

TYPS 2006 BACKGROUND PAPER

RURAL YOUTH FACTS



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Rural Youth Homelessness

- studies have shown that no less than 40 to 50% of the youth that are homeless in the cities are originally from small towns and rural/remote areas. The 99 homeless small town/rural youth interviewed verified these reports from their own experience.¹
- “The cost of keeping a youth in the shelter . . . estimates are between \$ 30,000 to 40,000 per year.”²
- “It has been estimated that one-third of Canada’s homeless population are youth. On any given night, that means close to 65,000 young people are without a place to call home.”³
- a study conducted by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse “Street youth (both rural and urban) continue to be at risk for an array of health problems, particularly HIV and Hepatitis B and C as a result of injection drug use and needle sharing.”
- there are about 100 street kids living in downtown Ottawa at any given time estimates Tom Sydney, Director of Public Education and Prevention for Operation Go Home. Mr. Sydney stated that *almost all are from rural/small towns in the Ottawa Valley.*⁴

Implications: Problem prevention has to begin in their home towns. Youth centres play a vital role in this by providing supportive intervention. The Transitions Report documented high-risk youth were more likely to go to a local youth centre for assistance than other social services. The more the youth centre is open and available, the better the support for high risk youth. The reduction of street youth migrating into the cities, would thereby reduce a number of higher risk behaviours for the youth (street prostitution, STDs, HIV/Aids, entrenched drug and crime lifestyles, etc) and reduce the strain and cost of the shelter, health and justice system.

Early-School Leaving

- The Canadian Rural Partnership Research report demonstrates that *youth in rural areas have a lower incidence of post-secondary education.* Northeastern Ontario shows significantly lower rates than the Ontario average for both rural and urban settings - rates that are also lower than the Canadian average.
- “... *high school drop-outs are more prevalent in southwestern and northern Ontario, and in smaller communities.* There are fewer drop-outs in larger urban centres such as Toronto...”⁵
- two significant identifying predictors of an early-school leaver is the student’s sense of alienation and isolation.⁶ Both predictors are magnified in small communities with

¹ Lanark County Transitions Report 200

² Raising the Roof – Bulletin July 2006

³ Raising the Roof – Bulletin July 2006

⁴ Ottawa Street Kids – Heddy Sodour 2006

⁵ Ont. Min. of Education – A comparative analysis of Drop-outs and non-drop outs in Ontario Secondary Schools.

⁶ Ont Min. of Education: Identifying Probable School Leavers in Ontario High Schools. 1990

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few social and recreational outlets outside of school and where transportation is a major barrier.

Implications: Homework clubs can help keep youth engaged in their school work by providing encouragement and assistance in their learning process. Most youth centres offer after-school homework clubs, mentoring, and peer support for any youth attending. The assistance and encouragement has proven to aid many potential school leavers by reducing the feelings of isolation and alienation. Many schools work with their local youth centres to provide daily lessons to support the youth.

Crime/Delinquency

- “*Contrary* to what most people think, the peak times for the commission of crime by young people is between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., the after school hours when young people are left on their own to pursue "leisure" interests.”⁷
- "too *much* money is spent on dealing with young people in the justice system and not enough on teaching them to be healthy and responsible.”⁸

Implications: youth centres are open after-school to 6:00 pm. Youth attending become involved in homework clubs, community service activities, recreation, and positive social interaction. Youth Centres are also open in the evening hours and the activities offered can and do divert kids with nothing to do from getting involved in delinquent acts (e.g. vandalism). Police and probation officers regularly refer youth to the local youth centres, which in small towns are often the only positive option for youth.

Tobacco: Smoking

- There are significantly higher levels of teen tobacco use in small towns, rural, and Northern communities compared to major urban centres. Students in the North (12%) and West (11%) are most likely to smoke daily, while those in the East (6%) and in Toronto (7%) are least likely.⁹

Implications: youth centres have always been smoke-free environments and actively encourage and support youth to reduce or quit smoking through programs and supportive guests (health nurses) and programs.

Recreation/ Health Behaviours

- Studies have indicated that the health status of Canadians living in the most rural and remote parts of Canada is lagging behind that of urban residents. This has led to the need to analyze health indicators across the urban-to-rural gradient. The health and

⁷ Myths About Youth Crime in Canada - Fact Sheet CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON YOUTH AT RISK

⁸ Money Well Spent: Investing in Preventing Crime, by the National Crime Prevention Centre (1996),

⁹ Centre for Addictions and Mental Health CAMH: Ontario Student Drug Use Survey - 2005

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well-being of youth are also gaining increased attention as the benefits of promoting preventative measures, rather than only focusing resources on treating “the sick”, become apparent.¹⁰

Highlights

- ◆ Girls and boys in Canada’s northern regions report lower self-rated health and lower functional health.
- ◆ Youth in northern regions are generally more likely to smoke. Within each type of region, girls are more likely to be smokers than boys.
- ◆ Boys in small town regions have the highest prevalence of being overweight or obese.
- ◆ One in four boys report heavy drinking practices in small metro regions, small cities, small towns, and northern regions. In contrast, boys in the major metropolitan regions have the lowest prevalence of heavy drinking.
- ◆ Physical inactivity is generally the same among youth across metro and non-metro regions – a different result than the findings of an earlier study that found that physical inactivity for the population as a whole is more likely in rural areas.

Implications: youth centres encourage and have programs/opportunities to become more active and experience healthy choices in eating and drug-free fun.

Substance Abuse

- There are “higher alcohol abuse and smoking rates among rural youth, particularly those in Northern areas.”¹¹
- illicit drug consumption to be highest among 11th and 12th graders, at approximately 48 per cent. Students from Toronto were the least likely to take drugs, while students from northern Ontario were the most likely.¹²
- “Rates of drinking significantly differ by region, with Toronto students (51%) least likely to drink compared to students in the other three regions (hovering at about two-thirds).”¹²
- “Toronto students are the least likely to report binge drinking (15%), whereas Northern students are the most likely (33%).”¹²
- Cannabis use is lowest in Toronto (20%), and highest in the North (33%). Use among students in the West (29%) and East (25%) fall in between.¹³
- “many drug use measures significantly vary by region: cannabis, binge drinking, cigarettes, hallucinogens (other than LSD and PCP), stimulants, cocaine, Ritalin, crack, tranquilizers, Ketamine, OxyContin, heroin, and any illicit drug (excluding cannabis). In general, students in Toronto (with the exception of heroin) and the

¹⁰ Health status and behaviours of Canada’s youth: A rural-urban comparison
Verna Mitura and Ray Bollman, Statistics Canada in Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin
Catalogue no. 21-006-XIE Vol.5, No. 3 (March 2004) & Pitblado et al., 1999; Shields and Tremblay, 2002;
Mitura and Bollman, 2003.

¹¹ Stats Canada Report in “Health status and behaviours of Canada’s youth: A rural-urban comparison”

¹² CAMH -OSDUS Drug Report Highlights 2005

¹³ CAMH -OSDUS Drug Report Highlights 2005

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Eastern region of the province are less likely to use these drugs compared to the province as a whole, whereas Northern and Western students are more likely to use.”¹⁴

Implications: Youth who lack access to the type of meaningful activities offered in Youth Centres often resort to substance use because of being idle with nothing to do. Youth Centres through the support they offer augment the resiliency of high-risk youth which decreases the probability of their becoming involved in substance use.

Toronto usually has the lowest level of teen drug and alcohol use (despite the media attention). All other regions have similar or considerably higher levels of most types substance abuse. Eastern Ontario has the second lowest rate of substance abuse, even though its policing and health services are at significantly lower levels than Toronto. We suggest the reason is that Eastern Ontario has the province’s greatest concentration of youth centres that have continuously operated for 10 years or more.

Teen Depression and Mental Health

- “In 2001, 11.1% of students (confidence interval: 9.3%- 13.2%) reported that they had seriously considered suicide during the past year.”¹⁵ Small town, rural, and northern youth had a significantly higher rate of suicide than in major urban centres.

Implications: There are few social services available or trusted by rural/small town youth, particularly “after-hours” and weekends. Bullying and sexual identities are recognized by numerous studies as being linked to many youth suicides, issues particularly problematic outside of the larger urban areas. Youth centres have become significant “front-line” partners with local mental health agencies in addressing these issues.

Supporters of Youth Centres as a Significant Social Benefit

- o National Crime Prevention Council (Canada)
- o Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse
- o Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Ontario
- o Canadian Police Chiefs Association
- o World Health Organization (WHO)
- o United Nations - UNICEF & Children’s Environmental Network & Drug Secretariat
- o Canadian Pediatric Association
- o Canada Drug Strategy – Health Canada
- o Municipalities across Ontario - seventy municipalities passed resolutions of support for their local youth centre and the TYPS models

¹⁴ CAMH -OSDUS Drug Report Highlights 2005

¹⁵ CAMH 2003