impact that experienced trauma has on the descendants of colonization (Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop, and Child and Family Services) and is defined as follows:

“A collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation. It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to events.”

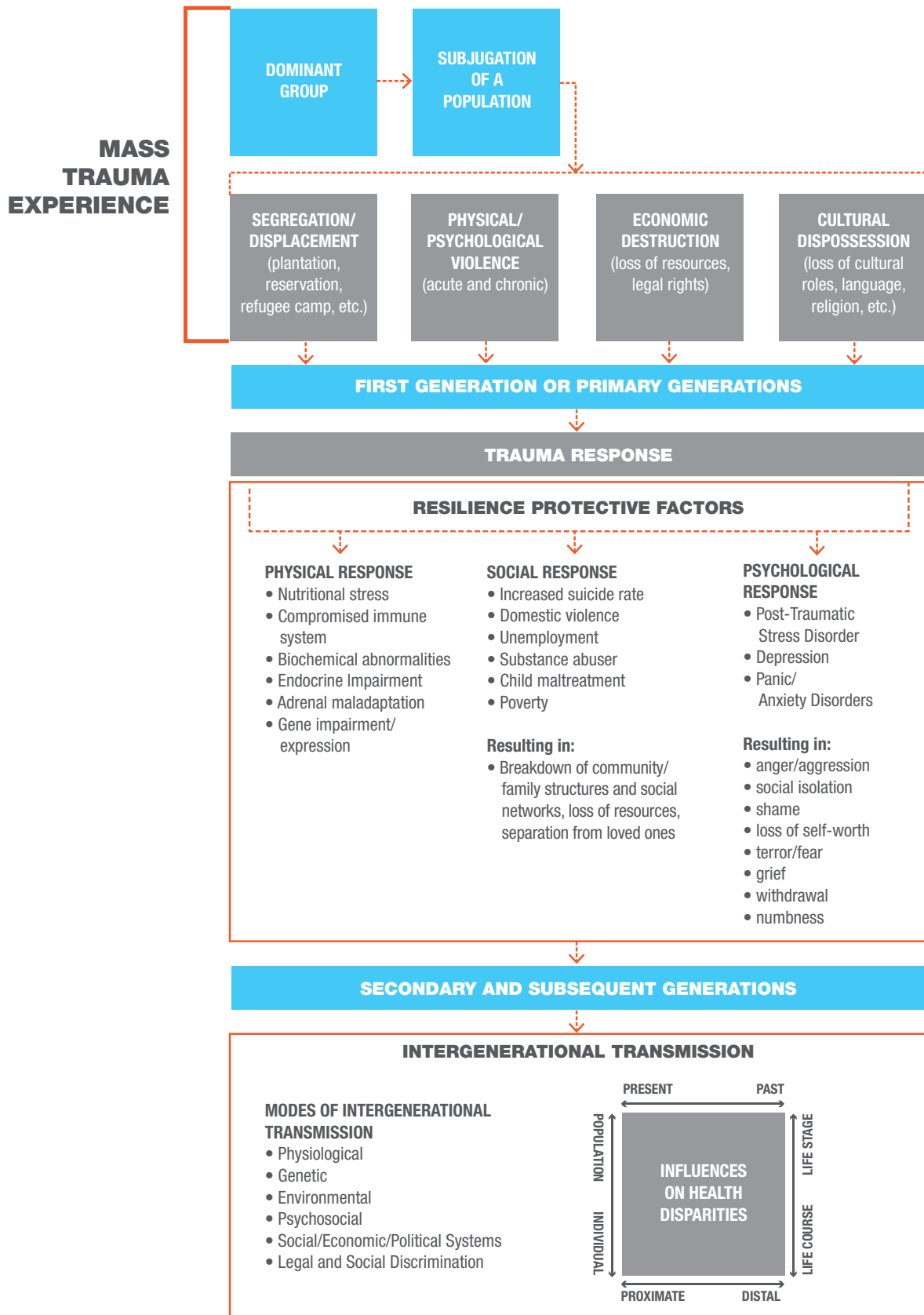
(Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth, YMCA of Calgary, University of Calgary, 2012)

Research indicates that Intergenerational Trauma can have devastating effects on the health and wellness of Indigenous youth in Canada (Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth, YMCA of Calgary, University of Calgary, 2012). There are linkages between Intergenerational Trauma and many health issues, such as Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, suicide and thoughts of hopelessness, and substance abuse (Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth, YMCA of Calgary, University of Calgary, 2012). Many of the symptoms of social exclusion (teen pregnancy, high school dropout, unemployment, etc.) are also linked to the effects of Intergenerational Trauma.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) has developed a diagram (shown below) on how a mass trauma experience, such as Indian Residential Schools, can be transferred multi-generationally. The diagram below allows us to understand how the barriers addressed in this document such as poverty, child care, drugs/alcohol abuse, pregnancy/parenting, lack of culture, lack of family support, lack of community support, discrimination/racism, transient/no constant home, domestic violence and dating violence are residual trauma experienced by generations of Aboriginal people that suffered in the Indian Residential School System (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006). Other forms of trauma, such as rape, assault, emotional and verbal abuse, domestic violence and constant family instability are reasons for homelessness.

Therefore, developing programming that addresses the Intergenerational Trauma as a root cause issue to many of the barriers throughout this document may support the overall healing journeys of those youth, in turn reducing their rate of homelessness. Discovering ways to integrate 'trauma informed approaches' into the current sector of programming is a necessary next step to developing further advancements among Indigenous youth exiting homelessness.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma



Normalizing Instability

During the consultation process with 12 Indigenous youth, all who were interviewed had normalized unstable or temporary housing and/or family instability in general as not at-risk of homelessness. The youth felt that constant transitions, moving between homes and housing, group homes, drug/alcohol treatment facilities and/or being incarcerated were all 'stable' housing and would not make them homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

The longest period of time any of the youth had lived in a home was five to six years as a child, "with an auntie". When asked about their three previous addresses, it was discovered that many had a multi-generational normalization of housing instability, wherein their closest family members moved frequently and created unsafe living environments.

The impact of homelessness and the intergenerational transient lifestyles on education was significant. As a result, those who were homeless and living in shelters were not attending school because of various barriers including poverty, transient lifestyle, addictions and inflexible school requirements.

Negative natural supports and the instability of youth's homes was the primary pathway into homelessness. Many of the youth wanted to live in a safe, family-like home but they understood that their current family living situations were not healthy or positive.

System Dis/Engagement

Most of the participants lived in group or foster homes and sighted numerous negative experiences from which they ran away frequently. The youth cited frequent transitions among foster homes, group homes, case workers and family members which created turmoil and instability as a reason they "fled from Child Services" into homelessness. Youth were often evicted from foster or group homes because they "broke the rules" and that "case workers did not care enough" to find them or why they had left. In general, youth wanted people to love and care about them, as a pseudo family, but in their experiences, did not find that within the child intervention system.

Participants were also involved in other systems, many had been arrested and spent time in jail, remand and youth detention. Although many youth indicated that drug and alcohol use or addiction played a role in their housing situation, many had not accessed addiction services because of the waiting lists and inability to access supports when they were ready and willing to go. Many of those youth that had addiction issues, also had mental health concerns, such as depression, suicidal ideation or attempts.

Moving Forward

Indigenous youth cited employment, education, affordable housing and independent living as the top solutions to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Yet, there was a lack of awareness about the services and supports available to Indigenous youth that may stabilize their housing situation or help them exit homelessness.

Youth also reported that they accessed supports through particular agencies that acted as gateways. These access points had few rules and were accepting of youth actively using drugs and alcohol, involved with the justice system, homeless/transient/no mailing address, no identification, and very little or no paperwork. Unfortunately, these services were often drop-in and stepping stones to other agencies, and youth found it difficult to access longer term housing and support to end their homelessness.

Larger systems and agencies that can provide long term and significant supports to youth living in homelessness, such as, Housing First, affordable housing, treatment centres and independent living, were reported to have more stringent eligibility requirements and were therefore much harder to access.

Most of the youth wanted to have independent housing which had several meanings to the youth interviewed. In general, the criteria included a locked space that may or may not have a kitchen, reduced or no rent, support with basic needs (food, utilities, etc.), some rules and regulations, no curfew, stability, safe, reduced contact with staff but someone to check-in and provide guidance, and allowed to have guests.

Youth most often cited staff as the primary resource or best part of the agency: non-judgmental, caring, consistent agency staff was their primary reason for accessing the service in the first place. Indigenous youth did note that if systems and agencies collaborated better amongst themselves and with public systems, they would have better ability to access services.

Overall, Indigenous youth wanted to access Indigenous agencies first and then felt better going to mainstream services with an Indigenous advocate or being referred there. The youth felt that it was, “More culture friendly environment and understand their clients”.

Appendix 7 - The Plan Refresh Process

Objectives

The Refresh process represents a combined effort of community, the Calgary Youth Sector, youth, the Calgary Homeless Foundation and the Government of Alberta using a Collective Impact approach.³⁴ This process was not simply about updating the 2011 plan; it was about re-invigorating buy-in and meaningfully engaging new partners in ending youth homelessness.

The aim of the Refresh was three-fold:

- 1.** Develop a strategic direction focused on implementation actions for Calgary to achieve an end to youth homelessness that is aligned with best practices and provincial direction;
- 2.** Create a process that engages diverse stakeholders in the development of the Plan and its implementation.
- 3.** Capture community, sector and government roles within the Plan which will create a sense of ownership in the collective response required.

A particular emphasis was placed on capturing the youth voice throughout, as well as the strategic engagement of Child and Family Services as a partner in this work. This Plan aims to focus on priorities that are actionable in implementation, rather than broad-stroke system reform recommendations.

Refresh Steering Committee

A Sub-Committee of the Youth Sector worked alongside sector members to probe overall understandings and expectations for the Refresh over the summer of 2015. The Sub-Committee initially consulted with the Youth Sector through a World Café (Participants) and a Youth Sector Survey to probe member perspectives on whether a Refresh was necessary, its scope and any initial emerging directions that should be accounted for.

Using the input collected, the Sub-Committee developed a proposed approach for the Refresh and secured funds from the Calgary Homeless Foundation, Family & Community Support Services (FCSS), and the United Way of Calgary and Area to engage in the Refresh process.

In October 2015, the Sub-Committee transitioned into the role of a Steering Committee to oversee the Refresh process with representatives from Alberta Human Services, Calgary Homeless Foundation, McMan Youth, Family & Community Services Association, Calgary John Howard Society, Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, and Calgary Region Child and Family Services. Dr. Alina Turner (Turner Research & Strategy) was engaged to provide technical assistance throughout the Plan’s development as well.

In January 2016, Dr. Turner prepared a Refresh Strategy Overview Briefing, which summarized emerging best practices in efforts to end homelessness, as well as relevant policy directions and levers for the updated Plan. The document outlined emerging priority directions for the Refresh based on input and analysis to date.

Key Stakeholder Consultations

Using this briefing as a springboard to further discussion, the Steering Committee facilitated a one-day session with key service and public system stakeholders to gain input on proposed emerging directions in February 2016. The session was attended by 19 representatives from government agencies, community funders, and service providers. From this session, a What We Heard document was prepared and shared with participants and other relevant community stakeholders to ensure correct interpretation of input and clarify outstanding issues.³⁵

Refresh Process Timeline

TIMELINE	ITEMS
July – August, 2015	Community Consultation: World Café & Youth Sector Survey
August – September 2015	Workplan Development
September – November 2015	Formalize Steering Committee
September – December 2015	Secure funding for Refresh process
February – October 2015	YAT Consultation
November 2015 – January 2016	Research & Policy Review
December 2015 – March 2016	Data Analysis (HMIS, PIT Count, shelter data)
January 2016	Strategy Briefing Document
February 2016	Key Stakeholder Roundtable
January – February 2016	Youth Voice (LGBTQ2S, Indigenous youth)
March 2016	Plan Writing
March 2016	YAT Plan Feedback Roundtable
May – August 2016	Plan Funder/Government Feedback
September 2016	Plan Finalized
October 2016	Plan Launch
November 2016	Implementation Planning Begins

³⁵ Appendix 7 provides further information about themes arising from this process.

Youth Voice

The Steering Committee placed a high emphasis on ensuring youth voice was at the heart of the Refresh process throughout with an acknowledgment that the answers to what needs to be done are to be found in community and in youth's own perspectives and experiences. To incorporate youth voice throughout, the Steering Committee oversaw the following engagement efforts:

Input from Youth Advisory Table (YAT) from nine monthly meetings was incorporated in initial scoping phase to probe emerging gaps in current efforts, new trends, and input on a new direction. The Steering Committee came to the YAT with the Refresh plan priorities in March 2016 to ensure the proposed draft captured their intent.

Due to the prevalence of LGBTQ2S and Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness in our community the Steering Committee felt it was important to capture their unique experiences. One-on-one interviews with 12 LGBTQ2S and 12 Indigenous youth were completed over January and February, 2016 to ensure the perspectives of the two key groups were captured in a fulsome manner. Two separate reports were completed summarizing findings, which were incorporated into the final Plan (see summary in Appendix 6).³⁶ Quotes from youth participants are included throughout the report as well.

Research & Data Analysis

In addition to the aforementioned consultation efforts, the Steering Committee also facilitated access to key research and policy documents, as well as data relevant to the Refresh. Data came in from Alberta Human Services and the Calgary Homeless Foundation for further analysis and interpretation. An analysis of key policy documents was developed, alongside analysis of available data relevant to the Plan.

A scan of best practices and research that has emerged since the writing of the 2011 Plan was also completed. There were 71 reports and 29 research summaries on youth homelessness that were published in past two years alone. To ensure the most relevant syntheses were incorporated, the direction of the Steering Committee was to focus on the findings of the Re-imagining our Response³⁷ report by Steve Gaetz, which summarizes the literature and provides a strategic framework for youth plans to end homelessness.

The role of the consultant (Dr. Alina Turner) was to provide technical assistance throughout the process, undertake the research and policy analysis, and synthesize the various sources of information aforementioned into the final Plan for stakeholder review and approval.

Building on Existing Efforts

The input gathered from the policy, research review and community consultations affirmed that there were priority areas that were either missing from the 2011 Plan or could be strengthened, along with those that should be maintained.

³⁶ While key findings are incorporated throughout the Plan, these reports are also available as standalone documents.

³⁷ Available online on the Homeless Hub: http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/ComingOfAgeHH_0.pdf.

It is important to highlight that the general direction of the 2011 Plan is largely congruent with research and policy changes that have since ensued. In fact, the 2011 Plan is cited in several direction-setting documents, including Re-imagining Our Response and the Alberta Youth Plan. As the first of its kind in Canada, the current Plan provides a solid starting point to the refresh process. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the 2011 Plan in brief.

Significant strides had been made in community advancing the 2011 Plan as well. In particular, the call for a provincial youth plan was realized by the launch of the Alberta Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness (2015) (hereafter referred to as the Alberta Youth Plan). This direction-setting document sets out a vision for the province around ending youth homelessness that is aligned with the proposed approach of the 2011 Calgary Youth Plan, particularly through its emphasis on prevention, youth-centered solutions and the call for cross-sectoral and cross-departmental collaboration.

Calgary has made significant advancements implementing both the broader community plan to end homelessness and the Calgary Youth Plan including:³⁸

- A slowed growth in homelessness despite an increasing population by housing over 6,000 people; of these, CHF data suggests a minimum of 9%, or close to 600, were youth.
- Committed leadership and resources of about \$45 million from the Alberta Government to support the Plan; this has supported Housing First and supportive housing programs for youth as well – over \$3 million is dedicated to youth-specific programs, though youth are being served throughout these investments.
- A coordinated homeless-serving system of care, that includes a Homeless Management Information System, enhanced service standards and performance management across providers. This includes the creation of coordinated entry, including a youth table to facilitate triage and access.
- Private sector collaboration to support an end to homelessness, exemplified by Calgary's RESOLVE Campaign.³⁹

³⁸ Appendix 3 provides CHF's summary of progress advancing the 2011 Plan.

³⁹ The RESOLVE partners are Accessible Housing, Bishop O'Byrne Housing, Calgary Alpha House Society, Calgary Foundation, Calgary John Howard Society, Horizon Housing Society, Silvera for Seniors, The Mustard Seed, and Trinity Place Foundation of Alberta.

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END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Acknowledgements

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To the Youth Advisory Table, who were engaged over the last year and created a guiding document that has truly shaped the plan, your commitment to learning about policy, the sector and programming is invaluable to us. To the youth who participated in LGBTQ2S and Indigenous Youth consultations, thank you for sharing your struggles and opening our eyes to your unique experiences.

Thank you to The Calgary Foundation, the Calgary Homeless Foundation, Child and Family Services, The City of Calgary, the Government of Alberta and the United Way of Calgary and Area for the ongoing support to make the Refresh a reality.

We know as a sector that we cannot end youth homelessness alone. We would like to thank the Youth Sector Committee and all the Key Community Stakeholders who shared their ideas and feedback through numerous phases of completing the plan. To reach our common goal, we will require ongoing collaboration and continued investments in our youth to help them achieve their greatest potential as they transition into adulthood.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge and honour the young people we have lost to homelessness. Thank you for inviting us into your lives and touching our hearts. Thank you for taking the time to teach us, guide us and make us want to do better. The courage you displayed everyday gives us the strength to continue this fight and to challenge the status quo. Your lives were impactful, and you remind us every day of what's important and why we carry on. No one should experience homelessness. Every youth matters. You matter.

The Calgary Youth Sector Refresh Steering Committee

