



ONE MORE YEAR?

An assessment of the impacts of an additional year of housing benefit for residents within SHIPs Peel Youth Village Program.

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in our information, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Chair, Community Research Ethics Board, Community Research Ethics Office, {519} 741-1318.

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Executive Summary

Given the importance of transitional housing, the need for continued research into the housing challenges facing youth in Canada, and a commitment to learning about and contributing to the development of best practices, Peel Youth Village-Supportive Housing In Peel (PYV/SHIP) in partnership with the Region of Peel embarked on a twelve-month research project. This project evaluated the efficacy of the existing three-hundred and sixty-four day time limited tenure in PYVs transitional housing program for youth in supporting the acquisition and maintenance of independent living (broadly defined).

Specifically the research team asked the following question:

Keeping in mind the mandates of PYV/SHIP, how does an additional year of housing support (defined as a housing benefit of \$400 per month) impact the quality of life and success for youth in the areas of housing, employment and/or income, education/training, health, and community involvement and acceptance as they transition to independent living?

To answer this questions the research team engaged 12 PYV youth (18 or older at the time of all interviews) as research participants for one year. Four were provided with a \$400/month benefit that mimicked the economic supports offered by PYV and the transition to independent living for each participant was monitored. Those with the benefit fared significantly better in the areas of housing, employment, education and training and moderately better in the area of health.

In short, the findings suggest that one year is simply not enough to address individualized challenges (e.g. the long and short term effects of trauma, problematic substance use and/or addiction, debt). Nor is it enough time to address structural challenges (e.g. low welfare rates, high market rent, long wait times for housing subsidies, high rates of precarious low-paid employment among youth) that residents and former residents face.

In light of these findings the research team makes the following recommendations:

PYV/SHIP offer a more flexible and individualized timeline of residency up to either 18 or 24 months.

A pilot project providing a more flexible and longer period of residency for the next group of incoming residents

Specific attention to and more specialized programs for newcomer youth, Indigenous youth, youth who experience racial oppression, youth with disabilities, LGBTTTTPQ youth and female youth

Wider research project into the efficacy of strict time-limited transitional housing for youth in the GTA.

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Youth, Homelessness and Risks of Homelessness in Canada: The Context

The Canadian Homelessness Research Network defines homelessness as “the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and the ability to acquire 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”.¹ This definition encompasses the spectrum from absolute homelessness (immediately without a place to live) to a risk of homelessness (without access to secure, long-term housing). In Canada up to 1.3 million people have experienced homelessness (as defined above) in the last five years with approximately 200,000 people accessing emergency housing services or sleeping outside annually. 30,000 experience homelessness on any given night and up to 50,000 people experience hidden homelessness (e.g. couch surfing).²

Approximately 20% of the homeless population in Canada are youth (ages 16-24) with 25%-40% of this population identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and/or transgender. Youth homelessness is directly related to family conflict, abuse(s), poverty and neglect and youth face substantial challenges, such as high rates of precarious employment and a lack of life skills, education and training, when seeking affordable and safe housing.³

Although stakeholders such as service users, service providers, policy makers and communities are well aware of these challenges, research about homeless youth in Canada is a relatively recent development when compared with Britain and the USA⁴. Stakeholders in Canada are committed to improving our collective understanding of youth who experience or are at risk of homelessness and to the on-going development of emerging best practices in the area of youth

¹ Gaetz et al. (2013). Introduction. Youth Homelessness in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice. Canadian Homelessness Research Network. Eds. S. Gaetz, B. O’Grady, K. Buccieri, J. Karabanow, & A. Marsolais. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press. pp 6-7 (citing report from 2012)

² Gaetz et al. (2014): The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press. pp 5-6

³ Ibid pp. 25-26

⁴ Bridgman, R. (2009). The Peel Youth Village: Designing Transitional Housing for Suburban Homeless Youth. In: Hulchanski, J. David; Campsie, Philippa; Chau, Shirley; Hwang, Stephen; Paradis, Emily (eds.) Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada (e-book), Chapter 3.7. Toronto: Cities Centre, University of Toronto. www.homelesshub.ca/FindingHome

housing needs (see for example Kidd & Davidson 2006, Noble 2014, Youth Homelessness in Canada 2013, CAMH: Hidden in our Midst 2014).

Transitional Housing: Addressing Youth Housing Needs and Challenges

An important part of the discussion about youth and homelessness are transitional housing programs. Transitional housing is broadly defined by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) as “...an intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing. It is more long-term, service-intensive and private than emergency shelters, yet remains time-limited to stays of three months to three years. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network”⁵. While the time-limited tenure in transitional housing programs poses challenges for residents who must often contend with issues of poverty, discrimination in the housing market, a lack of affordable housing and long waitlists for subsidized housing, interim housing is considered a regular part of the youth housing continuum.⁶

The acknowledgment of the regularity of interim housing among youth is not used here to normalize or disregard the substantial housing challenges faced by youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness or to disregard the specific challenges associated with time-limited tenure within transitional housing programs. Rather, by recognizing the importance of transitional housing in the lives of this particular group of youth, service providers, service users, policy makers and communities can continue the work of shaping transitional housing programs to meet the needs of residents. Indeed, despite the challenges associated with time-limited tenure, the Housing Stability Service Plan (HSSP) identifies this type of housing program as an important element in the promotion of healthy communities and housing stock supportive of the well-being, goals and personal development of individuals⁷. Transitional housing, as a significant component in the strategies to end youth homelessness specifically, and homelessness more broadly in Canada is an important site for research and evaluation.

⁵ CMHC. (2004). Research Highlight. pp 2. <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/pdf/63445.pdf>

⁶ Homelessness Hub. *Transitional Housing*. <http://homelesshub.ca/solutions/housing-accommodation-and-supports/transitional-housing>

⁷ Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration. Housing Stability Service Planning Framework 2014-2019, pp. 25. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-64008.pdf>

The Role of Peel Youth Village-Supportive Housing In Peel in Addressing Youth Homelessness and Risks of Homelessness

Peel Youth Village (PYV) is owned by the Region of Peel Housing Corporation and operated by Supportive Housing in Peel (SHIP). PYV has been in operation since 2006. SHIP assumed the role of operator for PYV on December 31st, 2012. SHIP is committed to the promotion of Healthy Housing™, the implementation of best practices in service provision and the development of housing that enhances the quality of life of tenants and benefits the surrounding communities

PYV is a multi-use development which incorporates both a transitional housing program for 48 homeless youth and a two level Community Center. This building is embedded within the Acorn community and services offered to the residents are available to anyone residing in the Acorn neighborhood. PYV serves a community of approximately 1600 people in the Region of Peel of Ontario through residential and community services.

The residential component of the program provides transitional housing (defined as one year less a day) to 48 youth (ages 16-30) who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. In addition to a single person room, the residents benefit from on-site laundry facilities, kitchens, washrooms and a recreation center. Residents of the program have access to on-site PYV-run support programs in the areas of education, vocation, healthcare, recreational therapy, cooking and nutrition, justice, addiction(s), early-intervention mental health care, money management and independent living. Upon transition to independent living, former tenants have access to the after-care program for one year, but, given the high demand for supports for youth today, service providers at PYV continue to offer support to former residents even after they have been discharged from the aftercare program.

The community center offers a large indoor court that used for recreational programming such as basketball, tennis, badminton and yoga as well as a fully equipped gym. Also, there are recreation therapists, employment counselors and case managers who run programs and offer services targeted at the functional needs of community members. PYV also provides spaces for community engagement, including a commercial kitchen, a café, meeting rooms, lounges, and educational and family services.

PYV promotes a resiliency approach that is non-judgemental and recognizes the effects of social context on the strengths and challenges individuals experience in their daily lives. In keeping with the resiliency model best practices, PYV provides services that promote the overall health and well-being of community members, and staff employs evidence-based practices in the design and implementation of supports. Specifically, PYV is committed to helping improve the quality of life for youth with housing needs and all members of the community by fostering independent living skills and providing inclusive spaces for community engagement.

The Research Project

Given the importance of transitional housing for youth facing homelessness, the need for continued research into the housing challenges facing youth in Canada and a commitment to learning about and contributing to the development of best practices, Peel Youth Village-Supportive Housing In Peel (PYV/SHIP) in partnership with the Region of Peel embarked on a twelve-month research project. This project evaluated the efficacy of the existing three-hundred and sixty-four day time limited tenure in PYVs transitional housing program for youth in supporting the acquisition and maintenance of independent living (broadly defined). Specifically, PYV/SHIP asked if a (more) flexible period of residency at PYV would increase the efficacy of supporting a successful transition to independent living. What follows in this report is an overview of the research project and a presentation of the findings.

In short, the findings suggest that one year is simply not enough to address individualized challenges (e.g. the long and short term effects of trauma, problematic substance use and/or addiction, debt)⁸. Nor is it enough time to address structural challenges (e.g. low welfare rates,

⁸ Although individualized and structural challenges are separated in this report, we are not suggesting that the so-called individualized challenges can be understood as caused by the individual or that these challenges can be understood external to economic, social and other inequalities faced by residents. Rather we understand that the manifestation of challenges at the level of the individual are often dismissed as personal failings. These challenges are understood more fruitfully to be directly related to broader social issues such as (but not limited to) sexual, racial and/or familial violence, discrimination in the workplace, the education system and the community, poverty and a lack of access to daily needs like food and shelter. However, individualized challenges and structural challenges resonated very differently with residents who often felt they had a measure of control over the former but not the latter. Moreover, the immediate, everyday strategies in place (or those requested by services users) differ when they are related to individualized challenges vs. structural challenges. For this reason, we carefully chose the term individualized, instead of individual, when speaking about challenges that manifest at the personal level and that are often incorrectly attributed to individual weakness or failings. Structural is the term used when discussing challenges that manifest at a systems level, such as a lack of access to employment. We recognize that

high market rent, long wait times for housing subsidies, high rates of precarious low-paid employment among youth) that residents and former residents face.

Given the challenges faced by youth who have experienced homelessness or who have been at risk of homelessness, a more flexible tenure in PYV/SHIPs comprehensive, wrap-around and affordable transitional housing program is recommended. This flexible timeline would offer a greater opportunity to address some of the individualized challenges and to acquire additional skills and strategies for addressing the challenges at the system level. More time could, ultimately, offer greater support for obtaining and maintaining those healthy, safe and happy forms of independent living most appropriate to each resident. Rather than a strict 364 day tenure, 18-24 months would likely improve the success of residents in transitioning to and maintaining a high quality of life in independent living.

Research Question

Keeping in mind the mandates of PYV/SHIP, how does an additional year of housing support (defined as a housing benefit of \$400 per month) impact the quality of life and success for youth in the areas of housing, employment and/or income, education/training, health, and community involvement and acceptance as they transition to independent living?

Framework for the Project: The Social Determinants of Health and Resiliency Models **The Social Determinants of Health**

While PYV offers transitional housing to youth, PYV is about more than housing. PYV recognizes that access to safe and affordable housing is a key social determinant of health and well-being, but it is not the only determinant. Access to safe and affordable housing is a necessary component of well-being that, when coupled with a range of supports, promotes health, resilience and autonomy. The programs at PYV, therefore, offer past and present resident youth and members of the surrounding community access to programs that foster the development of skills and interpersonal relationships that are essential to healthy and resilient individuals and communities.

this distinction is imperfect and in many ways problematic as a direct line can be drawn between system level challenges and those which manifest individually. For more reading on our approach see Framework section.

In keeping with PYV's mandate, this project takes as its starting point insights offered by the social determinants of health and the resiliency models. The social determinants of health model, rather than understanding health and well-being as solely the result of the biology and/or behaviors of individuals, places health and well-being in the larger social, economic and political context. The social determinants model can generally be defined as an approach to research and policy design which understands health and well-being to be directly influenced by socio-economic factors such as income, employment, education and access to affordable and safe housing as well as experiences of discrimination, isolation, and stigma.

Resiliency Model

Complementary to the social determinants framework is the resiliency model. The resiliency model focuses on individual strengths, rather than "weaknesses" or pathology, and understands challenges, successes and well-being to be influenced by social context. Some individuals understand their psychology, physiology and/or genetic make-up to impact their experiences, access to supports and inter-personal relationships that foster skill-building, and positive reinforcement. It is also understood that self-esteem and autonomy, as well as the factors mentioned above of income, employment, education and access to affordable and safe housing and various forms of discrimination, have a significant impact on fostering overall well-being regardless of previous experiences.

Emerging from these models are sets of best practices geared towards building healthy communities and helping individuals thrive. Examples include the provision of a range of supports and opportunities for engagement, drawing on client strengths, respecting client identity and diverse understandings of challenges and success, providing positive reinforcement, and including residents in housing management^{9 10}.

Commitment to evidence-based best practices and emerging promising practices informs the service delivery and support model at PYV. Best practices, therefore, will inform, whenever

⁹ Transitions for Youth and the Halton Transitional Housing Study for Homeless Youth Steering Committee. (2007). More Than a Roof: Best Practices for Transitional Housing Models for Homeless Youth in Halton. <http://communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/communityPlanningPartnerships/resources/PromisingPrinciple sandPractices1.pdf> . pp 32-33.

¹⁰ Region of Waterloo Social Services. (2010). Promising Principles and Practices in Housing Options for Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Waterloo Region. <http://communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/communityPlanningPartnerships/resources/PromisingPrinciple sandPractices1.pdf> pp. 1

possible, the process of community consultation, the structure of the assessment tools/research questions and the conduct of the researchers. Of central importance is respecting and believing how clients understand, define and report their experiences.

Independent living:

For the purpose of this research project, and keeping in mind PYV/SHIPs commitment to client autonomy and diversity, independent living is broadly defined. Accessing resources such as income support and/or housing subsidies does not mean a person is living without independence.

Rather, independent living is about individuals being able to, whenever possible, decide where and how to live, work, learn, volunteer, raise a family (if desired) and socialize. For some, this may mean not accessing support services. For others, this may mean accessing numerous supports including housing programs and income support. Successful independent living means having access to necessary and desired resources to sustain well-being and a high degree of autonomy over life in both the immediate and the long-term. PYV/SHIP recognizes that choice and autonomy over daily life are often frustrated by factors like poverty and discrimination and that needs and wants change over the life-course of individuals.

Parameters of Assessment

The research team recognizes that current and former residents, community members, and service providers have the professional knowledge and personal experiences to help direct this type of research project. Rather than the research team defining how success in independent living should be understood and assessed, a community-engagement framework was implemented.

A community engagement framework is different from traditional academic research in that it involves equal participation by community members and researchers in much of the design, implementation, and dissemination of the research.¹¹

To assess quality of life and success in independent living as these related to employment and/or income, education/training, social engagement, and health each of these categories had to be agreed upon and defined. In keeping with the community engagement framework, an open

¹¹ See the following for greater discussion of community-engaged research
http://oprs.usc.edu/files/2013/01/Comm_Engaged_Research_Guide.pdf

workshop was held with residents, community members and service providers for the purpose of establishing reasonable measures of success and quality of life that reflect PYV's mandate and culture as well as the social, political and economic realities in the Region of Peel. Although the research questions evolved throughout the course of a project, the parameters set in consultation with the community remained the guiding principles for measuring success and quality of life in independent living.

The categories of success have been defined by the community as involving:

Safe, affordable and secure housing

Affordable housing is defined as not exceeding 30% of an individual or family's gross income¹². Housing costs, therefore, should not exceed more than 30% of an individual's income. Individuals should have a choice in where they live and feel physically, emotionally and financially safe in their home. Individuals should not fear arbitrary eviction or rent increases or any other circumstances which render housing precarious.

Access to employment, training and/or education

Maintaining safe, secure and affordable housing and a high-quality of independent living is often tied to access to employment. As important as secure housing is to well-being in independent living, so too is access to employment that is fulfilling. Where an individual does not have access to fulfilling employment, access to the training and/or education that can lead to such employment is a key element in supporting the kind of independent living PYV/SHIP seeks to cultivate.

Access to a living wage and benefits (either through employment or other means)

Simply having access to employment is not necessarily sufficient for supporting a high-quality of independent living. Access to employment that is secure offers regular and predictable hours and provides a living wage and benefits (such as access to employment insurance benefits, comprehensive health care benefits, vacation and the opportunity to cultivate a pension) is fundamental to maintaining safe, affordable and secure housing, health and well-being.

¹² Gaetz (2014), pp. 22

For people who are underemployed or unemployed, access to income supports or replacements that provide sufficient income and access to benefits is fundamental to supporting independent living and well-being.

Good health (physical, mental and spiritual)

Good physical, mental and spiritual health (however defined) is fundamental to maintaining a high-quality of life and success in independent living. Also fundamental to all aspects of health is having access to an array of resources as well as the time required to use and benefit from these resources. When we do not feel well we are less able to pursue our goals, to enjoy our work, education, training, and leisure time or navigate challenges when they arise. Good physical, mental and spiritual health will look different for each person and relate directly to their specific experiences, identities, and beliefs. This diverse understanding of good health supports inclusion, combats stigma and celebrates diversity.

A sense of community involvement and acceptance

Living in a place where individual identities, beliefs, experiences and desires are respected and celebrated supports integration, guards against unwanted isolation and allows for safe and enjoyable involvement in community organizing and social activities. Feeling at home in your community contributes to an overall sense of well-being that supports the maintenance of a high-quality of independent living.

These parameters are congruent with the approaches to individual and community development put forward by government agencies, policy institutes and scholars (see for example Open-Minds, Healthy Minds (Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-term care 2011), Wellesley Institute Submission to the World Health Organization: Social Determinants of Health Into Action (2011)), and Housing First in Canada (Gaetz et al 2013).

Like the community of people who helped us develop these parameters of assessment, PYV/SHIP understands that a successful transition to independent living means having a safe, affordable and secure place to live. More than this, however, PYV/SHIP views high quality independent living to involve: access to enjoyable and fulfilling employment that provides a living wage and/or access to income supports that allow individuals to sustain well-being, access to desired education or training that supports pursuit of desired vocation, timely access to the

resources that cultivate good physical, mental and, when important to an individual, spiritual health and a sense of community involvement and acceptance.

When constructing the research questions and assessing the data, the research team focussed on how participants fared in respect to these five categories when transitioning to independent living. The findings are presented by considering each of these parameters of assessment in turn.

Methods

We engaged 12 PYV youth (18 or older at the time of all interviews) as research participants for one year to assess the impact of an additional year of funding on the quality of life and success in the transition to independent living. The selection of the youth was reasonably random, with invitations extended to all youth in residence and all reachable former residents. Those who received the benefit were randomly selected from former residents who signed up for the project.

The 12 youth were divided into three sub-groups that reflected two distinct stages in the transition to independent living and that controlled for a variety of factors, beyond the presence or absence of a the housing benefit, that frustrate or facilitate a successful transition to independent living (see below). Every two months for the period of one year the youth completed one-on-one interviews with the researcher to discuss the challenges, successes and concerns they experience in their day-to-day lives. On average the youth met with the researcher 5/6 times with half of the participants attending all interviews and only two attending less than 5 interviews (see Appendix A for interview attendance).

Group 1 – This group consisted of 4 youth who were still living at PYV at the beginning of the interview process and had a minimum of 4 months remaining in their stay and had passed through the first thirty days at PYV¹³. All the youth in group 1 transitioned out of PYV during the research project.

Group 2 – This group consisted of 4 youth who had been residents and had transitioned to independent living but were still part of the after-care program. This group of participants had all established access to housing at the time of the initial interview.

¹³ This cut-off was in place to ensure the participants were reasonably established and accustomed to the space and routines of PYV.

Group 3 – This group consisted of 4 youths who recently transitioned to independent living and are taking part in the after-care program. They received the housing benefit.

Although not all participants were provided with the benefit, all participants were provided with \$35 per interview and were compensated for travel to and from interviews.

In addition to interviews, the research team employed documentary review of governmental and non-governmental policies and reports.

The Benefit

The purpose of the \$400/month benefit was to mimic, as closely as possible, the predictable economic supports provided to residents while living at PYV. The supports include a consistent rent of \$376/month, staples (eggs, milk, cheese, bread, laundry and dish soap, and personal hygiene items) lunch programs and trips to the food bank, other transit supports, free laundry, and free printing for students.

At the same time, the aftercare program extends the wrap around supports provided by PYV to ALL former residents for the period of one-year post-residency (although no former resident is cut off from the services at PYV after that one year period). Together the benefit and the aftercare program extended to all former residents simulates the social and economic supports provided by the PYV residential program.

On average once residents left PYV their living costs went up significantly. Of the 11 paying rent (one person lived in a free shelter) the average was about \$505/month¹⁴, anywhere from \$100-\$300/month on groceries and (unless they were in school or receiving transit subsidy for work or medical appointments) up to \$100-\$125/month on transit. The benefit filled in the residential economic supports provided by PYV while all participants remained attached to the aftercare program.

What follows is an assessment of how the benefit provided to four residents, in mimicking the supports offered at PYV, impacted the transition of youth from living in the residential program to living independently (broadly defined) in the community. While ideally the research project would have simply allowed four participants to stay for another year in residency at PYV, this

¹⁴ Calculated by adding and then dividing the 14 different rents paid by the 11 residents after leaving PYV. One resident did not pay rent after leaving PYV.

was not possible due to the strict time limited tenure in place. By providing this economic benefit along with the established aftercare support, the research team was able to mimic as closely as possible the supportive environment offered by PYV among the four residents whose residency had ended.

Ethics, Confidentiality, and Consent

Ontario does not have an official community research ethics board. There is, however, a community research ethics office in Waterloo, Ontario that provides guidance and consultation to community researchers. To ensure an optimum level of ethics in our research practices we sought a statement of ethics approval from the Community Research Ethics Office in Waterloo (see Appendix C) <http://www.communityresearchethics.com/>.

The identity of participants was kept completely confidential by the research team. Only participants will have the right to disclose their involvement in the project. While transcripts of interviews were produced, these transcripts were seen only by the researcher. The interview participants were given an opportunity to review and comment on completed transcripts. The names of the participants were removed from the transcripts. Should the transcripts need to be seen by someone other than the researcher all identifying information (e.g. names of partners, specific names of housing providers, etc.) would be removed. To date, however, the transcripts have been kept private between the researcher and individual participants.

Research participants were asked to sign a consent form detailing their rights and any risks and benefits associated with the project (see Appendix B). All materials are being kept in a locked filing cabinet and/or on a password-protected computer. Once all reports and associated academic publications are produced, all information is to be shredded and deleted.

Participants were able to exit the project at any time and should an individual from group 3 (i.e. an individual receiving the benefit) want to discontinue their involvement in the project they were provided with the benefit for the month they chose to leave and the following month. This ensured that any benefit recipients could adequately plan for the financial change that would result from exiting the project. No one from group 3 left the project.

Limitations of the study

This study is admittedly limited by its small scale. While considerable data was gathered from the 12 participants, they represent a fraction of the youth who experience homelessness or the

risk of homelessness. This makes drawing system-wide conclusions difficult. However, the findings are congruent with larger studies on homelessness and youth which are referenced throughout this report. What is conclusive is that the experiences of the participants are not unique, allowing us to situate confidently this study and findings within the broader landscape of youth homelessness in Canada.

While the study is small in scale when considered against the population of homeless youth in Canada, it is not small in scale when considered in relation to the number of residents who have come through PYV/SHIP. SHIP has been in the role of operator for PYV for 3.5 years. This means that PYV/SHIP at the time of this report had served or is currently serving approximately 192 youth. By following 12 youth, the research has access to slightly more than 6% of the total population served. While this is a small sample, it is large enough to provide insights into life at and after PYV/SHIP and to draw conclusions about the operation of this specific transitional housing program.

Another limitation of the study is the degree to which the benefit mimics an additional year of residency at PYV. While it would have perhaps been ideal to offer four youth an additional year of residency at PYV, this was not possible given the current legal relationship between residents and PYV/SHIP. Instead, the researchers had to mimic the economic supports offered by PYV/SHIP through a monetary benefit and continued access to the aftercare program.

The Findings:

Safe, affordable, and secure housing:

The context:

According to the Region of Peel's 2015 Annual Housing Systems Report, the average market rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$1046/month¹⁵. While the rate of bachelor apartments was not available in this report, the CMHC 2015 housing report puts the average rent for a bachelor apartment in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area at approximately \$900¹⁶ while the Annual

¹⁵ Region of Peel. (2015). Annual Housing System Report <https://www.peelregion.ca/housing/pdf/HUM-0491-housing-report-2015.pdf>

¹⁶ CMHC. (2015). Rental Market Report http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64507/64507_2015_B01.pdf pp. 8 & 13.

Systems Report asserts that rents in Peel are comparable to those in the City of Toronto. In sum, the market rent for an apartment for a single person in the Peel Region is between \$900-\$1050/month.

For residents and former residents of PYV/SHIP, market rent for a bachelor or one bedroom is typically unaffordable. For a rent of \$900/month to be considered affordable, an individual would have to have access to an income of \$36,000/year. As the income discussion of this report demonstrates, this rent is well beyond 30% of an income of someone working full-time at minimum wage (approx. \$23,400/year). Moreover, market rent is well beyond the current financial capacity of all participants, many who access OW or ODSP, are pursuing high-school or post-education and/or who are precariously employed.

In addition to the issue of affordability, reported barriers particular to youth seeking out safe and secure housing included:

- the unwillingness of landlords to rent to young people
- a lack of available co-signors
- no established credit score or a poor credit score impacting credit check performed by landlords
- a lack of time to establish a good credit score
- the unwillingness of landlords to rent to people accessing OW or ODSP
- access to first and last month rent to secure a unit

For people unable to pay market rent, the Region of Peel provides funding for social housing programs, transitional housing programs, including PYV and other SHIP run housing units, as well as shelter beds and housing subsidies (total number of units/beds/homes is 20,716). Other rental options for people with low-incomes include renting a room in a house, living with a partner and sharing rent or living with a family member.

Group One:

At the beginning of the project all members of this group lived at PYV/SHIP. By the end of the project all members of this group had moved out of PYV/SHIP, and all moved out before their 364 days were up. Three moved towards the end of their time at PYV (with no more than three months remaining) as housing became available and one in the middle of their stay at PYV.

Upon leaving PYV rent for this group ranged from \$400-\$550/month. Two participants were renting rooms in larger apartments with people they did not know before leaving PYV and one rented an apartment with a friend. One participant had moved to the City of Toronto for work and was living in a free youth shelter

The two participants renting rooms felt that their housing was relatively stable and had no problems with their roommates. One of these participants felt the need to move out of the area immediately to get away from an unsafe relationship. This person was unable to move for financial reasons. The participant renting an apartment with a friend experienced a landlord who treated them unfairly had asked them to leave. This participant was in the process of looking for somewhere else to live and planned to return to PYV in the following year.

All members of this group wanted to move into their own units but had no immediate plans to do so. All participants felt that rental costs were a significant burden. For two of the participants in group one rental costs consistently consumed more than 50% of their income. For one participant income varied with rental costs sometimes consuming more than 30% of their income. The person living in the shelter did not pay rent.

Group Two:

All of the participants in group two were housed at the beginning of the project. Three maintained this housing throughout the year, and one person moved in with a family member at the end of the project.

Two members of this group had access to subsidized housing (between \$425 and \$581/month for bachelor apartments in social housing building) while two rented rooms (\$420-\$450/month).

Both felt that their housing was relatively stable, but that the location was undesirable and that the building sometimes poorly maintained. One received a maintenance bill from the landlord, but the workers at PYV/SHIP were able to intervene, and no payment was required.

The two group members who rented rooms in different apartment buildings (\$350-\$421/month) were advised that they would have to move out. One was given a two months' notice for moving and was actively looking for new place to live at the end of the research project. The other participant was told vaguely by the landlord that he intended to sell the building. The second individual moved in with a family member due a change in relationship status, employment and financial circumstances, not due to the sale of the building.

This group also felt that rent was a substantial burden. Those paying market rent often had to find landlords who would wave first and last months' rent or who would accept it in installments. The individual who had to move immediately was very concerned about finding a safe and affordable place to live and negotiating the cost of first and last months' rent with future landlords.

Of this group three members had rental costs that exceed 30% of their income, often reaching well beyond 50%, while one participant in the group experienced fluctuating income. For this participant, rent sometimes consumed more than 30% of income.

Group Three:

All members of this group were housed at the beginning of the project and remained housed at the end of the project. Two participants lived in market rent housing. Of these two, one participant lived with a partner in a one bedroom in the City of Toronto and was paying \$785/month. The other participant was initially renting a room at \$550/month but moved twice during the research project, first to a one bedroom at \$750/month and then into a bachelor apartment in a co-op building at \$650/month.

The other two participants lived in subsidized housing. The rent for one of the participants in subsidized housing changed from \$111/month to \$630/month for a one-bedroom apartment over the course of the project due to a change in employment. The other subsidized rent remained consistent at \$581/month but was expected to be reduced, also due to a change in employment. At the end of the project the rent for this individual had not yet decreased.

When the project began one of the participants who was living in subsidized housing had substantial rental arrears due to unemployment and was facing the initiation of the eviction process. This person was able to pay off the arrears over the course of the project and has remained in the unit.

One of the participants paying market rent was living in unsafe housing with a previously unknown roommate. This individual was able to use the housing benefit to move immediately into a one-bedroom apart (\$750/month) with no long term lease. In the meantime, this individual sought out a longer term housing solution and found safe and secure housing in a co-op (\$650/month) before the project ended.

The costs of rent for this group was also considered a substantial burden. Excluding the benefit, the two participants paying market rent would have consistently used more than 40% of their income for rental costs and sometimes, depending on employment income, over 60%. For the two participants living in subsidized housing, rent for one person would have consumed between 30% of available income to upwards of 60%. These variations depended on employment status and the speed at which subsidized rental rates were adjusted to account for income. The other participant living in subsidized housing would have paid rent that was well under 30% or just over 30%. Variations here also depend on hours worked and the associated housing subsidy adjustment.

With the benefit those paying market rent paid between 39%-50% of their income for housing, with variations depending on employment income and finding safe and less expensive housing. For the two participants in subsidized housing, rental costs were kept below 30% until one

person lost employment at which point rental costs rose to 40% even with the subsidy adjustment. Without the benefit, this individual would have been paying 60% if income in rent.

Analysis:

As stated, youth face significant housing challenges that are directly related to the high costs of rent in the Peel Region and high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and precarious employment among youth (see section on employment for greater discussion). Rent was considered affordable (30% or less of income) for only one participant over the course of the year. While the benefit did not put rent at the level of affordable, what it did do was provide greater housing options to the residents and helped participants maintain housing when income rates changed, and/or a delay subsidy adjustment resulted in an unaffordable rental payment.

Three of the participants reported past rental arrears due to unemployment. One was receiving the benefit and the other two were not. The individual with the benefit was able to pay off the arrears and avoid the eviction process. The other participants owed past rent to PYV/SHIP but were no longer living at the site and were not facing eviction. One person owing arrears felt that returning to the site and accessing supports was difficult due to the outstanding debt. The other participant owing to PYV planned to pay off the arrears and return to the program¹⁷. Another participant, not receiving the benefit, lost access to ODSP and moved in with a family member where the expectation of rental payment was suspended until ODSP was reinstated.

Five of the participants were experiencing varying degrees of unsafe or insecure housing. Only the participant receiving the benefit was able to move immediately into a safe, albeit unaffordable, apartment (\$750/month) and stay there until safe, secure and more affordable housing (\$650/month) could be acquired. Rent still consumed well over 30% of this individual's income, but the benefit opened up access to housing in the \$600-\$800 range, and the individual was able to leave an unsafe environment and find long-term housing.

¹⁷ This person was not evicted from PYV due to arrears but chose to leave.

The best option for those earning a low-income and/or accessing OW and ODSP is a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) subsidy which keeps rent at or close to 30% of an individual or household income. Only one of our participants had access to this kind subsidy and according to SHIPs central intake wait lists for RGI and for subsidized housing generally are anywhere from 2-10 years long. Taking into account high rental costs in the GTA and the wait-times for subsidies, the single most important factor for youth seeking to find and maintain safe, secure and affordable housing is access to income that opens up the option for accessing at least self-contained units in low-cost market rent. In this study, such units were reported to cost \$650/month in a co-op or between \$750-\$785/month in a for-profit building. This would require an income of between \$26,000/year and \$31,000/year which is still above what minimum wage offers for full-time work.

Access to a living wage and benefits and access to employment education and/or training

The community set out access to employment offering benefits (health care, dental, vision, vacation pay and pension) and living wage as central to maintaining a high quality of life and/in independent living. Where this type of employment was unavailable, the community established access to the education or training necessary to acquiring such employment and access to sufficient income support was established as equally important. Although the community separated access to employment, education and training from access to a living wage and benefits this report treats these two categories together as the issues of education/training, employment and a living wage are inextricable from one another. Additionally, while this section offers some discussion about the challenges of coordinating OW and ODSP and the low levels of support for people who are unemployed and underemployed, we focus here on access to employment, wages and education/training. Sidelining the topic of OW and ODSP is not an indication of unimportance. Rather, this report privileges the goals and expressed capacities of the participants; all of whom reported a desire for higher levels of education and/or self-sustaining employment.

Employment and a living wage

The Context:

In 2015, the unemployment rate in the Region of Peel was reported to be 8.1% and the youth unemployment rate as 18.9%¹⁸. National averages for unemployment in 2015 were 7.0¹⁹ and 13.5% respectively²⁰. General barriers to youth employment are lower education levels, a lack of experience and low workplace resulting in higher degrees of layoffs among youth. Barriers for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness include: “a lack of social support, low education and skill levels, low levels of social capital and connections, trauma, mental health concerns, addictions, criminal justice involvement” and employer prejudice²¹.

In addition to these barriers the participants reported that the following impacted access to employment:

- increase in online applications
- living far from available jobs work
- a lack of references
- periods of unemployment that are difficult to explain

Along with a high unemployment rate, youth face declining access to full-time employment and lower wages. According to a Statistics Canada report, which controlled for full-time students, access to full-time employment among youth aged 15-24 and adults 25-34 is substantially lower today than 2007. Alongside this decline in full-time work is a decline in wages for people between the ages of 15-34 since the 1980s²². While the drop in full-time work could be account for by the recession, the decline in wages over a much longer period of time indicates that youth today have less access to income than youth thirty years ago. It is a difficult time to be a young person looking for well-paid full-time work that offers benefits or full-time work at all. This is one of the reasons PYV/SHIP has vocational support on site.

¹⁸ Region of Peel. (2015). pp. 7

¹⁹ Statistics Canada. (2015). Labour Force Survey. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150904/dq150904a-eng.htm>

²⁰ Region of Peel. (2015).pp 7

²¹ Noble, A. (2012). It's Everybody's Business: Engaging the Private Sector in Solutions to Youth Homelessness. Raising the Roof. pp. 21

²² Galarneau, D. et al. (2013). What has changed for young people in Canada? <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11847-eng.htm>

All the participants had been employed at some time in their lives and 8/12 were employed in some capacity over the course of the project. Of the three participants who did not work, one was a full-time post-secondary student, two were addressing significant mental healthcare concerns and one was actively looking for work and did not meet regularly with the researcher so data on progress is limited. The youth at PYV/SHIP want to work full-time. All participants saw employment as a primary goal and when living at PYV received vocational supports.

At the same time all participants saw education or training as key to the desired employment. For some participants the goal was pursuing post-secondary education and for others the goal was to enroll in workplace training programs like apprenticeship. At PYV there is support for residents pursuing education/training.

Education and Training

The Context:

Youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are, as a group, in a low socioeconomic bracket. About half of these youth come from low-income families and all have faced some kind of housing challenge at a stage of life when many Canadian youth are pursuing education²³. As access to education is considered one of the most important factors in obtaining financial security, the disruption in the learning continuum places many youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at a disadvantage and places additional barriers in their path to a high-quality of independent living.

Socio-economic status is one of the most important factors influencing high school completion with people in the lowest quartile being more likely to drop out of high school. At the same time access to education significantly impacts socio-economic status. The absence of a high school diploma, experienced by 1 in 12 Canadians, was found to decrease earnings by \$97/week. 1 in 4

²³ Covenant House. Facts and Stats. <http://www.covenanthousetoronto.ca/homeless-youth/facts-and-stats>

people without a high school diploma experiencing unemployment²⁴. Access to post-secondary education and/or vocational training is “increasingly essential” to obtaining and maintaining secure employment that offers a living wage²⁵. A study in 2003 showed that 77% of Canada’s youth from the highest socio-economic quartile attended post-secondary institutions as opposed to 61% of from the lowest socio-economic quartile²⁶. It is clear that education is key to obtaining a living wage and benefits, as well as autonomy over job type. Education is a key factor in high quality independent living. For this reason, PYV/SHIP offers education supports.

Group One:

Employment and income

The incomes for this group ranged from \$626/month to \$2500/month depending on access to income support programs, employment and hours worked. Two of the participants in group two were working non-standard jobs at the beginning of the project (agency work, shift work, unreliable hours, cash jobs) and both obtained full-time work with benefits by the fifth month of the project. One of these participants earned \$15/hr and worked in a warehouse earning on average \$2500/month before taxes. The participant had this job when the project ended. The other participant’s job paid \$12.35/hr and was due to start in the fall. The work schedule was expected to be long periods of work over a few days followed by days off. This person was doing irregular shift work while waiting for the new job to start and stopped attending interviews half way through the project, so additional information is not available.

The other two participants were not working and accessing OW or ODSP, earning between \$626 and \$1060/month and living on \$200-\$300/month after rent. One was actively seeking employment and the other actively dealing with substantial mental health concerns. All worried

²⁴ Gilmore, J. (2011). Trends in Dropout rates and the Labour Market Outcomes of Young People. Labour and Statistics Division. Statistics Canada. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010004/article/11339-eng.htm>

²⁵ Niagara Community Observatory. (2015). Policy Brief #22. https://brocku.ca/webfm_send/35214

²⁶ Berger, J. (2009). Participation in Post-Secondary Education: Recent Trends. The Price of Knowledge, Access and Student Finance in Canada. https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/Price-of-Knowledge_4th-edition_2009-11_chapter-2_en.pdf.

about having enough money. After moving out of PYV only the individual earning \$15/hr lived without accessing housing subsidies and/or income support.

Education and Training

Two of the four members of this group had completed high school, both of whom had done some post-secondary training. At the beginning of the project, one of the participants with a high school diploma was enrolled in a post-secondary program, and the other was admitted to a program during the project. At the end of the project, no member of this group was enrolled in a post-secondary program. The person enrolled discontinued studies due to mental health concerns while the person who had been admitted to a post-secondary program decided to work instead. Of the two participants who had yet to finish high school, one had no plans to return and was working full-time. This participant decided to apply to post-secondary programs as a mature student. The other wanted to finish high school but was currently looking for work.

The primary barrier to education for this group was finances, with one participant citing a lack of appropriate identification as an additional barrier to post-secondary education. While OSAP is available to youth, by itself the income provided by student loans is insufficient and requires a part-time job. Moreover, for the participants with jobs were reluctant to give up the hard-won full-time work to go back to school, wanted to try to put money aside before pursuing education and were wary of student loans given consistent struggles with debt. While certainly this plan seems sensible, the incomes available even to those working full-time are so low and rental costs so high (see section on housing) that the opportunity to save is fairly limited. For those adults without a high school education, and all participants in this study were adults, access to work is already difficult making the process of saving for post-secondary education even more challenging. As a result of financial concerns, all participants delayed post-secondary education or finishing high school. Obtaining sufficient incomes to pay rent, eat, take transit, pay off debt and have a phone were the priority for this group.

While there are programs available to low-income youth who want to pursue education, simply knowing about these programs and having access to the time and support to apply is often a barrier.

Group Two:

Employment and Income

When the interviews started no one in group two was employed, and two participants were pursuing education. By the end of the project three of the participants in group two had been employed and one was working on finishing high-school and dealing with substantial mental health care concerns. Of the three participants who worked hourly rates ranging from \$11.25/hr (minimum wage) to \$17/hour. Only one person was employed in a full-time permanent job earning \$11.69/hour with an average monthly income of almost \$2000/month before taxes and was not receiving supports from OW or ODSP. A second participant worked two jobs, one which was contract work with periods of full-time employment at \$17/hr (usually 8 weeks) and the other job consisting of shift work at \$12/hr. At the end of this project, the second participant found permanent full-time work, but it had not started. The third participant who was employed worked irregularly, between 24-30 hours per week at \$12/hr. Calculating the projected yearly salaries of the second and third employed participants was not possible as the schedules and pay were erratic.

Two of the participants in this group who worked regularly spent between 2 hours to 4 hours on public transit and one biked 1.5 hours home in the middle of the night. The employed participants in group two spoke about the grueling pace expected of shift-workers (e.g. very few hours between shifts, standing for long periods of time), the physical and financial strain of traveling so far to work and the limited employment options for people who had not high school or post-secondary education. One participant was injured on the job and had to take unpaid time off.

Of the participants employed two resigned from their jobs due to the stress and at the end of the project one was doing occasional day jobs and the other participant was looking for a new job. This group reported that one of the most difficult aspects of being a low-income youth with a job was the unpredictable, claw backs to income assistance. Two members of this group who were working regularly experienced unanticipated income deductions from OW or ODSP. Both experienced deductions were applied correctly and incorrectly. In some cases, these deductions resulted in an immediate loss of anticipated monthly income while other times there was an overpayment and the subsequent payments were reduced to compensate. The unpredictability caused by (correctly and incorrectly) fluctuating welfare payments caused insecurity among employed participants.

The individual who as not working was initially accessing OW. This person transitioned to ODSP receiving instead \$1060/month as well as a lump sum payment due to an error in ODSP eligibility assessment. All participants spoke about the substantial time and energy required of them when coordinating OW or ODSP

Education and Training

At the beginning of the research project all members of this group were pursuing some education or training. Two had completed high school and two had not. One participant was pursuing post-secondary education and accessing OSAP. Two participants were studying and/or attending courses for the purpose of writing licensing exams that would provide them access to a new job market. Those writing licensing exams were provided with some financial support from OW, ODSP or non-profit employment programs for covering the costs of exams, courses and study materials. One participant was finishing high school and dealing with substantial mental health care concerns.

Throughout the course of the project, the participant enrolled in post-secondary education discontinued studies for full-time work, but resigned from the job due to stress and was accessing OW and looking for work at the end of the project. One participant pursuing training discontinued studies for two jobs and OW support. This person found full-time work at the end

of the project. One participant finished a training course and found work in the field, but resigned due to the stressful nature of the work and also lost access to ODSP, but was fairly certain it would be reinstated and was doing temporary day jobs in the meantime. The participant completing high school remained enrolled and continued to access ODSP.

Group Three

Employment and income

At the beginning of the project three of the participants were working; one full-time, one usually full-time and one part-time. The fourth participant was enrolled as a full-time post-secondary student and was accessing ODSP. The participant working full time earned \$2000/month before taxes and worked in a warehouse from 3pm-11pm 5 days a week. This job offered benefits. The participant working typically full-time hours worked in a trade and slightly above minimum wage or \$2000/month before taxes and had access to benefits. The part-time worker was in retail without access to benefits. The retail shifts varied depending on demand. Sometimes this person made only \$100/week and continued to access OW.

Over the course of the project, the individual pursuing a trade was able to enroll in an apprenticeship program and find a shop that offered full-time hours and benefits, although wages were slightly reduced. The participant who had full time work resigned from the job due to stress and depression, choosing to pursue an intensive course of mental health care treatment. By the end of the project this person was doing temporary agency work and looking for permanent work. The participant working part-time quit the job due to a commute from the City of Toronto to Mississauga. While looking for work in the City of Toronto this individual handed out over 100 resumes in the city doing irregular cash jobs in the meantime. Eventually steady part-time work was found. The participant who was not working due to a full-time student status had planned on looking for part-time work, but the benefit provided sufficient income to delay this process. At the end of the project, however, this individual was initiating a job search. Although this person had never been able to maintain long-term employment due to reasons of mental

health, the year spent successfully completing courses provided the confidence to go out and find work.

For each participant working there was a need to change jobs due to stress, a long commute and/or irregular hours. By the end of the project, two of the three participants were able to find jobs that met their needs. The third person was able to address the issues of depression and stress and return to the workforce. The benefit facilitated these transitions, allowing individuals to find jobs that were more sustainable and that met their personal and financial needs.

Education and Training

At the beginning of the project two of the four members of the third group were enrolled in school and all but one had completed high school. One person was pursuing a professional degree in a post-secondary institution. During the project, another participant was able to find an employer who would supervise an apprenticeship. The fourth participant was not enrolled in school but planned to pursue post-secondary training after working and saving money for one year.

As with the other two groups, finances were the primary barrier to education. For the individual completing high-school, the need to work to make ends meet meant that s/he could only enroll part-time. For the participant doing full-time warehouse work, the need to save money for school was a challenge. The one participant in this group pursuing post-secondary education was accessing ODSP and had all education costs covered under a separate program for people who struggle to maintain employment. While the benefit allowed this student to delay working part-time, with the end of the benefit s/he was looking for work. S/he was concerned about balancing a demanding professional program, maintaining high grades, looking for full-time employment in the professional field and working a part-time job. The barriers for the individual pursuing a trade was not directly related to finances, but the challenge of finding an employer who would supervise the necessary apprenticeship while offering employment in the meantime. Despite these challenges all participants pursuing education/training make progress in this area. One

person completed high school; one found an apprenticeship and one completed the first year of a demanding program and was beginning the next.

Analysis:

The 8/12 participants were employed during this project, and one participant who was unemployed was looking for work. All participants looking for work were very persistent and had clearly been provided with the skills necessary for job searchers. The work performed by the participants, however, was largely characterized by unpredictability; long periods of agency work, variation in the number of shifts and, therefore, income and the threat of layoffs. These are common employment challenges faced by youth and especially youth without education and training at a post-secondary level.

Alongside unpredictability, the youth who worked faced burnout given the pace of employment, the strain of spending hours a day on transit to get to work, the resultant social isolation, the stress of financial instability despite working and the stress of coordinating with OW and ODSP around payment and benefit adjustments that were often incorrectly applied. These stressors, coupled with mental health concerns (reported by 10/12 see section on health), were significant barriers to maintaining employment. Three of the participants were not looking for work due to full-time studies and/or mental health concerns. Of the nine working or looking for work, four were able to find work that offered close to a living wage and benefits. Only two of these participants saw these jobs as permanent with one person resigning due to mental health concerns.

The benefit aided all participants by providing them with time to find work that was sustainable, and that supported their longer term educational/training goals or for addressing mental health concerns. Three participants receiving the benefit were working, and all three were able to resign from jobs that did not meet their long-term goals, that required a long and expensive commute or that cause unmanageable levels of stress. Two receiving the benefit found new sustainable jobs, one full-time apprenticeship and one part-time job that allowed the participant the time to complete high school. The third person receiving the benefit pursued mental health and

immediately found temporary agency work and was looking for full-time employment. The fourth participant receiving the benefit was able to put off work and pursue post-secondary education. This person directly referenced the benefit as facilitating the choice to concentrate on school.

When considering education and/or training, 6 participants were pursuing some form of post-secondary education or training at the beginning of the project, two of whom were receiving the benefit. Two participants were actively working towards completing high school, one who was receiving the benefit.

Of those participants not receiving the benefit, only one person completed a post-secondary training program, and one participant remained enrolled in high-school. Three of the four participants who were not receiving the benefit discontinued post-secondary training or education, two citing financial reasons, and the other mental health concerns. In contrast, all three who received the benefit and were pursuing education/training continued in their programs, despite mental and physical health concerns and financial hardships reported by all three participants. One person receiving the benefit completed high-school over the course of the project. Those participants not receiving the benefit were more likely to quit school for work, but only one person who left a training program found a sustainable and well-paid with benefits.

The benefit clearly supplemented income to get participants closer to a living wage. More importantly, it facilitated change employment that was more enjoyable, sustainable and compatible with long-term education and training goals. More than facilitating access to employment and a living wage, the benefit aided those pursuing education and training by removing some of the financial barriers and, therefore, the need to give up education or training in favor an immediate job or try to balance school and employment while often dealing with mental health concerns.

Mental, physical and spiritual health

The Context:

Access to safe, secure and affordable housing, good nutrition, regular check-ups with a physician, the ability to acquire necessary pharmaceuticals and a safe and healthy workplace are all health determinants. For you who are homeless or at risk of homeless, poverty frustrates access to these determinants. A recent study by the Canadian Paediatric Society sites respiratory illness, dental diseases, dermatological diseases, STIs and malnutrition to be among the common health problems experienced by street-involved youth (a broad term for youth experiencing degrees of homelessness)²⁷. Regular physical health care is necessary for all people in maintaining a high-quality of life. For this reason, PYV/SHIP has converted one of the units into a GP office.

For youth who have experienced homelessness or the risk of homelessness, there is often a family conflict. As a result, many experience trauma which is exacerbated by a lack of safe, affordable and secure housing and a low-income. Moreover, the adversity faced by youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can negatively impact mental health and mental health challenges can act as barriers to housing. While a reliable estimation of how many homeless and at-risk youth have mental health diagnoses is difficult to find, anywhere from 23%-70% of homeless people in Canada have a mental health concern²⁸. There is no reason to believe it is less among youth

Among youth, common diagnoses include depression, PTSD, bipolar disorder and addiction²⁹. While the province of Ontario provides free mental health care services to all residents, wait-times for these services can be very long and the assessment very painful. Access to psychopharmaceuticals, which can be very costly, requires access to sufficient income, employment that offers benefits or a drug card provided by OW or ODSP.

Less information was available about spiritual health and youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Here we do not define spirituality but allow for diverse interpretations and beliefs

²⁷ Elliott, A. (2013). Meeting the health care needs of street-involved youth. *Canadian Paediatric Society*. 18(6), 317-21. <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/health-care-needs-of-street-involved-youth>

²⁸ Mental Health Commission of Canada. *The Facts*. <http://strategy.mentalhealthcommission.ca/the-facts/>

²⁹ Kidd, S. (2013). *Mental Health and Youth Homelessness: A Critical Review*. *Youth Homelessness in Canada. Youth Homelessness in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice*. Eds. S. Gaetz, B. O'Grady, K. Buccieri, J. Karabanow, & A. Marsolais. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

of individuals. Although little information is available, spirituality when important to an individual is central to their well-being and is being increasingly recognized as an important clinic tool in treating mental and physical health concerns. Having a community and space within which to practice or observe one's spirituality can be challenging for youth without access to safe, affordable and secure housing. What is more, the normative approach used to address the challenges faced by youth who experience or are at risk of homelessness, often sidelines or undermines spirituality. Recognizing diverse spiritual practice and beliefs and providing a range of services that respect and incorporate individuals expressed spirituality is essential to supporting a high-quality independent living.

Without exception the biggest health concern among participants was mental health with oral and nutritional health also being important. The report, therefore, focuses on these health issues, but will address others as they arose for each group.

Group One:

Physical health

For the group living at PYV at the beginning of the interviews physical health was a not a primary concern. Although smoking was often referenced as a bad habit and workplace bodily strain was cited by one participant as interfering with overall well-being. Three of the four members of this group referenced not having enough to eat or regularly visiting food banks upon moving out. As grocery staples and lunch programs are provided at PYV, this was not an issue when living in the residential program.

Mental health

Mental health concerns were the primary health issue for this group with all but one participant referencing some mental health issue and two disclosing significant mental health challenges. One participant in this group spoke openly about trauma and the frustrations with trying to find a therapist who could help process the trauma and going through endless assessments to access

services. For two individuals in this group, mental health concerns were a barrier to employment and education.

Spiritual health

Spiritual health was not talked about in a significant way by this group with one person identifying being in good spiritual health and another in poor spiritual health. More information, however, was not provided to the researcher.

Group Two

Physical health

The members of this group experienced significant health challenges. One suffered two injuries during the project. Health care was sought for one of these injuries but the course of treatment was not completed due to work obligations. The secondary injury resulted in unpaid time off work, but no care was sought. Three spoke about a lack of access to proper nutrition due to finances and one participant referenced a lack of time to prepare healthy food due to a hectic work schedule. Two had dental concerns; one had sought treatment, but the other was concerned about coverage.

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Mental health

Three of the four participants in this group experienced significant mental health care concerns ranging from addiction to a diagnosis of bi-polar disorder while the other participant spoke about feeling depressed. One participant had been on a community treatment order (CTO) which mandated a monthly injection of a psychopharmaceuticals. This person had no drug coverage at the time and had to work solely to pay for the injection and/or rely on family members. This person was able to secure ODSP and a drug card and was still receiving injections during the project although the CTO expired. Access to psychiatrists and drug therapy seemed relatively straightforward for this group, but access to talk therapy was difficult. Two members of this

group were pursuing psychotherapy. One participant began to miss sessions due to work and had trouble reconnecting with the therapist or finding a new one. The other person engaged in talk therapy discontinued for personal reasons and was not interested in finding a new therapist. For two members of this group mental health concerns were a barrier to employment and/or education.

Spiritual health

Spiritual health was important to two of the four participants in this group. One participant preferred to practice religion alone while another spoke of a lack of access to a community where spiritual learning and practice was available.

Group Three:

Physical health

For the members of this group physical health was a concern for three participants. One participant had experienced an injury before the interviews and was receiving medical care. This injury sometimes interfered with work. Another member of this group became pregnant during the project and received incomplete medical care. However, one of the staff at PYV was supporting this individual by the end of the project good care had been secured. Good nutrition for this group was of less concern, perhaps because of the benefit, although it is difficult to ascertain due to the residency at PYV before the research project and the comparably high rate of employment among this group.

Mental health

As with the other two groups mental health was the primary concern for members in group three. Two members were seeing mental health professionals of some kind at the beginning of the project, and another sought out mental health support towards the end of the project. One member of this group reported a significant mental health diagnosis but had regular access to

treatment. The primary concern of this individual was the impact of changing medication on concentration and the ability to do well in school. The individual who sought out treatment during the project was able to resign from a difficult and stressful job to pursue therapy but had trouble finding free a therapist. While this group indeed faced mental health challenges, they fared reasonably well.

Spiritual health

Spiritual health was not reported as important to this group.

Analysis:

Access to the benefit had a moderate impact on the mental, physical and spiritual health status of the third group. Beyond likely improved access to good nutrition, one individual was able to resign from a job to pursue treatment. A participant not receiving the benefit had to forgo treatment for both physical and mental health for work while another had to spend a considerable amount of money traveling to a treatment facility which causes financial hardship.

A sense of community involvement and acceptance

While the community set out community involvement and acceptance as an important factor in high-quality independent living, it was not a theme that regularly emerged in the interviews. While some participants reported feelings of isolation isolated due to long work hours, long commutes, poverty, and, in one case, for reasons of culture, others reported having friends in similar circumstances that offered a sense of fellowship and support. Occasionally the youth volunteered at PYV/SHIP, but by and large, these youth were preoccupied with trying to survive. The benefit had no marked impact on community involvement and acceptance as the money went towards necessities or educational resources. It is not uncommon for young people who are working and going to school to have lower levels of community involvement.

Conclusions

Overall the benefit aided the recipients in pursuing and sustaining a quality of independent living higher than those who did not receive the benefit. The benefit had a significant impact on success in the areas of housing, employment, and education/training, a moderate impact in the area of health and little to no impact on community involvement and acceptance.

In the area of housing, the benefit improved affordability, security, and safety as well as autonomy over where to live. It allowed one individual to move out of unsafe and unaffordable housing into a safe and more affordable unit. The benefit allowed another participant to pay off rental arrears due to unemployment and avoid the eviction process. The third and fourth participants did not experience immediate housing insecurity, but the benefit allowed these two people to cope better with increases in rent in one case, and unpredictable employment in both cases.

These experiences are markedly different from members in groups one and two who did not receive the benefit. Two participants had to move immediately due to insecure housing, but owing to low incomes and long wait times had few options and experienced substantial stress. One moved in with a family member, and another was looking for a landlord who would wave first and last months' rent when the project ended. A third participant not receiving the benefit moved suddenly due to a change in financial status and ended up living with a family member and a fourth participant stayed in an unsafe area as they could not afford to move.

In the area of employment and income, the benefit provided additional financial aid which facilitated two members leaving jobs that were not supporting their education goals. Both found new jobs. A third participant receiving the benefit left a job that was negatively impacting his/her mental health status and sought treatment. The fourth participant put off finding work to focus on a full-time post-secondary education program.

In the area of education and/or training, the benefit facilitated the continuation of higher levels of education. None of the participants receiving the benefit discontinued their education.

Conversely, three of the five participants enrolled in education or training programs and not receiving the benefit dropped out of school in favour of work. Two other members of groups one and two had not finished high school but were focussed on working instead of obtaining a diploma.

For the participants with health concerns, the benefit had a moderate impact. One participant receiving the benefit was able to resign from a stressful work situation and pursue an intensive two-week course of treatment before returning to the labour market.

The youth who have lived at PYV/SHIP are equipped with the skills required to find housing, employment, and co-ordinate with income support programs and other social services to obtain the necessities of everyday life and pursue good health. The participants in this project are intelligent, compassionate, and endlessly resourceful; they are real experts in the area of social services, and they know how to survive. However, PYV/SHIP is interested in helping young people thrive, not just survive, hence the comprehensive wrap-around approach to service provisioning.

What this study reveals is that to thrive in independent living youth need economic security and the opportunity to complete high school and post-secondary training. That is, in today's economy, youth need the time to pursue education and training to acquire the skills that will afford them economic security. This finding is congruent with larger studies on socio-economic status, youth homelessness, physical and mental health and education referenced throughout the report. Youth who do not have family supports, or other substantial economic and social resources, often find themselves in a catch-22. The youth need to work but do not have the skills typically offered by post-secondary education and training to be hired on in secure well-paid jobs. At the same time, they cannot pursue education or training as they have to work to survive.

For youth who have experienced homelessness and/or the risk of homelessness, the challenges of finding good employment and pursuing education and/or training are often complicated by substantial mental health concerns. It would be a tall order for any person to look for safe,

affordable and secure housing, pursue or enroll in higher levels of education or training and find work. Mental health concerns add a significant barrier to finding the employment and education or training necessary to high-quality independent living.

While living at PYV/SHIP youth have access to low-rent and other economic supports like food staples, transportation aid, free laundry and lunch programs. These economic supports remove some of the financial burden associated with high rents and low paying jobs, giving residents one year to find good jobs and look for safe, adorable and secure housing. Also the youth are provided with individualized supports around mental and physical health, education and training, money management and employment supports as well as income support workers who help with the often arduous process of coordinating and learning how to maintain OW and ODSP. These comprehensive supports give the youth one year to address health concerns, to find work, to find safe, secure and affordable housing, and to work towards higher levels of education.

The supports are in place, but putting together all of these elements for a high-quality of independent living is a great deal of work. While the aftercare program at PYV offers continued support and access to all the wrap around services except low rent, former residents often lack the time and resources required to access these services given the transit costs, long commutes to and from work or school and irregular shift work.

Given the unique barriers in the areas of employment that offers a living wage, access to housing and access to education/training experienced by youth who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness, 364 days is simply not enough time at PYV/SHIP. Most of the participants were successful in one or two areas, but more time in a wrap-around program is needed if they are to put in place all of the elements for a successful transition to high-quality independent living.

Even providing youth with a small benefit for one year substantially improved their quality of life and ability to maintain independent living. Financial support, however, is not enough. These four youth, as well as all the youth involved in the project, continued to seek out supports in the areas of housing, education/training, employment and income, and health and were often frustrated by the lack of options, long wait lists and substantial transit costs associated with

accessing these services. Longer periods of access to on-site services would address many of these frustrations.

Recommendations

Given the marked impact of the benefit, the research team developed the following recommendations going forward:

PYV/SHIP offer a more flexible and individualized timeline of residency up to either 18 or 24 months.

While more time would require more staff and programming resources and more housing space, more time would further extend PYV's responsive, flexible, permanent and preventative housing-first style services. A flexible time period is also recommended because not all the youth involved in the project felt that more time at PYV would have been helpful. Flexibility recognizes that the trajectory and desires of each participant are different.

A pilot project providing a more flexible and longer period of residency for the next group of incoming residents

Such a pilot project would allow PYV/SHIP to further assess the impact of more time that this study proposes is essential to obtaining and sustaining independent living.

Specific attention to and more specialized programs for newcomer youth, youth who experience racial oppression, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, LGBTTTTPQ youth and female youth

PYV/SHIP embraces a diverse understanding of good health and quality of life as it supports inclusion, combats stigma and celebrates diversity. Youth who face additional social marginalization due to ability, sexuality, ethnicity and/or sex and gender identity need an array of supports not always available in the broader social services system. PYV/SHIP, with its focus on individualized systems of support, can continue to support all youth and contribute to a broader network of services that meet the expressed needs of youth with diverse identities.

Wider research project into the efficacy of strict time-limited transitional housing for youth in the GTA

Now that this study has been completed it would be useful to work with PYV/SHIPs partners, community members and service users and providers to do comparative research across youth transitional housing services/models. This would allow greater insight into the successes and barriers present throughout the youth transitional housing system in the GTA.

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Appendix A: Participant profiles

Participant	Benefit	Months @ PYV	Work	Income b/f tax/month	Housing/month	Education/Training	Health	Interviews Attended of 6
1	No	8	FT	\$2500	Room \$401	Grade 11-NCE	Workplace strain (physical)	5
2	Yes	12	FT, PT	\$2000, then OW	Bachelor subsidized \$581	Some PSE-NCE	Workplace strain (physical and mental), Depression	6
3	No	12	UE, FT, UE	OSAP, then \$2000, then OW	Room \$350	Some PSE-Discontinued	Depression	5
4	No	12	UE, PT X 2	OW then \$100-\$600/cheque and OW FT found, not started	Bachelor subsidized \$425	No HS- pursued training-discontinued	Addiction (recovery) Other mental health concerns NS	6
5	No	12	UE	OW then ODSP	Bachelor subsidized \$425	Enrolled in HS	Mental health concerns identified as significant, not specified	5

6	Yes	12	Almost FT, then FT	\$2000	One bedroom RGI \$111 then \$630	Enrolled in apprenticeship	Previous injury, depression	5
7	No	7-8	PT, found FT, not started as of last interview	OW and irregular pay from PT work	Free youth shelter	College diploma completed, accepted to new program-did not attend	None	3
8	No	8	UE	OSAP then OW then ODSP	Room \$550	Some PSE-discontinued	Mental health concerns related to trauma	6
9	Yes	12	UE	ODSP	Room \$550 the one bedroom \$750 then bachelor (co-op)\$629	PSE-Enrolled	Mental health concerns identified as significant	6
10	No	12	UE, then PT, then UE with day jobs	ODSP	Room \$421	Training program completed	Mental health concerns identified as significant	6
11	Yes	12	PT, then, UE, then Cash jobs, then PT	OW and irregular PT work	One bedroom \$785, lives with spouse	Completed high school during project	None	6
12	No	6 *will return	UE	OW	Apartment w/ roommate \$475/m each	Grade 9	Depression and other NS	2

Legend:

PT-part-time UE-Unemployed
FT-Full-time PSE-Post-secondary education
NS-not specified NCE-Not currently enrolled

Appendix B: Consent Forms

Project Title: One more year? An assessment of the impacts of an additional year of housing benefit for residents within SHIPs Peel Youth Village Program.

Research Team:

Tobin LeBlanc Haley (Research Consultant)

Cory O’Handley (SHIP)

Lesley Nagoda (SHIP)

Lina Termini (PYV/SHIP)

Contact information: Removed for report

What is this form for?

This form asks if I can interview you for a research project that is being done by Peel Youth Village (PYV) and Support Housing in Peel. I want to learn about your experiences living at PYV. Below is a written informed consent form that gives me permission to interview you and use the information you share with me in my research project. **Your identity will remain anonymous.**

What is this research about?

This research project explores whether an additional year of housing support (defined as a housing benefit of \$400 per month) impacts the quality of life and success for youth in the areas of employment, education, activities of daily living (ADLs), and social engagement as they transition to independent living. It also examines the wider social context in which PYV operates (i.e. what is the composition of the larger community in terms of race, gender, sexuality, sexual identity, family composition, disability, income, employment, education and housing?). And, if the

opportunities and programs offered to the Acorn neighbourhood and the residents of PYV reflect the different groups, service needs and wants of this community.

What will we ask you to do?

You will be asked to take part in 6-7 interviews over the course of the next year. You will be paid \$35 dollars per interview and all transit costs will be covered. There is another group of interview participants who are receiving \$400 per month as a housing subsidy. If you live in PYV right now you are not getting this as your housing is already being provided. If you are one of the interview participants who has transitioned out of the residential program, you are not receiving the \$400 per month. Because this project aims to see if an extra year of housing subsidy has a measurable impact of quality of life and success of youth, we need to talk to and compare the experiences of the 4 people who are getting it and some of the many people who have to go without it. This \$400 is being provided by research dollars and not through an existing income or housing support program.

What are possible risks/discomforts for you?

We do not think you will experience any discomfort or risks. However, anytime someone is asked about their housing situation, the services they consume/provide, their past experiences or their struggles/success there is the potential for feelings of anxiety, insecurity, sadness, distress and anger. Furthermore, you might be worried that any information provided or critiques of PYV might jeopardize access to programs or relationships with other people in the community. That is why we keep your identity confidential to the extent provided by law and provide you with a list of free services outside the PYV community you can access if you are feeling upset, worried, angry etc.

What are the benefits of this research?

Because we are engaging with staff, residents and neighbours in the project design, the final report will be a reflection of the goals, struggles and successes of the community. This collaborative grassroots approach to research ensures that the experiences and knowledge of all relevant participants (including research participants) will be reflected in the research process and the final report. This final report will reflect the PYV community and SHIP/PYV can use this report in discussions with community members and partners as well as the broader community of governmental and non-governmental service providers and policy makers. This report will contribute to the pool of knowledge about the successes and challenges experienced by youth in their transition to independent living

What are the benefits for you?

One of the research goals is to make sure that **your experiences are at the centre of this project**. This research project offers you the opportunity to provide researchers with information and to be actively involved in designing the assessment parameters.

Your participation is completely voluntary. What does that mean?

It is up to you if you want to participate in this research project or not. Should you decide to volunteer you may also refuse to answer particular questions without telling me why or withdraw from the study at any time. Should you withdraw from the study we will ask if we can use the interview data

we have collected, should you refuse all associated data that has been collected will be immediately destroyed. Should you withdraw from the study you will still be provided with the transit costs and \$35. Your decision not to volunteer, not to answer certain questions or to withdraw from the study will not influence how you, or other residents, will be portrayed in this research nor will it affect how your relationship with PYV, SHIP or the Region of Peel nor will it impact your ability to access services from PYV, SHIP or any other service providers now or in the future.

Confidentiality: Read how I will protect your identity.

All interviews will be recorded. While I am recording the interview, I will use a small tape recorder that will be visible to you throughout the interview and you will be **clearly informed as to when it is turned on and off**. You may be quoted anonymously in the final report. You will be given a chance to review all interview transcripts we produce so you can see the information we have collected and correct any mistakes. You will also be invited to a final report presentation and hard copies will be made available.

Only Tobin LeBlanc Haley will be conducting the interviews. The transcripts of these interviews will be anonymized by LeBlanc Haley before they are shared with the research team. The research team (Cory O’Handley, Lesley Nagoda and Lina Termini) may see the transcripts as they are involved in analyzing the research, but all identifying information will be removed. Similarly, should an audio recording be shared (only with the three people names above) Leblanc Haley will ensure that you have not stated their name and/or erase that part of the recording prior to sharing it with the rest of the research team.

All information you supply during the research process will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication resulting from the research. Your data (information about you) will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet and/or on a password protected computer. All data will be stored in the manner outlined above until all written works resulting from this project have been published. After this all data will be destroyed through shredding and deleting. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Can I interview you?

I, _____, consent to participate in “One More Year”, a research project conducted by Supportive Housing in Peel and Peel Youth Village. I understand the parameters of this project and I want to participate. I understand interviews will be recorded. My signature below indicates my consent. I have received a copy of this consent/information form.

Signature
Participant

Date

Signature
Tobin LeBlanc Haley

Date

Can I quote you anonymously?

I, _____, consent to being quoted anonymously in “One More Year”, a research project conducted by Supportive Housing in Peel and Peel Youth Village. I understand the parameters of this project and I want to participate. I understand that I may be quoted anonymously (i.e. all identifying information will be omitted) in the final report and publications. My signature below indicates my consent. I have received a copy of this consent/information form.

Signature
Participant

Date

Signature
Tobin LeBlanc Haley

Date

Project Title: One more year? An assessment of the impacts of an additional year of housing benefit for residents within SHIPs Peel Youth Village Program.

Research Team:

- Tobin LeBlanc Haley (Research Consultant)
- Cory O’Handley (SHIP)
- Lesley Nagoda (SHIP)
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Contact information: Removed for report

What is this form for?

This form asks if I can interview you for a research project that is being done by Peel Youth Village (PYV) and Support Housing in Peel. I want to learn about your experiences living at PYV. Below is a written informed consent form that gives me permission to interview you and use the information you share with me in my research project. **Your identity will remain anonymous.**

What is this research about?

This research project explores whether an additional year of housing support (defined as a housing benefit of \$400 per month) impacts the quality of life and success for youth in the areas of employment, education, activities of daily living (ADLs), and social engagement as they transition to independent living. It also examines the wider social context in which PYV operates (i.e. what is the composition of the larger community in terms of race, gender, sexuality, sexual identity, family composition, disability, income, employment, education and housing?). And, if the opportunities and programs offered to the Acorn neighbourhood and the residents of PYV reflect the different groups, service needs and wants of this community.

What will we ask you to do?

You will be asked to take part in 6-7 interviews over the course of the next year. You will receive the housing benefit of \$400 per month, 35\$ per interview and all transit costs will be covered. The \$400 is to help you cover your housing expenses and will be paid to you directly through SHIP.

What are possible risks/discomforts for you?

We do not think you will experience any discomfort or risks. However, anytime someone is asked about their housing situation, the services they consume/provide, their past experiences or their struggles/success there is the potential for feelings of anxiety, insecurity, sadness, distress and anger. Furthermore, you might be worried that any information provided or critiques of PYV might jeopardize access to programs or relationships with other people in the community. That is why we keep your identity confidential to the extent provided by law and provide you with a list of free services outside the PYV community you can access if you are feeling upset, worried, angry etc.

You might also be concerned that if you want to withdraw from the project you will lose your housing subsidy. We recognize that it is your right to withdraw from the project and while we cannot provide you with the full year of housing subsidy if you decide to withdraw, we will provide you with the housing subsidy for the month you withdraw and a subsidy for the following month to ensure you can give the 60 day notice (as required by many landlords), make plans and move if necessary. You will, of course, be able to keep all honorariums that you have been given up to the point of withdraw.

What are the benefits of this research?

Because we are engaging with staff, residents and neighbours in the project design, the final report will be a reflection of the goals, struggles and successes of the community. This collaborative grassroots approach to research ensures that the experiences and knowledge of all relevant participants (including research participants) will be reflected in the research process and the final report. This final report will reflect the PYV community and SHIP/PYV can use this report in discussions with community members and partners as well as the broader community of governmental and non-governmental service providers and policy makers. This report will contribute to the pool of knowledge about the successes and challenges experienced by youth in their transition to independent living

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Your participation is completely voluntary. What does that mean?

It is up to you if you want to participate in this research project or not. Should you decide to volunteer you may also refuse to answer particular questions without telling me why or withdraw from the study at any time. Should you withdraw from the study we will ask if we can use the interview data we have collected, should you refuse all associated data that has been collected will be immediately destroyed. If you withdraw you will still be provided with the \$400 for the month you withdraw and the subsequent month, after which you will no longer receive the housing subsidy, the \$35 honorarium and transit costs. Your decision not to volunteer, not to answer certain questions or to withdraw from the study will not influence how you, or other residents, will be portrayed in this research nor will it affect how your relationship with PYV, SHIP, the Region of Peel and/or any associated groups nor will it impact your ability to access services from PYV, SHIP or any other service providers now or in the future.

Confidentiality: Read how I will protect your identity.

All interviews will be recorded. While I am recording the interview, I will use a small tape recorder that will be visible to you throughout the interview and you will be **clearly informed as to when it is turned on and off**. You may be quoted anonymously in the final report. You will be given a chance to review all interview transcripts we produce so you can see the information we have collected and correct any mistakes. You will also be invited to a final report presentation and hard copies will be made available.

Only Tobin LeBlanc Haley will be conducting the interviews. The transcripts of these interviews will be anonymized by LeBlanc Haley before they are shared with the research team. The research team (Cory O’Handley, Lesley Nagoda and Lina Termini) may see the transcripts as they are involved in analyzing the research, but all identifying information will be removed. Similarly, should an audio recording be shared (only with the three people names above) Leblanc Haley will ensure that you have not stated their name and/or erase that part of the recording prior to sharing it with the rest of the research team.

All information you supply during the research process will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication resulting from the research. Your data (information about you) will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet and/or on a password protected computer. All data will be stored in the manner outlined above until all written works resulting from this project have been published. After this all data will be destroyed through shredding and deleting. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

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Signature
Participant

Date

Signature

Date

Tobin LeBlanc Haley

Can I quote you anonymously?

I, _____, consent to being quoted anonymously in “One More Year”, a research project conducted by Supportive Housing in Peel and Peel Youth Village. I understand the parameters of this project and I want to participate. I understand that I may be quoted anonymously (i.e. all identifying information will be omitted) in the final report and publications. My signature below indicates my consent. I have received a copy of this consent/information form.

Signature
Participant

Date

Signature

Date

Tobin LeBlanc Haley

To be attached to the consent form of those receiving the housing benefit:

Dear Participant,

You have been selected to receive \$400 per month for 12 months as part of the PYV/SHIP research project *One More Year*. As you know, the purpose of this project is to assess the impact of \$400 per month housing benefit on the quality of life and success of youth transitioning into independent housing. Each month you will be given \$400 by PYV/SHIP to help with the cost of housing. This will help us measure how an additional year of housing benefit impacts you, a youth in transition. You will receive this money directly from the trustee at SHIP each month. This will be done either through the mail or face-to-face. Your first \$400 installment will be paid once you have coordinated with the trustee. At this time you will set up a payment schedule for the rest of the project.

In exchange, you will meet with the research team 6-8 times over the next year to discuss your experiences with employment, education/training, housing, activities of daily living, leisure, access to social services (for example: health, income support) and other goals, challenges and successes you may have. Aside from meeting with interviewers and discussing your experiences, there are no requirements for receiving the housing subsidy. You will be paid an additional \$35 per interview.

As you know from the consent form, these interviews are completely anonymous and voluntary. You may withdraw from the research project at any time and, as indicated in the consent form, this will have no impact on how you are portrayed in the research, your relationship with the research team and/or SHIP/PYV, or future opportunities to participate in research with the research team.

Should you decide to withdraw, you will be provided with one additional month of housing benefit to facilitate any housing changes you need to make (example, if you withdraw in May you will receive the housing benefit for May and June). The only exception is if you withdraw in December 2015 in which case you will be provided only with the final installment of the housing benefit associated with the project. The purpose of providing you with an additional month upon withdrawal is to make sure you are able to plan and give the required 60 day notice at the beginning of the month to your landlord should you need to move. Should you not attend an interview without notifying the research team and setting up an alternative date, this will be understood as an expressed desire to

leave the project. In this case you will be provided with the two months rental benefit and asked to participate in an exit interview.

If you agree to participate in this project under these conditions please sign below in addition to the large consent form.

Thank you again,

Tobin LeBlanc Haley

I, _____, understand the conditions of the \$400/ month housing benefit and agree to participate in this research project under these conditions.

_____ (Date)

Appendix C: Ethics approval



**COMMUNITY
RESEARCH
ETHICS OFFICE**

Strengthening and Supporting Community Research
Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada and Internationally

September 11, 2014

Tobin LeBlanc Haley (Research Consultant)
Peel Youth Village/Supportive Housing in Peel
3-26 Castlerview Avenue
Toronto, ON M5R 1Y9

Dear Tobin:

We are pleased to inform you that the ethical review of your research project: One more year? An assessment of the impacts of an additional year of housing benefit for residents within SHIPs Peel Youth Village Program has been completed.

Based on the changes you have made, we have determined that your research proposal is ethically sound and we agree to the use of our approval statement on any documents related to the research project, once we have had an opportunity to review your survey, interview protocols and formal agreement with those receiving the \$400 monthly subsidy. That statement reads: This project has been reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in our information, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Chair, Community Research Ethics Board, Community Research Ethics Office, {519} 741-1318.

We ask that, if you make any major changes to your research process and/or reviewed documents, you request our further review.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, thank you for using the services of the Community Research Ethics Office. If we can be of service in the future, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

Theron Kramer, Co-Chair
Community Research Ethics Board

4/12/2016

Gmail - Final documents for project

Mr. Kramer,

Thanks so much. Please find the changes attached. I highlighted them,

Happy New Year.

Tobin

[Quoted text hidden]

2 attachments

 **Demographic surevy (1).docx**
21K

 **Agreement between PYV and Participants in Group 3 (1).docx**
16K

theron.kramer@sympatico.ca <theron.kramer@sympatico.ca>

Tue, Jan 6, 2015 at 8:05 AM

To: Tobin Haley <tobin.haley@gmail.com>

Cc: Creo Admin <creo@communitybasedresearch.ca>, Laura Mastronardi <lmastronardi@wlu.ca>

Thank you Tobin for clarifying the two final documents associated with your research. We now consider our approval final, unless you make any further major changes as your project continues.

We wish you all the best with this interesting and important research.

Theron

Theron Kramer
Co-Chair, Board of Directors
Community Research Ethics Board

Phone: 519 745-1726

Cell: 519 589-4004

theron.kramer@sympatico.ca

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Date: Tue, 6 Jan 2015 08:16:44 -0500

Subject: Re: Final documents for project

From: tobin.haley@gmail.com

To: theron.kramer@sympatico.ca

[Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=119ad7d2e&view=pt&q=theron.kramer%40sympatico.ca&qs=true&search=query&th=14a7a07ba1c4a838&siml=14a...> 4/4