RE-HOUSING STREET-INVOLVED YOUTH
IN METRO VANCOUVER

by

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Abstract

Homeless youth are a marginalized and vulnerable population facing high rates of violence, sexual exploitation, mental health issues, and substance misuse. Recent evidence suggests that homeless youth in Metro Vancouver have a distinct set of needs unmet by existing housing services and supports. Through key informant interviews, this study identifies three key factors preventing youth aged 16 to 18 from becoming stably housed: 1) diminished housing supply, 2) limited access, and 3) unstable transitions. Drawing on case studies of best practices in other jurisdictions and stakeholder interviews, the study presents four alternative policy options to improve street-involved youths' housing tenures in Vancouver. The study evaluates the options and provides recommendations for action for the government of British Columbia, including considerations to facilitate implementation.

Keywords: homeless youth; street youth; supportive housing; aging out of care; transitions; social policy; housing first; service provision

Executive Summary

Urban homelessness is a growing problem in Canada that burdens provincial health, welfare, and criminal justice systems. Homeless youth present a distinct challenge to policy makers for several reasons. First, street-involved youth tend to be over-represented with marginalized groups, including Aboriginal youth, girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, and youth dealing with mental illness and/or substance misuse issues. Second, homeless youth are vulnerable while living in the street environment, with youth experiencing high rates of violence, sexual exploitation, sexually transmitted disease, suicide, and pregnancy. Third, while the majority of adults enter into homelessness because of low incomes and lack of affordable housing, homeless youth usually enter into a state of homelessness because of family conflict, disruption, and/or abuse. Youth homelessness has a significant detrimental effect on youths' long-term health and employment outcomes, diminishing youths' human, social, and economic capital and making youth more susceptible to homelessness later in life.

To assist policy makers in developing effective policies to re-house street-involved youth in British Columbia, this study explores why homeless youth aged 16 to 18 in Metro Vancouver do not become stably housed. Using key informant interviews with youth service providers, government managers, policy analysts, and non-profit funders, I identify three main barriers preventing youth from obtaining stable housing. These barriers are: 1) diminished affordable housing stock, due to a high demand for housing in Vancouver and inelastic supply; 2) limited access to housing because of youths' low incomes and landlord discrimination; and 3) unstable transitions to independent living because of youths' limited life skills and ineffective discharge practices for youth leaving care.

To develop policy alternatives to assist youth in obtaining stable housing, I conduct four case studies of effective practices in other jurisdictions. Drawing on these case studies and my interviews, I propose four policy options in addition to the status quo: 1) scattered-site housing with community-based supports; 2) youth-dedicated units in BC Housing buildings with case management supports; 3) congregate housing (foyers) with on-site services; and 4) extended foster care with specialized leaving care services. The study uses consistent criteria and measures to evaluate the policy options, including effectiveness, cost, stakeholder acceptability, and ease of implementation.

Based on my policy analysis, I recommend that the provincial government pursue three complementary options to strengthen Metro Vancouver's current continuum of housing, income, and service supports. Scattered-site housing is a relatively low-cost, easy to implement option that provides higher-functioning youth with an opportunity to gain the skills necessary to live independently. Foyers provide intensive services suitable for higher needs youth and garner a high degree of support from a wide range of stakeholders. Because the construction of foyers depends upon not-for-profit leadership and coordination, foyers are also relatively easy to implement. These benefits offset foyers' higher capital costs because of new housing construction. Finally, the third proposed option, allocating youth units in BC Housing buildings, is an effective 'stop-gap' measure by which the province can begin re-housing youth while foyer housing is constructed. The study concludes with a discussion of three factors that would facilitate policy implementation: strategic political commitment, youth centred practice, and accountability mechanisms.

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1: Introduction

Despite the efforts of federal, provincial, and municipal governments across Canada, homelessness continues to be one of the most pressing issues facing policy makers today. While traditional approaches to homelessness have tended to focus on the needs of single men, evidence suggests that Aboriginal people, families, seniors, women, and people with mental health and/or substance misuse issues are in need of specialized housing services and support (Frankish, et al., 2005; SPARC BC, et al., 2008; Condon and Newton, 2008). Within this context, homeless youth are increasingly recognized as a population with unmet housing needs (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). This research examines youth homelessness in Canada with a focus on Vancouver's street-involved[1] youth population aged 16 to 18. In examining the distinct characteristics of homeless youth in Canada and their challenges in becoming stably housed, this study contributes to the growing body of research providing evidence-based solutions to homelessness.

Rigorous national data identifying the extent of youth homelessness in Canada is seriously lacking. Difficulties in adopting a universal definition of homelessness, defining a consistent age range for youth, and in enumerating 'hidden' youth have yielded inconsistent estimates (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). Despite these challenges, Metro Vancouver's most recent point-in-time homeless count found 270 unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 to be homeless, representing 10% of the enumerated homeless population (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). Marginalized groups are often over-represented among homeless youth, including Aboriginal youth (SPARC BC, et al., 2008), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth (Smith, et al., 2007; Raising the Roof, 2009; De Castell et al., 2002), homeless girls and

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[1] This study uses the term 'street-involved' to encompass both 'absolutely' and 'relatively' homeless youth, terms that are defined in section 2.2.

youth dealing with mental health and substance use issues (Eberle, et al., 2007). Homeless youth are vulnerable, experiencing violence, sexual exploitation, and risks to their sexual health at higher rates than the general homeless population (Kelly and Caputo, 2007; CMHC, 2001). Pathways into homelessness include histories of family conflict and disruption; physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; and low educational attainment (Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Eberle, et al., 2007; McLean, 2005; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009).

Homeless youth present a challenging problem because they are in a transitional stage from childhood to independence. Unlike adults, the majority of whom enter into homelessness from a state of independence, youth enter into homelessness from living situations in which they were dependent upon either adults or the state to provide for their care and support (McLean, 2005). This transitional stage to adulthood carries additional vulnerabilities for homeless youth, many of whom have limited human, financial, and social capital reserves to draw upon during their transition (PRI, 2004; MCFD, 2000). While few longitudinal studies have followed cohorts of street-involved youth to confirm their higher risk for homelessness in later life, US studies have found that approximately one fifth of homeless adults were first homeless as children and youth (Robertson and Toro, 1998), a finding that is supported by qualitative research in Canada (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). These facts suggest that in the absence of successful interventions, youth homelessness is a path to chronic adult homelessness.

The experience of homelessness during youths' transitional stage to adulthood interrupts their social, educational, and emotional development. Canadian researchers have documented an extensive range of detrimental effects associated with low educational attainment, including reduced lifetime productivity, decreased health and wellbeing, and increased likelihood of engagement with the criminal justice system (Hankivsky, 2008). Within this context, improving youths' educational attainment and employment outcomes are important policy objectives for provincial decision makers aiming to reduce social service costs and ensure youths' life-long

productivity and wellbeing. Recent research has shown that individuals' housing status has an amplifying effect on the achievement of these policy goals. Housing can undermine or enhance health and educational outcomes, depending on its stability and quality (Frankish, et al., 2005; Patterson, et al., 2008; Kraus, et al., 2005; Culhane, et al., 2002). Housing has a stabilizing influence, fostering what some researchers have termed a 'virtuous circle' of wellbeing in which improvements in housing, education, health, and employment serve to reinforce each other (Wade and Dixon, 2006). This stabilizing influence is likely to garner the greatest return for street-involved youth, who are less entrenched in street environments than homeless adults and so are more likely to achieve significant educational and employment gains. By prioritizing stable housing as a prime objective on the policy agenda, policy makers can mitigate the influences of socio-economic inequalities and provide youth with a solid foundation upon which youth can build a more productive future.

The research goals of my study are to examine the scope and causes of youth homelessness in Vancouver and to identify policy responses to stably house street-involved youth. While previous studies have focused on why youth become homeless and their experiences of street life (Caputo, et al., 1997; Miller, et al., 2004), less information is available on the barriers youth face in exiting street life. My research seeks to fill this gap and to apply my findings to formulating and assessing policy solutions.

The study proceeds in the following way. In section two, I review the problem of youth homelessness in Canada, including the methodological challenges in estimating the extent of youth homelessness, common characteristics and vulnerabilities of street-involved youth, and antecedent risk factors of becoming homeless. Section three examines previous research findings as to challenges facing street-involved youth in obtaining stable housing in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. In section four I review existing government policies in British Columbia and the service delivery model of housing, income, and supports as it pertains to street-

involved youth in Metro Vancouver. Section five discusses my research methodology and study design. In section six I present my research findings on factors preventing street-involved youth aged 16 to 18 from becoming stably housed in Vancouver. Section seven examines case studies of effective policies and programs that have addressed these barriers in other jurisdictions. In section eight I draw upon my research interviews and case studies to propose four alternative policy options to the status quo. Section nine outlines the criteria and measures I use to evaluate the policy options, which is conducted in section ten. The study concludes with my policy recommendations and considerations to facilitate policy implementation.

2: Background

The following section provides an overview of the state of research on homeless youth in Canada, situated within trends among street-involved youth populations in the US and the UK. I begin with a brief overview of the growth of homelessness in Canada. I draw from the literature to examine methodological approaches used to measure youth homelessness, describe the common characteristics of street-involved youth populations, and identify vulnerabilities specific to youth populations. The section concludes with a discussion of pathways into youth homelessness.

2.1 Growth of Homelessness in Canada

Over the last ten years homelessness and lack of affordable housing have emerged as urgent public policy problems facing Canadian governments. Rising housing costs, low vacancy rates, lack of federal and provincial investment in new social housing, condominium conversions, and urban population growth have combined to create a severe lack of affordable housing in most urban areas in Canada (Snow, 2008; Condon and Newton, 2008). The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) estimates 12.7% of Canadians are in 'core housing need' (CMHC, 2009b).[2]

Affordability stress disproportionately impacts low-income Canadians and renters. British Columbians fare slightly worse than the national average with 223,700 households (15.8%) found to be in core housing need in 2001, comprising 31.4% of all renters and 8.3% of

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[2] Core housing need is a standard developed by the CMHC to measure affordability, adequacy, and suitability of housing. Adequate housing refers to the condition of the household with regard to major repair, and suitability is measured according to National Occupancy Standard requirements. CMHC considers a dwelling affordable if the renters or owners spend no more than 30% of their before-tax income on shelter costs (CMHC, 2009b).

all homeowners (CMHC, 2006). CMHC's most recent Rental Market Survey reports that the vacancy rate for purpose-built apartment rental housing in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area was 1.9%, reflecting a 1% increase in vacancies over the previous year, but still below the provincial average of 2.3% (CMHC, 2009a:1). Average apartment rental rates in the Vancouver CMA have continued to become more expensive, with the average rental rate of a bachelor apartment increasing to $755 in 2009 from $735 in 2008 (CMHC, 2009a:6), a rate which is double the shelter allowance of $375 for single persons on income assistance (Condon and Newton, 2008). Combined with other social factors, lack of affordable housing has resulted in increasing numbers of low-income Canadians forced into a state of homelessness (Snow, 2008; SPARC BC, et al., 2008). The Social Planning Council of British Columbia's (SPARC BC) 2008 point-in-time homeless count enumerated 2,660 homeless people in the Metro Vancouver region, representing a 137% increase from 2002 (SPARC BC, et al., 2008).

The growing homeless population also increases demand on British Columbia's over-extended health care system. Canadian researchers have identified housing as a social determinant of health, along with early childhood education, food security, education, and income (Bryant, 2003). As the cost of housing increases, individuals and households often have fewer resources to allocate to food, resulting in long-term chronic conditions such as malnutrition (Friendly, 2008). Homelessness itself has a direct negative impact on health, including increased mortality rates and a range of health conditions from tuberculosis to respiratory diseases, arthritis or rheumatism, high blood pressure, fungal infections and skin infestations because of crowded shelter conditions (Frankish, et al., 2005). Research indicates that in Metro Vancouver, the overall health of the homeless population is worsening over time. From 2005 to 2008 the number of homeless people in Metro Vancouver reporting more than one health condition jumped by 81% (SPARC BC, et al., 2008).

Among the absolutely homeless population, researchers consistently find much higher rates of mental illness and substance misuse than in the general population (Frankish, et al., 2005; Patterson, et al., 2008). Sixty-one percent of the Metro Vancouver homeless population self-reported a health problem with addiction and 33% reported a mental illness (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). Researchers note that the street environment often exacerbates pre-existing mental health conditions (Frankish, et al., 2005). Reviews of cost-effectiveness studies of housing and support for people with mental illness and substance addictions in Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK suggest that providing individuals with permanent housing and supports can significantly reduce the burden on public sector services, including hospitals, shelter services, and correctional facilities (Patterson, et al. 2008; Culhane, et al., 2002). A 2001 study conducted for the Government of British Columbia estimates that homeless people in BC use 33% more public services than those who are adequately housed (Eberle, et al., 2001).

2.2   Defining Youth Homelessness

The problem of homelessness in Canada is effectively understood as a continuum, ranging from 'absolute homelessness' to 'relative homelessness' (Condon and Newton, 2008). The United Nations uses these terms to better define homeless populations (CMHC, 2001). Absolute homelessness refers to those who do not have access to safe and affordable housing and who may be living on the street or using temporary emergency shelters. Relative homelessness refers to those who live in unsafe, unsuitable, and unaffordable housing such as rooming houses, hotel rentals, or other accommodation where their housing tenure is insecure (Snow, 2008). Relatively homeless populations can include people who are termed the 'hidden' or 'invisible' homeless: those who do not have access to their own housing, but who temporarily stay with families or friends, often termed 'couch surfing' (CHMC, 2001; SPARC BC, 2003; Auditor General, 2009).

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In contrast to relative and absolute homelessness, stable housing is a concept used by researchers to signify a state of tenured, secure housing (SPARC BC, 2003; Kraus, et al., 2005). For the purpose of this study, I define stable housing as a state of housing in which the individual is not in core housing need and has been in a stable living situation for a year or more (Caputo, et al., 1997).

Researchers use a variety of terms to capture the different characteristics of homeless youth, including "runaways, curbsiders, throwaways, missing children, street youth and youth at-risk" (Kelly and Caputo, 2007: 727). Just as there is a continuum of homelessness, researchers and practitioners note that there is also a range of youth involvement in the street lifestyle, leading some studies to broaden their focus to the street-involved youth population, which can include both absolutely homeless and relatively homeless youth (Smith, et al., 2007; Rachlis, et al., 2009; Czapska, et al., 2008; Karabanow, 2008; Wingert, et al., 2005; McLean, 2005; Miller, et al., 2004; Robertson and Toro, 1998). Researchers also define the age cohort of youth in varying ways. Studies based on the more narrow legal definition of youth from ages 12 to 18 examine the characteristics of the younger street-involved population, the majority of whom become street-involved between the ages of 13 and 14 (Smith, et al., 2007; Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Wingert, et al., 2005). Other studies define youth to include individuals up to age 25 to encompass the experiences of older youth, including those who have 'aged out of care' (Caputo, et al., 1997; CMHC, 2001; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009).

Following previous planning studies conducted in Vancouver, this study uses the term 'street-involved youth' to refer to youth aged 16 to 18 who are either living on the street or significantly involved in street life and the street environment and who do not have a permanent place to call home (SPARC BC, 2003; Eberle, et al., 2007; Karabanow, 2008). The report uses the terms street-involved youth and homeless youth to encompass the range of youth experiencing absolute and relative homelessness in Vancouver.

2.3   Estimating the Street-Involved Youth Population

One of the most consistent challenges facing researchers is determining the extent of youth homelessness in Canada. As with other marginalized populations, obtaining a comprehensive census of street-involved youth is difficult, limiting most studies to small, non-random samples, and so reducing the ability to generalize from results (CMHC, 2001; Raising the Roof, 2009; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Cross-study comparisons are also difficult because consistent definitions are lacking. In the United States, researchers have developed large-scale national studies designed to determine an annual prevalence rate of youth homelessness (Robertson and Toro, 1998). In comparison, Canadian researchers have tended to use two main methods: point-in-time homeless counts and estimates based on the number of youth using shelters or youth services (Kelly and Caputo, 2007)[3]. Both approaches have methodological challenges.

Point-in-time counts are widely understood as undercounts, because they focus on individuals who are either sleeping outside or in shelters, transition houses, or safe houses within a particular period (SPARC BC, et al., 2008; Condon and Newton, 2008; Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Frankish, et al., 2005). This method over-represents absolutely homeless individuals and undercounts relatively homeless individuals (Phelan and Link, 1999; Robertson and Toro, 1998; Kidd and Scrimenti, 2004; Shapcott, 2006). People experiencing hidden homelessness are often deliberately excluded from point-in-time counts because of enumeration difficulties (Eberle, et al., 2007; Shapcott, 2006; SPARC BC, et al., 2008). Some researchers suggest that for every individual who is absolutely homeless, there are three to four people who are relatively homeless (Condon and Newton, 2008).

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[3] A recent federal parliamentary brief notes that Statistics Canada has estimated that a comprehensive count of Canada's homeless population would cost approximately $10 million. The authors note that other countries such as Australia and France have adapted the national census to enumerate residents experiencing absolute and relative homelessness (Echenberg and Jensen, 2008).

The challenges in enumerating homeless youth are compounded by the high proportion of street-involved youth who are 'hidden homeless,' namely, youth who are staying temporarily with friends or family, but who do not have a regular address where they can live indefinitely. Many youth fear apprehension by child welfare authorities or the police and avoid accessing services designed for the adult homeless population or speaking with adult researchers (Eberle, et al., 2007; Kelly and Caputo, 2007). Despite these difficulties, the most recent 24 hour point-in-time homeless count conducted in Metro Vancouver enumerated 270 unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 on March 11, 2008 (SPARC BC, et al., 2008), representing 10% of the total enumerated population of 2,660. Point-in-time counts conducted in 2005 and 2002 found 296 and 272 unaccompanied youth respectively (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). In comparison, a recent point-in-time count conducted in Calgary enumerated 682 youth under the age of 24 on March 14th, 2008, representing approximately one fifth of the enumerated population (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009).

Some researchers argue that despite their limitations, point-in-time counts can be used to calculate annual prevalence rates (Robertson and Toro, 1998). Annual rates are usually higher than point-in-time counts because they include estimates of the number of people who become homeless over the course of a year, but who are likely to be homeless for a shorter duration than the individuals captured in point-in-time counts (Burt and Wilkins, 2005). US researchers with the Corporation for Supportive Housing have developed comprehensive formulas to convert point-in-time counts to annual prevalence rates (Burt and Wilkins, 2005). In Vancouver, researchers with the Streetohome Foundation recently converted the estimate from the 2008 Homeless count to an annual prevalence rate of 328 youth under the age of 25 in need of housing in the City of Vancouver (Streetohome, 2010: 9), representing 0.5% of the city's youth population aged 15 to 25 (Statistics Canada, 2007b).

An alternative method to point-in-time counts is to rely on shelter and youth service usage records (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). In the City of Vancouver, consultations with youth service providers estimated that 1,600 distinct individual street-involved youth were provided with housing and support services in 2005 (Eberle, et al., 2007). As with homeless counts, service usage records fail to include 'hidden' youth who are not 'plugged into' the system. Some researchers stress that service providers face a moral hazard when estimating youth populations because results are linked to governments' allocation of resources (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). Policy makers in other jurisdictions in Canada have promoted the use of standardized Homeless Management Information Systems to standardize data collected by shelter and service providers (Begin, et al., 1999; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009), but these systems have yet to be implemented on wide scale in British Columbia (Auditor General, 2009).

Faced with these methodological challenges, researchers have begun to explore other methods to estimate the scope of youth homelessness. One approach is to estimate the number of youth at economic risk of homelessness (Eberle, et al., 2007; Condon and Newton, 2008). According to 2006 Census data, 66%, or 13,420, of youth-headed[4] households were paying 30% or more of their income on rent (Statistics Canada, 2007a). Comparatively, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) estimates that between 0.75% and 1% of all youth aged 15 to 19 are at 'high risk of homelessness independent of their families' (Eberle, et al., 2007). The 2006 Census reports that there are 137,190 youth aged 15 to 19 living in the Vancouver CMA, yielding an estimate of 1,029 to 1,371 youth at risk of homelessness in Metro Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2007b). An alternative approach is to work with provincial departments and health authorities to estimate youth discharged from various services who are at risk of homelessness, including youth discharged from hospitals due to early psychosis treatment or pregnancy, youth aging out of foster care, and youth leaving correctional facilities (Auditor

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[4] Defined in the Census as "primary household maintainer under the age of 25" (Statistics Canada, 2006).

General, 2009). Streetohome Foundation estimates that approximately 372 youth become

homeless through these avenues in the City of Vancouver on an annual basis (Streetohome, 2010:

9). Other methods include telephone surveys to determine if members of the household are

currently couch-surfing (Eberle, et al., 2009; Phelan and Link, 1999), but these methods require

large-scale national samples in order to obtain statistically valid results (Echenberg and Jensen,

2008).

The range of methodological challenges facing researchers has led some policy analysts

to argue that the goal of determining a comprehensive census of the homeless population is

'doomed to failure,' a proverbial search for an unachievable holy grail (Hulchanski, in Shapcott,

2006: 2). Similarly, in their preface to their study on street-involved youth in Calgary, the

research team argues:

> We will state at the outset that a definitive enumeration of homeless youth is
> impossible. The very nature of the issue and the contexts in which it occurs
> prohibit access to many of the young people affected. The greatest majority of
> homeless youth are hidden and many do not conform to strict mainstream
> definitions of homelessness, neither absolute, nor relative (McLean, 2005: 4).

Unlike disenfranchised adult homeless populations, some youth experiencing homelessness will

not see themselves as such, despite their extreme vulnerability and need of support. Youth who

have grown up in care and moved regularly from one housing situation to another, or youth who

experienced homelessness as children with their families, are unlikely to have a lived experience

of stable housing to compare with their current living situation (Condon and Newton, 2008;

Serge, et al., 2002). The complex nature of estimating the extent of youth homelessness suggests

that policy makers consider other aspects of the social problem, namely the over-representation of

marginalized groups among street-involved youth and the extreme vulnerability of homeless

youth populations in Canada and the US.

2.4 Characteristics of the Street-Involved Youth Population

Canadian and US studies have found that homeless youth populations tend to be over-represented by marginalized groups. Aboriginal, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, young women and girls, and youth dealing with mental health and substance use issues (Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Serge, 2006; CMHC 2001; Robertson and Toro, 1998; Novac, et al., 2002) consistently form high proportions of homeless youth populations.

CMHC's national environmental scan reports an over-representation of Aboriginal youth among street-involved youth populations in Vancouver, Edmonton, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Ottawa (CMHC, 2001: 1). In Metro Vancouver, 32% of the Vancouver homeless population enumerated in 2008 reported an Aboriginal identity, as opposed to 2% of the general population as reported in the 2006 Census (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). For youth populations, the proportion of enumerated Aboriginal street-involved youth remains high: 41% of youth under the age of 25 self-identified as Aboriginal in the 2008 count (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). The McCreary Centre Society's 2007 provincial survey of street-involved youth aged 12 to 18 found that 410 of the 762 youth surveyed (54%) identified as Aboriginal (Saewyc, et al., 2008). In comparison, only 9.8% of school-age youth in British Columbia identify as Aboriginal (Saewyc, et al., 2008). Aboriginal youth are likely to be disproportionately impacted by rural-urban transitions, as youth move off-reserve to urban environments to seek improved housing conditions and economic opportunities (Wingert, et al., 2005; Czapska, et al., 2008).

American and Canadian researchers have consistently found LGBTQ youth to be over-represented among street-involved youth (Cochran, et al., 2002; Robertson and Toro, 1998; CS/RESORS, 2001; Ray, 2006; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Wingert, et al., 2005). The 2007 McCreary study found that one in five British Columbian street-involved youth identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual in comparison to 3% of all youth in school (Smith, et al., 2007). Of concern are the higher rates of discrimination, violence, and abuse

experienced by LGBTQ youth, both in their home life and in the street environment (Smith, et al.,

2007; CCHRC, 2002; De Castell, et al., 2002; Eberle, et al., 2007; SPARC BC, 2003). Studies

have also found that LGBTQ youth are at higher risk for attempting suicide (CCHRC, 2002;

Novac, et al., 2002).

Young women and girls make up a significant proportion of the street-involved youth

population in Vancouver. While adult homeless populations tend to be over-represented by men

(SPARC, BC, et al., 2008), the gender split in the street-involved youth population tends to be

more balanced. Girls and young women accounted for 48% of the unaccompanied youth

population under age 25 during the 2008 Homeless Count (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). Some

evidence suggests that street-involved females are more likely to be located at the younger end of

the age range (Caputo, et al., 1997; Serge, 2006; Robertson and Toro, 1998), although this may be

because of the tendency of older girls to become 'hidden' homeless through their relationships

with older men, often resulting in deeper entrenchment in sexually exploitive, precarious housing

situations (Czapska, et al., 2008).

Finally, as with the general homeless population, street-involved youth populations

demonstrate disproportionately high rates of mental illness and developmental disabilities. In the

US, researchers have documented prevalence rates of serious disorders ranging from 19 to 50%

(Robertson and Toro, 1998; Cauce, et al., 2000). These findings are echoed in Canadian studies

finding youth to be dealing with a broad range of mental health issues, including "depression,

conduct disorders, trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and psychotic symptoms"

(Kelly and Caputo, 2007: 732). The Calgary Youth, Health and Street Study (CYHSS), a survey

of 355 street involved youth under the age of 25, found that 43% of youth reported a childhood

mental illness diagnosis, a rate that is 11 percentage points higher than the rate reported by

chronic homeless adults (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009). In British Columbia, McCreary's

study asked youth if they had ever been diagnosed by a health professional to have mental health

problems or cognitive disorders. One in five youth reported having been diagnosed with a learning disability, one in four having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD), and 13% of males and 32% of females reported suffering from depression (Smith, et al., 2007). These findings are echoed in early results from a pilot psychiatry outreach project running in the City of Vancouver, which reports 35% of males in the program live with psychotic illness and 31% of females suffer from a mood disorder (Mathias, 2009).

Street-involved youth are three times more likely to attempt suicide than the population of youth in school (Smith, et al., 2007). Novac and associates stress that young women and LGBTQ youth are at much higher risk of attempted suicide (Novac, et al., 2002). Youths' depression and despair is often compounded by extreme isolation; in British Columbia only 60% of female youth and less than half of male youth reported seeking help after their last suicide attempt (Smith, et al., 2007).

Many youth also report concurrent mental illness and substance misuse (Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Serge, 2006; Tarasuk, et al., 2009). Raising the Roof's recent national study, based on three research sites in Calgary, Toronto, and St. John's, found that 50% of youth are dealing with addictions (Raising the Roof, 2009). As they note, "many youth self-medicate as a tool for survival in situations, where, for example, they might need to stay awake all night to avoid being exploited. Drugs and alcohol are often used as a substitute for expensive health medications" (Raising the Roof, 2009: 14). In British Columbia, the McCreary study found that 76% of street-involved youth binge drink, as compared to 26% of the in-school youth population, and 77% of youth smoke both tobacco and marijuana. Unlike youth in school, street-involved youth also report high rates of illegal drug use, with more than two in three youth reporting some type of illegal drug used yesterday, including cocaine, mushrooms, hallucinogens, crystal meth, ketamine, heroin, and other injection drugs (Smith, et al., 2007). Similarly, the psychiatry outreach project finds that 77% of males and 69% of females referred to the program are actively

misusing substances (Mathias, 2009). Of concern is the young age at which youth report starting drug or alcohol use: one third of youth surveyed in the CYHSS reported starting using prior to age 12, while 57% reported beginning using between the ages of 12 and 15 (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009). These findings are echoed in the BC context, with one in three youth having tried alcohol before the age of 11, rising to one in two before the age of 13 (Smith, et al., 2007).

The high prevalence of mental illness, substance misuse, and developmental disabilities among street-involved youth, combined with the over-representation of marginalized and disenfranchised groups such as Aboriginal people, young women and girls, and LGBTQ youth, indicate the need for targeted services designed for a diverse youth homeless population. When considering homeless youths' vulnerabilities, the need for specific policy interventions becomes even more pronounced.

2.5 Vulnerability of the Street-Involved Youth Population

Several studies across Canada have stressed the difference in the homeless experience of street-involved youth in comparison to adults (Raising the Roof, 2009; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; McLean, 2005; Wingert, et al., 2005). Youth populations report high levels of violence and sexual exploitation, a myriad of physical and sexual health problems, and high pregnancy rates (Smith, et al., 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; Kelly and Caputo, 2007).

For many youth, violence is a perpetual condition of life on the street. Over one in two British Columbian youth report being threatened, 40% report being physically attacked or assaulted, and three out of five youth report being in a physical fight in the last 12 months (Smith, et al., 2007). In Vancouver, researchers and service providers have identified parts of Vancouver as being more dangerous for street-involved youth, especially the Downtown Eastside, where youth tend to be more isolated and less likely to live in 'street families' or groups (Eberle, et al.,

2007). In Calgary, 75% of youth surveyed in the CYHSS study reported being a victim of violence on the street, a rate 6 percentage points higher than that reported by the adult homeless population (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009). These findings are similar to the results of earlier studies: a 1992 study of street-involved youth in Ottawa found that 62% of youth had been beaten up or assaulted while on the street (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). Youth also report being physically abused by friends, romantic partners, police, foster parents, and other non-family acquaintances (Smith, et al., 2007; Wingert, et al., 2005).

Youth are also at high risk of sexual exploitation, defined as "the exchange of sexual activity for money, goods, or resources such as shelter and food" (Smith, et al., 2007: 40). In their 2003 study of 1,656 street-involved youth aged 15 to 24 the Public Health Agency of Canada found that 35% of youth had traded sex for money, cigarettes, drugs and/or alcohol, and shelter in the last three months. One in five females and 14% of males also reported having obligatory sex – defined as having sex after having received shelter, money, drugs/alcohol, or other items (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). These findings are supported by studies in British Columbia and Vancouver, reporting that approximately one in three street-involved youth have been sexually exploited (Smith, et al., 2007; Rachlis, et al., 2009). Across the nine British Columbian communities surveyed by the McCreary Centre Society in 2007, the average age that youth reported being sexually exploited was 15. Significantly, the more precarious their housing situation, the more likely youth are to have been sexually exploited (Smith, et al., 2007).

Different sub-populations have been found to be at a higher risk of sexual exploitation, depending on their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and whether they have experienced sexual and physical abuse while living at home (Czapska, et al., 2008; Robertson and Toro, 1998). A study of income generation activities among street-involved youth aged 25 and under in Toronto found that youth working in the sex trade were over-represented by Aboriginal girls and bisexual youth (Gaetz and O'Grady, 2002). In British Columbia, non-status Aboriginal youth

were more likely than status Aboriginal youth to be sexually exploited. Aboriginal youth who had experienced physical or sexual abuse were also found to be two times more likely to have been sexually exploited than their non-abused Aboriginal peers (Saewyc, et al., 2008). Young women are also often drawn into sexually exploitive situations by older men who provide shelter and protection in exchange for sex (Czapska, et al., 2008; Cauce, et al., 2005).

Street-involved youth report a comparable range of health conditions to the general homeless population, from sleep deprivation, to poor nutrition, respiratory illness, lice and skin problems (Kelly and Caputo, 2007). While youth in general report fewer health conditions than their adult counterparts (SPARC BC, et al., 2008), youth populations are at higher risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections than housed-youth, resulting from "survival sex, multiple sexual partners, inconsistent use of condoms, and injection drug use" (Frankish, et al., 2005; Rachlis, et al., 2009; Cauce, et al., 2005). As Kelly and Caputo note, "many youth report that they either do not perceive the risk as high, are unable to control the risks because they need to engage in high-risk activities to survive, or do not care. Their attitudes speak to the despair, precariousness, and difficult situations in which they find themselves" (2007: 732). Unfortunately, even when youth do seek medical attention, many youth find themselves unable to access health and dental services because of lack of acceptable identification (SPARC BC, 2003).

A significant percentage of street-involved youth are pregnant and/or parenting. In BC, 32% of sexually active homeless youth reported being pregnant or causing a pregnancy, in comparison to only 8% of sexually active youth in school (Smith, et al., 2007). In the US, 10% of homeless girls aged 14 to 17 are currently pregnant (Frankish, et al., 2005), while 48% of Calgary youth reported having been pregnant or causing a pregnancy (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009). Thirteen percent of BC street-involved youth are parents, 38% of whom report that their children are living with them (Smith, et al., 2007).

2.6   Pathways into Homelessness

Canadian researchers have identified a number of antecedent factors linked to youth homelessness, including: family violence and disruption; histories of physical and sexual abuse; family histories of poverty and/or homelessness; and low educational attainment (Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; Raising the Roof, 2009; CMHC, 2001; Caputo, et al., 1997; Kidd, 2003).

Research from Canada, US, Britain, and Europe overwhelmingly finds family violence and disruption as a key determinant of youth homelessness (Serge, 2006; Robertson and Toro, 1998; Kelly and Caputo, 2007; CMHC, 2001). Family histories include experiences of conflict, psychological, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect (Kidd, 2004; Caputo, et al., 1997). Sixty-one percent of BC street-involved youth report witnessing family abuse; one in four report physical abuse by their fathers, and one in five report physical abuse from their mothers (Smith, et al., 2007). McLean notes that family conflict, abuse, and neglect act as "push factors," which, combined with the "pull" factors of street culture, substance use, and relationships with other street-involved youth, lead children and youth to become homeless (2005: 52). Despite the consistently high rates of family conflict and abuse, researchers also emphasize that not all street-involved youth are disconnected from their families: nine out of ten British Columbian youth report feeling that their mothers care about them and over two thirds feel that members of their families understood them (Smith, et al., 2007).

Interestingly, survey data from the US does not support the hypothesis that the experience of family poverty is a direct causal factor in youth homelessness; but findings suggest that family poverty may be related to more chronic or repeated homelessness among street-involved youth (Robertson and Toro, 1998). Experience of homelessness as a child is a more significant determinant: Raising the Roof's national study finds that 63% of youth grew up with inconsistent housing, and 50% report that their families had difficulty maintaining housing (Raising the Roof,

2009). Poignantly, youth who experienced homelessness as young children, or whose parents were also street-involved, often note that returning to a shelter can feel like 'coming home' (Condon and Newton, 2008: 9).

Low educational attainment and conflict with teaching staff can act as another 'push' factor to the street for youth (Miller, et al., 2004; Wingert, et al., 2005). Approximately 60 to 70% of street-involved youth across the country report having dropped out of school (Raising the Roof, 2009; Smith, et al., 2007). While conflict within the educational system can act as a determinant of street-involvement, not all homeless youth drop out of school. Evidence suggests that at least a third of youth experiencing precarious housing manage to attend school (Smith, et al., 2007). The lack of high school certification serves to compound the economic challenges facing youth, as many find themselves in low-waged, temporary working conditions, despite a commitment to working in a legal job (Smith, et al., 2007; Gaetz and O'Grady, 2002).

3: Previous Research Findings

Within the academic literature, framing the problem of youth homelessness ranges from an economic focus on housing affordability, to psychological analyses of youths' experiences of alienation, to a 'life course' approach examining the transitions to adulthood. This section provides a brief overview of each of these frameworks in order to identify potential barriers facing homeless youth from obtaining stable housing in British Columbia.

3.1 Low-Waged Work and Housing Affordability

As examined above, one of the key determinants of homelessness for the general adult population is low income and lack of affordable housing. Previous research suggests that these determinants are also key factors for youth. Studies comparing the income generation activities of street-involved youth and adult homeless populations find that the youth population has significantly less income (SPARC BC, et al., 2008). Street-involved youth are also more likely to engage in illegal activities as a source of income than their housed counterparts (Begin, 1999; Gaetz and O'Grady, 2002). A recent national study reports that 30% of youth experienced legal issues while on the street, including a variety of misdemeanors such as panhandling, loitering, and failing to pay transit fees (Raising the Roof, 2009). Importantly, researchers note that increased criminalization of income generation activities commonly engaged in by street-involved youth such as 'squeegeeing' have served to further marginalize youth (Wingert, et al., 2005). Studies have also found that the greater the degree of entrenchment in the street, the more likely youth are to engage in more severe illegal activities, including drug dealing, sexual exploitation, and theft (McLean, 2005).

Given these income constraints, many youth are faced with either pursuing shared accommodation or renting single room occupancy units. For street-involved youth, these housing options are likely to be precarious. In a recent study of shared accommodation, SPARC BC found that shared accommodation requires a fairly high developmental level of functioning to negotiate interpersonal conflict, a skill set that many youth may not have developed. They note:

> Shared accommodation provides the advantages of financial benefits, security, and companionship, but also the challenges of lack of privacy, sharing of finances especially in situations of poverty, and conflicts exacerbated by lack of interpersonal skills and dysfunctional lifestyle choices. The research found that housemate conflict was the major reason for seeking other accommodation (Condon and Newton, 2008: 22).

Alternatively youth attain low cost units in privately owned residential hotels, the majority of which are located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Primarily comprised of single room units, this housing stock tends to be in poor condition, with small units, shared bathrooms, and nominal and often pest-ridden cooking facilities (Swanson and Pederson, 2009; Eberle, et al., 2007). Illustrating the extreme affordability stress caused by the lack of supply of low-income accommodation in Vancouver, a recent hotel survey conducted in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside also found that 49% of hotel rooms rent for $425 and above, which is $50 more than the current adult income assistance shelter allowance (Swanson and Pederson, 2009). Within this context, landlord discrimination acts as a deterrent preventing youth in obtaining independent, permanent housing in the private rental market (Eberle, et al., 2007; Czapska, et al., 2008; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009).

3.2 Alienation and Street Families

Another theme common in the literature is the high level of alienation and mistrust evident among homeless youth (Miller, et al., 2004; Kidd, 2003). Youth are often isolated not only from their families, but also from their mainstream peers and the older homeless population (Miller, et al., 2004; Wingert, et al., 2005). Youth with histories in the child welfare system are

likely to mistrust institutionalized supports, including adult health and housing providers (Eberle, et al., 2007; Smith, et al., 2007; Robertson and Toro, 1998; Czapska, et al., 2008; Karabanow and Clement, 2004). In terms of experiences on the street, alienation can lead to a distrust of adult housing services, resulting in a failure to access available supports. In their survey of street youth throughout BC, Smith and associates (2007) found that 71% of BC street-involved youth aged 12 to 18 had never asked a housing worker for help. For Aboriginal youth, alienation is often compounded by the ongoing impacts of Canada's colonial history and in practice many Aboriginal youth are alienated from non-Aboriginal, adult housing service providers (Saewyc, et al., 2008). Without an entry point to housing services and supports, many youth are unable to obtain stable housing.

In the face of alienation and isolation, as well managing ongoing health conditions, many street-involved youth form social networks or 'street families' (Kelly and Caputo, 2007) to help meet their emotional and basic needs. Youth report that street families can be hierarchical and rooted in strict codes enforced through threats and violence (McLean, 2005). Street families can act as a 'pull' factor for youth to remain on or return to the street, resulting in deeper entrenchment in the street lifestyle (McLean, 2005; Karabanow, 2008; Karabanow and Clement, 2004; Kelly and Caputo 2007). Researchers in Calgary note that street families can become a barrier to permanent housing if service provision is conditional upon youths' repudiation of their street peer groups (McLean, 2005: 20). This 'tough love' approach fails to acknowledge the lived reality of many street-involved youth:

> Street culture requires members to develop behaviours that are often in opposition to mainstream norms and values. High levels of distrust, dishonesty, frequent moves, participation in illegal activities, threatening or intimidating manner, resistance to authority ... can all be seen to be adaptive behaviours in response to the context of street culture and survival in that realm ... We need to place more emphasis on the resiliency and strengths that homeless youth possess regardless of where these strengths originated (McLean, 2005: 20).

When housing support is predicated on behavioural compliance, rather than the condition of absolute or relative housing, youth are more likely to become entrenched in the street environment and less likely to access services, resulting in an ever-deepening cycle of homelessness.

3.3 Transitions to Adulthood

A 'life-course' approach to social policy focuses on the experiences of individuals as they transition between different life stages, such as leaving the family home, entering the workforce, having children, and retirement (PRI, 2004). By focusing on the experiences of different populations as they undergo different life course traditions, policy analysts can identify potential policies to provide people with the resources to make these transitions successfully. In the general population, youths' transition from the childhood home to an independent living situation is a gradual process that lasts several years. Youth tend to go through several cycles of leaving and returning to their parental home prior to achieving independence. A variety of factors, including rising costs of post-secondary education and shifts in the demand for unskilled labour, cause youth in Western societies to reside longer in their family homes than in previous generations (Munro, et al., 2005; Wade and Dixon, 2006). The average age of home-leavers in Western societies is twenty-two, with many youth continuing to be financially dependent on their families well into their late twenties (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Munro, et al., 2005).

One of the effects of the fragmentary nature of youth transitions is that youth are becoming more vulnerable. A study of youth leaving home in the UK and Europe notes:

> As transitions become less bounded by established patterns, particularly around the time of leaving education and entering the labour market, young people have more opportunities to write their own scripts, but also face increasing risks of become marginalized (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005: 22).

From a life course perspective, childhood and adolescence are periods where individuals build up reserves of social and human capital, which are 'drawn down' over the course of their lives (PRI,

2004). In comparison, 'high-risk' youth have limited financial, human, and social capital reserves to draw upon, resulting in a lessened capacity to successfully transition to adulthood (MCFD, 2000; Serge, et al., 2002). While many street-involved youth display ingenuity and resilience in meeting their basic needs while on the street (Wingert, et al., 2005), the majority of street-involved youth lack experience in a range of mainstream life skills, including budgeting, grocery shopping, cooking, and relationship skills (Eberle, et al., 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; Rashid, 2004). For previously street-involved youth, the pressures of managing an independent household for the first time without support can result in conflict with private landlords, leading some youth to return to the more familiar street environment (Eberle, et al., 2007; Wingert, et al., 2005).

Youth who leave child welfare or child protection services at an early age are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless. The over-representation of street-involved youth with a child welfare background has been documented in numerous studies in the UK, US, and Europe (Serge, 2006; Robertson and Toro, 1998; Serge, et al., 2002; Wade and Dixon, 2006). In 2003 a national survey found that 40% of street-involved youth across Canada had been in foster care (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003). Although Canada has no data on the rate at which youth leaving care become homeless (Eberle, et al., 2007), US studies have found that 10 to 30% of former foster care youth experience at least one night of absolute homelessness (Rashid, 2004).

Stein (2006) argues that in stark contrast to the general youth population, the majority of British youth leave institutionalized care between the ages of 16 and 18, in a process of transition that is 'both accelerated and compressed' (274). Similar studies in Canada and the US have documented that youth who prematurely 'age-out of care' are often discharged into tenuous or precarious housing (Eberle, et al., 2007; Robertson and Toro, 1998; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; Auditor General, 2009; Echenberg and Jenson, 2009). Without the prolonged financial and social support that most youth receive from their families, care leavers experience

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increased barriers in successfully navigating a path towards adulthood (Munro, et al., 2005;

Serge, et al., 2002). As Serge and associates (2002) note:

> The arbitrary nature of youth leaving care at a certain pre-determined age does not necessarily reflect the age at which a youth is developmentally ready to exit, and in no way replicates the experience of leaving the family home. The inflexibility of the care system to serve the needs of youth who have aged out or voluntarily exited care either prematurely or upon reaching the age of majority is often cited as a factor in poor outcomes generally, including homelessness (4).

A similar phenomenon has been identified in the BC context. The Office of the Auditor General

of British Columbia's 2009 report on homelessness notes that comprehensive discharge planning

for youth in care is seriously lacking. The Auditor General identifies this as a key weakness of

the provincial system, along with hospital and correctional discharge practices. The report

emphasizes that managing transition stages for homeless and at-risk populations is a crucial

aspect of protecting the government's earlier investment, without which the cycle of

homelessness is likely to be perpetuated. The report concludes by recommending "that

government strengthen its approach to preventing homelessness by taking steps to ensure that

people leaving health care services, child protection, and correctional facilities are not homeless

upon their release" (Auditor General, 2009: 36). In comparison, jurisdictions in both the US and

the UK have introduced legislation recognizing the special housing needs of youth leaving care

(Munro, et al., 2005; Wade and Dixon, 2006; Courtney, et al., 2007; Peters, et al., 2009).

4: Current Policies and Programs

Metro Vancouver's response to youth homelessness is guided by a range of federal, provincial, and municipal policies that inform the types of services and supports available to youth in need. This section summarizes key policy initiatives and reviews the types of housing, income, and support services available to street-involved youth in Metro Vancouver.

4.1   Policy Initiatives

British Columbia currently has no provincial or national strategy to address youth homelessness. As a result, the youth aspect falls under the framework of general homelessness strategies on the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, as well as under children and youth protection strategies developed by the provincial children's ministry.

4.1.1   Homelessness Partnering Strategy

The lack of federal investment in social housing since the early 1990s is well documented (Hulchanski, 2002; Condon and Newton, 2008). Nevertheless, as a result of pressure from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other organizations, in 1999 the federal government introduced the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). Through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), the federal government allocated funding for emergency shelters and support services for homeless populations. Under SCPI, approximately $25 million annually was allocated to the Greater Vancouver Region from 2000 to 2007 (Condon and Newton, 2008). In 2007, again in response to public debate and dialogue, the federal government replaced SCPI with the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), an initiative operating under a similar

framework to SCPI.[5] Since 2007, approximately $12-15 million has been allocated annually under HPS to Metro Vancouver.

4.1.2 Housing Matters

Released in 2006, *Housing Matters* comprises the current provincial strategic vision to provide safe, affordable housing to all British Columbians (MHSD, 2009a). As such, the strategy informs the directions of the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and forms the basis of the Ministry's service plan (MHSD, 2009b). *Housing Matters* outlines six strategies designed to address issues of housing and homelessness with four strategies targeted at reducing absolute and relative homelessness: "1) The homeless have access to stable housing with integrated support services, 2) BC's most vulnerable citizens receive priority for assistance, 3) Aboriginal housing need is addressed, 4) Low-income households have improved access to affordable rental housing" (MHSD, 2006).

The original strategy explicitly defines the term "vulnerable citizens" to include individuals with low-incomes needing support to live independently, "most often" including seniors, people with physical disabilities or mental illness, those with drug and alcohol addictions as well as women and children fleeing abuse. The strategy states that vulnerable citizens "may" include youth who face barriers in accessing private market housing (MHSD, 2006). BC Housing recently introduced a new measure designed to track the longer-term tenancies of individuals (MHSD, 2009b), but MHSD does not evaluate the housing tenures of youth as a specific outcome measure.

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[5] The HPS website summarizes the program goals as follows: "The HPS works to prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada through: investments in transitional and supportive housing through a housing-first approach; support to community-based efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness; partnerships between the federal government, provinces, and territories; and collaboration with other federal departments and agencies" (Government of Canada, 2009).

4.1.3 Strong, Safe and Supported

The BC Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) released *Strong Safe and Supported* in 2008, a provincial strategy developed primarily as a response to the recommendations of the *Hughes Review*, an independent review conducted in 2006 (MCFD, 2009). The strategy aims to "place a strong focus on early intervention and a needs based approach to supporting and protecting vulnerable children and youth" (MCFD, 2009: 8). The needs of street-involved youth aged 16 to 18 are mentioned under the third pillar, which is the provision of intervention services based on youths' individual needs. The strategy highlights the Youth Agreements program as an alternative to bringing "high-risk" youth into care (MCFD, 2008). Key actions for the intervention pillar include: improving case management systems and assessment models; providing improved support for caregivers; and improving supports to children formerly in care and youth on youth agreements transitioning to adulthood (MCFD, 2008).

MCFD identifies two main indicators of success for youth in care: the number of youth with "positive educational outcomes" and the number of youth "who have a secure, safe, lifelong, positive relationship with at least one caring adult" (MCFD, 2008). MCFD does not use tenured housing as a measure of program success for youth in care (MCFD, 2008). In MCFD's 2009/10 – 10/11 service plan, the Ministry explicitly identifies working with the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to improve developmental outcomes for youth with special needs transitioning to adulthood as a key strategy under the intervention goal (MCFD, 2009). MCFD also has a legislated mandate to provide transitional support services and agreements to youth under the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act (1996)*, which provides that directors may establish support services for youth and sign youth agreements with youth under 19.

4.1.4 Regional Homelessness Plan

Established in 2000, The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) brings together 40 representatives of Metro Vancouver municipalities, service providers, community-based organizations, business, labour, and all levels of government to develop regional responses to homelessness and lack of affordable housing in the region. In 2000, the RSCH released *3 Ways Home*, a regional homelessness plan for Greater Vancouver. The plan outlines a continuum of programs for addressing homelessness: housing, services, and income supports. The plan includes a strong focus on prevention through housing and income as solutions to homelessness, while also recognizing the importance of services in ensuring stable tenancies (SPARC BC, 2003). The revised plan, released in 2003, includes a specific section addressing the needs of street-involved youth. The plan highlights the need for services throughout the region and attention to specific services for youth sub-populations (SPARC BC, 2003).

The RSCH has also reviewed proposals and administered federal funding for homelessness in the region allocated through the federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) from 2000-2007 and more recently under the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) (Condon and Newton, 2008). In June 2009, the RSCH issued a call for proposals confirming that $10 million of the funds allocated through HPS would be directed to continuing service contracts. Five million dollars of the funds will be distributed to large and small capital projects consistent with the plan's priorities of "supportive housing facilities, mental health and addiction facilities, and emergency shelter facilities" (RSCH, 2009).

4.1.5 City of Vancouver Action Plan

In 2005, the City of Vancouver released its own Homelessness Action Plan, which uses the same framework as the regional plan (COV, 2005). The plan identifies 87 recommended actions to eliminate homelessness in ten years, with three strategic priorities: reducing barriers to

accessing welfare by the homeless and providing training and employment services; developing 3,200 units of supportive housing; and increasing addictions and mental health services (COV, 2005). The plan commits the city to continuing to provide sites for social housing, financial support through its community grants programs, and facilitation of federal, provincial, and local partnerships (COV, 2005). In 2007, the City of Vancouver and the provincial government signed a memorandum of understanding to develop 12 City-owned sites for supportive housing, leading to the development of 1,200 units of social housing (COV, 2008). [6] The City also coordinates the Vancouver Youth Funders Committee, which is comprised of senior managers with the federal, provincial and city governments as well as major non-profit funders. In 2007, the committee commissioned a needs analysis for youth housing in the City of Vancouver (Eberle, et al., 2007).

4.1.6   Community Foundations

In addition to the cited government initiatives, non-profit and private funders have also begun to address the problem of youth homelessness in Vancouver. Vancouver Foundation, the largest community foundation in Canada, with an endowment of $665 million, has identified housing as its most urgent priority. In 2008, the Foundation launched the Youth Homeless Initiative, committing $750,000 over the next three years to funding initiatives addressing youth homelessness in Vancouver (Vancouver Foundation, 2009). The Youth Housing Initiative includes support for ongoing, rigorous evaluation as a part of the funding framework; as a result, Vancouver Foundation anticipates developing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of different housing interventions over the next few years.

Vancouver Foundation has also supported the start-up of the Streetohome Foundation in 2008, a new community-based foundation with the mandate of using a housing-first approach to address the needs of Vancouver's homeless population. The provincial government and the City

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[6] The City has since slated two additional city-owned sites for development.

of Vancouver matched Vancouver Foundation's initial contribution of $500,000, and Streetohome has since raised $750,000 in private donations towards supportive housing. Streetohome has recently released a 10 year strategy that includes a focus on prevention programs for youth (Streetohome, 2010). The Streetohome Board of Directors includes 25 community leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors in British Columbia, including representatives from BC Housing and the City of Vancouver.

4.2 Programs

Current responses to youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver focus on providing youth with the three elements outlined in the Regional Homelessness Plan: housing, income, and support services. I describe the range of programs available to homeless youth below.

4.2.1 Housing

Researchers, planners and service providers stress the need for a continuum of housing to address the barriers facing street-involved youth in exiting Vancouver's street environment (SPARC BC, 2003; Eberle, et al., 2007; COV, 2005). Table 1 outlines four main elements of the housing continuum.

Table 1   Housing Continuum

Type of Housing	Description
Emergency Housing	Includes emergency shelters for youth aged 19-24, safe houses for youth under 19 and transition houses for women and children leaving abusive relationships
Transitional Housing	Refers to time-limited housing, often from 30 days to 2-3 years that includes provincial on- or off-site services. Also sometimes termed second stage housing. Can be both dedicated in purpose-built housing or in scattered site apartments.
Supportive Housing	Refers to housing with ongoing supports and services, with no limit on length of stay. Can include services to residents who cannot live independently (e.g. those with severe mental health and addictions issues) Can include in dedicated purpose-built housing or in scattered site apartments or suites.
Independent Housing	Refers to permanent, affordable housing for individuals to live independently in the private market with rental subsidies.

Source: Adapted from SPARC BC (2003:15).

In their comprehensive review of youth housing options conducted for the City of Vancouver, Eberle and associates (2007) recommend a similar housing framework for youth. The authors stress that youth "do not need to proceed through the continuum in a linear fashion i.e. from emergency to transitional to supportive to independent, but can access any type of housing, depending on their readiness as determined through an assessment" (27).   Based on an inventory of current housing capacity in the City of Vancouver, the report identifies four specific gaps in the continuum: lack of cold wet-weather and low-barrier emergency beds, lack of scattered site transitional housing and housing with convertible leases, and lack of dedicated supportive housing units (Eberle, et al., 2007). With regard to overall capacity, and assuming a range of 300-700 homeless youth in the City of Vancouver, the report points to an undersupply of 130 to 530 beds/units (Eberle, et al., 2007: 53). A more recent inventory conducted by the Streetohome Foundation estimates a need for 602 additional units for youth in the City of Vancouver (2010).

An emerging pilot program designed to help youth secure housing in Vancouver's private rental market is Broadway Youth Resource Centre's (BYRC) Housing Portfolio Development

program. Based on successful housing liaison programs in other jurisdictions,[7] BYRC works in partnership with private landlords to rent units and sublet them to young persons. As part of the scattered-site model, BRYC provides youth with support services to help youth achieve and maintain independence (Streetohome, 2010). This program approach mitigates the effects of landlord discrimination while also supporting youths' desire for independence. In the first year of operations, BYRC was able to secure and maintain 19 rental units for vulnerable youth and is working over the next two years to secure and maintain 50 more (Vancouver Foundation, 2009). Opportunities for expansion may also include partnerships with non-profit housing associations and co-operatives.

An advantage of the scattered-site model is the ability to remove supports once youth have transitioned to a more adult, independent stage (Eberle, et al., 2007). Often termed a 'convertible lease,' the concept is that after transitioning to independence, the lease will transfer from the youth service provider directly to the youth, ensuring that youth are do not have to leave their home community unless they want to. Despite the success of convertible leases in other jurisdictions (Eberle, et al., 2007), Vancouver service providers have yet to see many youth transitioning into a convertible lease, with most youth choosing to transition to independent housing in other neighbourhoods or municipalities rather than remaining housed in their current housing unit. Service providers stress that the program is still in the first few years of operation and over time more youth may take up this avenue to long-term stable housing (P.I., 2009m).

4.2.2 Income Supports

The provincial government provides support for homeless youth through the Youth Agreements Program (YAP). YAP is an in-kind social program administered by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) that provides financial support and services to homeless youth aged 16 to 18. Following intake and eligibility assessment, participants sign a

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[7] See section 7.1.1 for a more detailed discussion of scattered-site supportive housing.

legal agreement with the Ministry that provides for residential, educational, or other support services, as well as financial assistance (MCFD, 2004). The program has no fixed financial rates (FBCYICN, 2008); instead, regional offices allocate budgets based on individual need and community resources available in the region (BC Statistics, 2002; Chau and Gawliuk, 2009). In 2002, the average fiscal cost was $878 per month per youth, with aggregate client expenditures at $1.8 million (BC Statistics, 2002).

Pursuant to Section 12.2 of the BC *Child, Family and Community Service Act (1996)*, Youth Agreements must include a Plan for Independence (PFI) that outlines a series of goals to be met by the youth in order to remain in the program (CFCSA, 2009). Plans for Independence can include a variety of behavioural objectives such as addressing substance misuse or mental health issues, managing basic needs such as finding and maintaining one's own home, returning to school, and/or finding employment (BC Statistics, 2002; MCFD, 2004). Once an agreement is signed, a Ministry caseworker monitors youth on a regular basis for the first 3 months of the agreement, after which the agreement is reviewed and can be renegotiated for additional six-month terms, terminating on the youth's 19th birthday (BC Statistics, 2002). Youth Agreements are terminated if the youth returns home to his/her family or if the youth fails to comply with commitments under the agreement's PFI, or if the MCFD worker determines that the agreement no longer meets the youth's needs (MCFD, 2004). Agreements are also terminated if the youth cohabits with a spouse, whether married or common-law (MCFD, 2004).[8]

Available research on the outcomes of the Youth Agreement Program suggests that the program is effective in assisting youth in obtaining stable housing. A program evaluation conducted by BC Statistics in 2002 finds that 95% of youth experienced an improvement in housing while participating in the program, with 81% of the participants maintaining improved

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[8] The MCFD Standards Manual does not explicitly address how case workers are to determine if a youth is living with a spouse. Key informants report that case workers in Vancouver tend to actively discourage youth from living with roommates to reduce the risk of being cut off from services (P.I., 2009a).

housing after leaving the program (BC Statistics, 2002). The combination of life skills training and financial support provided by the program is likely to be beneficial for youth who have the capacity to manage their own households but who need income supports in order to obtain housing in Vancouver's private rental market.

Evidence does not support that the YAP is successful in facilitating transitions to adulthood for vulnerable youth dealing with substance misuse issues, mental illness, and sexual exploitation. Jurisdictions across the province have considerable variation in caseloads; as a result, social workers with high caseloads are unlikely to have sufficient resources to build relationships with youth, which can affect the quality of outcomes. Although youth report improved outcomes while participating in the program, they experience a significant retrenchment after exiting. Some researchers argue that the termination criterion linked to attaining common-law status isolates young girls who live with older boyfriends, making them more vulnerable to abuse (Czapska, et al., 2008).

Alternatively, youth can access basic income assistance administered through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. The current maximum shelter allowance available from income assistance is $375 per month. Vancouver Coastal Health's Supported Independent Living Program provides a $400 supplement to the basic shelter allowance for youth aged 16 to 18 living with mental health and/or addictions issues (P.I., 2009g).

4.2.3 Support Services

The 2003 Regional Homelessness Plan identifies six core categories of support services needed to complement the housing continuum in order to stably house youth, including prevention, outreach, drop-in centres, health services, mental health services, and substance misuse services. Youth services provided in the City of Vancouver funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Services have been consolidated into four youth hubs located within the city

limits providing outreach services and drop-in centres. In addition two other youth service providers operate in the City of Vancouver, one providing a drop-in centre, short-term and transitional residential housing in the Downtown core, and the other assisting youth in securing limited scatter-site transitional housing in the Downtown Eastside. The Downtown Eastside currently has no designated youth service hub (Eberle, et al., 2007).

Housing inventories conducted over the past ten years suggest that elements of all six types of services are available for youth in Vancouver, but both the regional plan and the Youth Housing Options report note the lack of housing outreach workers and the lack of services for specific sub-populations, especially for youth with mental illness and substance misuse issues, Aboriginal youth, pregnant and parenting youth, LGBTQ youth, and sexually exploited youth (SPARC BC, 2003; Eberle, et al., 2007). Recently Vancouver Coastal Health's Supported Independent Living Program added 30 beds for youth dealing with addictions and pregnant and parenting youth (P.I., 2009g). The program includes off-site case management support services available eight hours a day, five days a week (Streetohome, 2010).

The Inner City Mental Health Program is an example of a pilot outreach service operating in Vancouver that is proving effective in meeting the needs of youth dealing with mental illness and/or addictions (Mathias, 2009). In a partnership among St. Paul's Hospital, Covenant House Vancouver, Watari, and Vancouver Coastal Health, this program provides clinical psychiatric services to street-involved youth in two shelter locations, a marked difference to traditional clinical practice requiring youth to attend regular appointments in hospital (Mathias, 2009). Although still in its first few years of operation, the program reports positive outcomes, with increased attendance at appointments and increased length of shelter stay past 21 days, an indicator of long-term tenure (Mathias, 2009).

Beyond BRYC's convertible lease program and Vancouver Coastal Health's Supported Independent Living Program, which does support some youth past age 19 on a case-by-case basis,

extensive transitional support services are rare in Metro Vancouver. MCFD has recently

introduced a rental subsidy program for youth aged 19 to 24. To be eligible, youth must have

been on a youth agreement up to their 19th birthday and be enrolled in an education, vocational, or

rehabilitative program (Serge, et al., 2002; MHSD, 2009a).

5: Methodology

Canadian research to date has focused primarily on homeless youths' process of engagement with the street environment and their experience of street life (Caputo et al., 1997; Miller, et al., 2004; Gaetz and O'Grady, 2002; Rachlis, et al., 2009; Tarasuk, et al., 2009). While providing an important base for understanding the scope of the problem, researchers note the paucity of literature examining youths' transitions off the street (Karabanow, 2008; Karabanow and Clement, 2004). In particular, less attention has been paid to the efficacy of alternative service interventions (Kidd, et al., 2007) or to the impact of different public policies on youth homelessness (Kidd and Davidson, 2009). My study addresses these gaps by identifying barriers and facilitators for youth as they exit the street environment and seek to obtain stable housing in Metro Vancouver. My analysis centres on three main research questions: Why do some street-involved youth aged 16 to 18 in Vancouver not become stably housed? What are effective housing and support services for 16 to 18 year olds? What governance models are effective in coordinating governments and service organizations to stably house youth? To address these questions, I use a mixed method approach including semi-structured key informant interviews and cross-unit case studies.

To identify the key barriers facing street-involved youth in obtaining stable housing in Vancouver, I draw upon 14 key informant interviews (12 individual, 2 group interviews) that I conducted for a previous study (Millar, 2009). Interviews were semi-structured and were carried out as follows:

- 2 interviews with expert researchers in the area of homelessness in British Columbia
- 5 interviews with representatives from the provincial government, health authorities, and non-profit funders

- 5 interviews with representatives from Vancouver youth service providers
- 2 group interviews with Vancouver youth workers and service providers (Millar, 2009).

I recruited interviewees through direct contact with their workplace and through informal networks. I designed the interview questions to elicit information as to the characteristics of Vancouver's youth population, barriers facing youth, effective housing practices and policies, and opportunities for partnerships among service providers, government agencies, and non-profit funders (Millar, 2009). For this study, I transcribed interviews and analyzed them using the six-step thematic analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify key factors preventing youth from obtaining stable housing in Metro Vancouver.

To provide empirical support for the proposed policy options, I use interview findings and case studies. I conducted four cross-unit case studies to identify best practices in other jurisdictions that address the barriers preventing street-involved youth from obtaining stable housing. I selected cases using a 'most-similar' approach (Gerring, 2004).

1. Supportive Housing Practices. Previous studies in Metro Vancouver have suggested supportive housing as an effective intervention in assisting youth to obtain and maintain stable housing (Eberle, et al., 2007). I examine two program models identified in the literature and interviews as promising practices: Pathways to Housing in New York City (Tsemberis, 1999; Kraus, et al., 2005) and Foyers in the United Kingdom (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006; Quilgars, et al., 2008; Streetohome, 2010).

2. Transition Policies. Different jurisdictions have introduced legislative changes to reduce the risk of homelessness experienced by youth as they transition to adulthood. I examine two policies designed to assist youth in transitioning: specialized leaving care services in the United Kingdom (Wade and Dixon, 2006; Dixon, et al., 2006) and extending foster care to age 21 in the Midwest United States (Courtney, et al., 2007; Peters, et al., 2009).

Drawing upon the interview analysis and the results of the case studies, I present four potential policy options relative to the status quo. Options are evaluated using consistent criteria and measures, including effectiveness in stably housing street-involved youth, cost, stakeholder acceptance, and ease of implementation.

I conducted a second set of semi-structured interviews to assess the proposed policy alternatives. I recruited four representatives from key stakeholder groups, including the provincial housing ministry, not-for-profit funders, and youth housing providers through direct contact and informal networks. I presented interviewees with a suite of policy options and asked them to rate each policy option according to effectiveness, acceptability, and ease of implementation. I also used an interview method called "Multiple Sorting Technique" to elicit open-ended responses (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 1987). Interviews were recorded and analyzed to identify similarities and differences among options.

Using a pragmatic research framework, my study focuses on the 'workability' of potential solutions. In his discussion of the pragmatic research approach, Morgan (2007) stresses that workability focuses on the practical consequences that are likely to follow from actual behaviours and the beliefs that 'stand behind those behaviours' (67). The pragmatic research approach is well suited to public policy research, which attempts to uncover behaviour and beliefs in an attempt to anticipate and weigh different practical consequences. Research on effective poverty reduction strategies in Canada suggests that communities that have developed a shared construction of the policy problem are effective in addressing poverty reduction (Leviten-Reid, 2006). One reason for this is that a shared understanding of the problem functions as a framework to align policy and practice, resulting in a more coordinated approach. Without a shared understanding of the problem, policy solutions are likely to be disjointed, with decision makers at odds with practitioners, or even with the beneficiaries themselves. By examining the similarities and differences among stakeholders as to their perspectives on the problem of youth

homelessness and potential solutions, I identify points of intervention and possible reforms. In this way my study contributes to the policy debate regarding youth homelessness in Vancouver and presents specific, detailed recommendations as to viable policy options.

Unlike previous research designed to examine the perspectives of street-involved youth (Caputo, et al., 1997; Wingert, et al., 2005; Miller, et al., 2004), my study does not seek direct input from current and previously street-involved youth, either as to the scope of the problem or the viability of proposed solutions. This is partially a function of limited project time and resources necessary to develop an ethical participatory-research framework to engage youth meaningfully in the research process. Without this framework, any research designed to reach street-involved youth is likely to be impacted by the very barriers it seeks to examine because of lack of rapport between youth and researchers (McLean, 2005; De Castell, et al., 2002). Instead, my study focuses on the lived experiences of youth service providers, government managers, and non-profit funders. Because of their experiences balancing policy and practice, these informants are well situated to identify policy gaps and suggest potential solutions (Kidd, et al., 2007).

Previous studies suggest that because of the 'hidden' quality of homeless youth, sound empirical enumeration is difficult to obtain (Kelly and Caputo, 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; CMHC, 2001). My study does not attempt to provide rigorous evidence on the extent of youth homeless in Metro Vancouver and instead depends upon a combination of point-in-time estimates conducted in the Metro Vancouver, survey data, and key informant interviews to approximate a range of youth in housing need. Instead of pinpointing a specific estimate, I attempt to complement existing empirical evidence with a qualitative analysis of the factors contributing to the depth of the problem of youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver.

Finally, my study focuses on models of moving youth from street to home as opposed to identifying the factors initially 'pushing' youth to the street. By focusing on youths' immediate housing needs, I shift attention away from the structural factors that create a supply of homeless

youth. In effect, my study provides insight as to the problem of youth homelessness at a point in time, an approach that favours policies that address the needs of today's homeless youth over those children who may become homeless at a later date. Because of the young age at which children become homeless, I suggest that research addressing prevention issues is likely to require a different suite of policies than those designed to assist youth in exiting the street environment, and so it lies outside of the scope of this study.

6: Barriers to Housing Youth in Metro Vancouver

Through a thematic analysis of key informant interviews with youth service providers, government managers, and non-profit funders, this study identifies a range of barriers that prevent street-involved youth from obtaining and maintaining stable housing. I have clustered my research findings into three main thematic categories: 1) diminished housing stock, 2) limited access to housing, and 3) unstable transitions. These categories are not mutually exclusive; rather, they serve to inform and sometimes reinforce each other. In the following sections, I illustrate these themes and examine their implications for policy alternatives.

6.1 Diminished Housing Stock

The first thematic cluster examines the barriers facing youth because of the inadequate supply of affordable housing in Vancouver's private rental market and shortages of social housing.

6.1.1 Inadequate Market Housing Stock

Informants point to scant affordable housing as a key driver of youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver. The combination of high demand for housing and inelastic supply results in consistently high rents in Metro Vancouver far above what youth can afford. Because of a range of factors, including high land and construction costs and the growing demand for home ownership, property developers are more likely to invest in condominium construction than to build new rental properties. Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), located in the downtown core, is one of the only areas in Vancouver in which individuals can find low-rent units. The

concentration of affordable housing stock in the downtown core means that many youth need to

relocate in order to obtain accommodation. Interviewees note:

> *They interviewed a bunch of people that they displaced [from the closure of the emergency shelters at Granville and Howe streets] and offered them SRO accommodation in the Downtown Eastside, but a lot of them were saying 'that's why I'm here in the first place; I don't want to go to the Downtown Eastside.' They had that option; it just wasn't one that they chose.* (P.I., 2009g, 493-497)

> *When you're a kid growing up, wherever your community was, you had your turf more or less. If you are a marginalized young person, you have smaller turf, you don't go to other areas for lots of different reasons... this is where they feel the safest, most secure.* (P.I., 2009m, 31-41)

> *There are kids in this neighbourhood who have unfortunately gotten into serious drug use and have mental health issues, well, they could do very well with some kind of supportive housing in this neighbourhood: this is where they're from, why not let them stay here?* (P.I., 2009c, 366-378)

These interviewees stress that street-involved youth have social networks grounded in specific

geographic locations. For youth who have experienced a narrow range of choices throughout

their lives, controlling the neighbourhood that they live in is a way of maintaining a degree of

social capital. For some youth, moving to a new area is too high a price to pay for obtaining

secure housing and exiting the street.

6.1.2   Shortages in Social Housing

For youth service providers, housing workers, and social workers providing support to

street-involved youth, the scarcity of low-income housing available in the private housing market

is aggravated by sheer lack of alternative non-market housing options, such as safe houses,

supported housing, or low-barrier emergency shelters. Since the withdrawal of the federal and

provincial government from directly funding social housing, non-market housing has not kept

pace with demand, resulting in long waitlists and priority placement for groups other than youth

(MHSD, 2006). The lack of available spaces within the social housing system means that support

workers place youth in the first available space, regardless of suitability of the type of housing to

an individual youth's situation and needs, which results in unstable tenancies.

> *There's no real planning that goes on, it's all 'what is the urgent case today and what can we do to get a roof over their heads?' So if you could have kids in foster care, and then a gradual move to independence, great, but that's not [happening], it's like crisis to crisis to crisis.* (P.I., 2009h, 350-357)

> *There isn't always going to be space somewhere, so if you plan this is what you'll do first, there isn't necessarily going to be space, so you've missed that part of the plan, so you jump to the next piece, which may not be benefitting the youth at all.* (P.I., 2009h, 358)

Interviewees repeatedly refer to the challenges in stably housing youth because of poor system

'flow' (P.I., 2009f , 399; P.I., 2009k, 218). Although there has been significant investment in

developing resource-intensive residential treatment facilities for youth dealing with substance

misuse, the social housing system lacks processes for discharging youth, resulting in a likely

return to a state of homelessness post-intervention. As one interviewee notes,

> *We have a highly expensive intervention that we've got some evidence to suggest is going to help a substantial number of people, but it's not going to help them if we then re-house them in the Downtown Eastside. Or we don't re-house them, we don't think of re-housing them.* (P.I., 2009k, 218-246)

The patchwork nature of the social housing system limits youths' ability to capitalize on the gains

achieved through time-limited housing interventions. The shortage of housing options generates

a 'two-steps forward, one step back' approach, in which youth are likely to remain under-housed

or return to a state of homelessness.

6.2 Limited Access to Housing

Youth also face additional challenges in accessing housing in comparison to the adult

homeless population. The second thematic cluster examines the ways in which low incomes and

landlord discrimination restrict youths' access to private market housing, and how current

housing policies and practices discourage youth from accessing non-market housing.

6.2.1   Low Income and Landlord Discrimination

Vancouver's street-involved youth have significantly less income than their housed counterparts, making it difficult for youth to obtain stable, secure housing units. Informants stress that low incomes are the prime driver of homelessness, as youth struggle to find affordable accommodation in Vancouver's housing market.

> *Our income assistance rates are just too low for people not to be homeless, or to live in sub-standard living, or in combinations of people that actually do not advantage them in the end. Too many people in too small spaces with animals and issues, that ultimately is not sustainable.* (P.I., 2009i, 156-162)

As in other jurisdictions, Vancouver's street-involved youth have limited education and employment experience; as a result, a majority of youth rely upon provincial income assistance programs to finance their housing.

> *A lack of income that may be the result of addiction, or it may be just a lack of your high school equivalency, or the basic requirements that would be needed for most employment. A lot of our youth don't have high school or even basic employability skills.* (P.I., 2009d, 76-81)

> *There's a couple of kids who have jobs, who are self-supporting, but that's not the norm.* (P.I., 2009m, 208-212)

The Youth Agreements Program (YAP) is a rental subsidy program administered by MCFD designed to provide youth with additional income support to obtain housing in the private market. Interviewees report a myriad of problems with the administration and design of the program, noting that the program is inconsistent and under-resourced (P.I., 2009d; P.I., 2009h). Youth service providers also observe that many youth trying to engage in the workforce are managing developmental disabilities, substance misuse, and mental health issues, all of which affect youths' ability to maintain steady employment.

> *If they haven't completed high school yet and need to, that's where they need to start. If they have never found work, meaningful work, you need to prep them for it; if they need to do volunteer work to get used to the workforce, great, that's what we'll do. And you need to accompany them, not just – 'go to this job' –*

some of the youth, because of their disorder, for lack of a better word, need a lot of support. (P.I., 2009e, 210-218)

Aboriginal youth face additional barriers to gaining employment because of the historical legacy of Aboriginal policy in Canada. Researchers note that across Canada, Aboriginal youth demonstrate significantly lower educational outcomes than non-Aboriginal youth, including lower rates of post-secondary and high school completion (Richards, 2008). Lack of educational attainment prevents Aboriginal youth from accessing jobs in the workforce, resulting in low incomes and difficulties in sustaining independent housing in the private rental market. A youth service provider describes the psychological impact of youths' educational deficit as follows:

> *When you get into the homelessness, with poverty here, the kids look so far down that they can't see up. ... Trade programs pick up a lot of the kids, and they do do well there, a lot of kids do do well. ... [But those same youth] could probably be in corporate society, you know, or be lawyers, or be doctors, or be in another whole genre, but it's hard. Let alone to look in a child's eyes and tell them 'you can be Prime Minister' one day, is to look in their eyes and say 'you can be a doctor, you can be a lawyer,' you can hardly say that to them sometimes, you know, in that situation.'* (P.I., 2009l, 426-441)

Without the long-term increased economic base guaranteed by higher education, Aboriginal youth are more likely to find themselves concentrated in lower-waged, precarious work, resulting in a more tenuous hold on stable housing.

Youth service providers, researchers, and policy analysts identified landlord discrimination as a significant barrier preventing youth from obtaining housing in the Vancouver private rental market. Street-involved youth lack credit histories, rental references, or savings for rent deposits, and as a result are unable to compete with older applicants in the rental application process.

> *For youth there's lots of issues that can be packaged into a discrimination kind of lens, including no previous rental history, difficulties securing resources for damage deposits, landlords' perceptions around the goodness of tenants, all those kinds of things. And as young people are more marginalized and appear more marginalized in all the range of ways that that might happen, that discrimination just sort of gets compounded.* (P.I., 2009k, 58-65)

Compounding the practical difficulties are property owners' negative perceptions of youth. Interviewees note that property owners often perceive street-involved youth to be a risky investment, assuming that young tenants will fail to pay rent, damage property, and leave without notice. This negative perception also extends to Ministry-supported youth; one interviewee comments that property owners generally assume that 'bad kids go with the Ministry' (P.I., 2009h, 175). Thus although marginalized youth dealing with mental health or substance misuse issues may be accessing a range of supports from MCFD, landlords' unfamiliarity with child welfare practices can further exclude youth from the private housing market.

6.2.2   Systemic Barriers to Social Housing

Because of the challenges in accessing independent housing in the private rental market, many street-involved youth are dependent upon non-market social housing to become re-housed. As examined above, the majority of BC's social housing targets the adult population, with a strong focus on seniors, families, and people with disabilities. As a result, the internal practices of BC Housing-managed properties, as well as those managed by non-profits and co-operative housing associations, tend to be adult-focussed, with scant accommodations for youth. Several interviewees noted that BC Housing's standard practice is to discourage placing youth under the age of 19 in any of their units, a practice also adopted by non-profit housing associations:

> *It's kind of ironic because we do have youth under 19 signing leases with private market landlords in [our] program but we can't get them into a BC Housing unit.* (P.I., 2009g 239-247)

> *It's like hello, but those 16 to 18 year olds are sleeping on the streets with 30 year olds!* (P.I., 2009m 283)

Informants comment that BC Housing has developed this informal practice to protect younger youth from the negative influence of adults who may themselves be dealing with substance misuse, mental health issues, or exiting the sex trade. Unfortunately, the policy forces case workers to place youth in the private market instead. As explored above, youth are vulnerable to

potential abuses in the private rental market as they are likely to be unable to access housing

without depending on an adult relationship to secure their tenancy.

The design of adult housing services also discourages youth from accessing services.

Confirming findings in the literature, interviewees describe Vancouver's street-involved youth

population as engaged in substance misuse, often to manage the effects of mental illness, trauma,

and abuse. Despite the high proportion of youth dealing with mental health or substance misuse

issues, few low-barrier housing spaces are available for youth in either shelters or supportive

housing facilities. Service providers stress that the lack of harm-reduction services forces youth

to make a restricted 'choice' between managing their addiction and obtaining housing:

> *Choice is a really hard thing to say to someone who's in psychosis, who's not really understanding what reality is based in, or whose addiction is really running their life, so that they don't feel that they have a choice, that this is what is driving them.* (P.I., 2009f, 145-149)

> *When a kid needs to access detox, it's got to be today. It can't be …'there's a waitlist and I want you to call in everyday for the next week and you'll find a place.' Because you know what, by the third or fourth day it's like 'I don't [care] and I'm fixing again. I can't do it, I can't hack it.' … At some point it's like 'enough, I can't handle the pain, give me a fix'* (P.I., 2009m, 595-604)

> *I hit it all the time where 'I want to go to detox,' but it's three days later, 'I want to get into a shelter' but I can't find them a shelter because who's going to take them in because they've used in the last day.* (P.I., 2009f, 154-157)

Religious charities administer many of the adult housing services available in Vancouver,

which can be alienating for Aboriginal youth. As a service provider comments:

> *Another thing is that most programs that they offer to - government or that the community offers, specifically the non-Aboriginal community - offers to Aboriginal people is 'I'll give you a fish' and you'll eat for today, instead of teaching them how to fish so they can eat forever. … Instead of the handout, it needs to be something different.* (P.I., 2009l, 320-329)

Researchers and Aboriginal community leaders in Vancouver stress that traditional, charity-based

service provision models echo earlier colonial practices designed to protect, civilize, and

assimilate First Nation communities (Saewyc, et al., 2008). Because of the lasting impacts of

Canada's colonial policies, community leaders emphasize the need for culturally appropriate services and alternatives to clinical models of support, rooted in a community development approach that also provides educational and vocational supports (Saewyc, et al., 2008; Raising the Roof, 2009).

In the absence of accessible independent housing on the private market and appropriate social housing, youth are dependent on their street families or relationships with street-involved adults for housing. Interviewees stress that sexually exploited youth remain hidden from service providers and government services, noting:

> *How do you support the really highly marginalized kids who are maybe very under age, and are involved in sex trade, and therefore if they're under age are sexually exploited youth, how to best support and bring those young people in?*
> (P.I., 2009k, 150-156)

Aboriginal girls, transgendered, and LGBTQ youth living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are vulnerable without a youth service hub operating in the neighbourhood (Streetohome, 2010). Some researchers and service providers have argued that responsive services must be provided to allow sexually exploited youth to follow a process of engagement and disengagement. They stress that service providers have successfully faced similar challenges in developing appropriate and effective services for battered women, especially in providing continuing support to women as they move in and out of abusive relationships (Czapska, et al., 2008; McLean, 2005; Karabanow, 2008).

6.3   Unstable Transitions

The final theme arising from the key informant interviews centres on unstable transitions to adulthood and independent living. The BC child welfare system fails to provide youth transitioning from care with adequate housing and support, exacerbating the tenuous nature of youths' development.

6.3.1 Transitioning to Independent Living

Key informants confirm that one of the distinctive differences between street-involved youth populations and the adult homeless population is that youth become homeless following a state of dependence on their families or the state, leaving them unprepared to manage an independent household. Unlike their housed counterparts, some street-involved youth have limited childhood experiences of stable housing to draw upon, while others have spent the majority of their teenage years struggling to survive in the street environment:

> *Developmentally, youth are often at least a couple years behind. So if you have a youth that is 18, you often have a maturity level that is much earlier in age – 14, 15 years old, and that's almost across the board, almost always with all of the youth, obviously because they've had a lack of caring adult relationships, and they've been traumatized. Surviving on the street doesn't teach you how to become an adult, it teaches you how to survive.* (P.I., 2009d, 39-46).

> *What is disturbing is the cycle of homelessness, that people who have grown up with parents who are homeless have a tendency to become homeless. I interviewed … a young woman in a shelter, and she said, 'I was in this shelter as a kid with my mother.' And so, for her it was like coming home in a way, she'd been there before … People in agencies are seeing youth with no skills, who have no experience of stable housing.* (P.I., 2009c, 301-314)

Many youth living on the street have never had the opportunity to manage a household and so can find it difficult to adapt to a mainstream, housed lifestyle. As in other jurisdictions, interviewees confirm that youth require support in learning basic 'life skills' to manage their own homes such as budgeting, cleaning, and cooking.

> *They've have never had their own space … they never had a home even in a group home, a room, let alone their own household that they have to clean and maintain.* (P.I., 2009f, 501-504)

More poignantly, like all adolescents, street-involved youth struggle to manage their own feelings and relationships with friends, partners, or family, and as a result can feel especially isolated when living alone.

> *There's the one youth I deal with at [a housing shelter] all the time, and his entire life was in care, in jail, in care, and now he's sleeping in a church, and*

that was my chat with him, was why did all of a sudden you come down here? And he goes, he couldn't live on his own, he didn't have the skills, nobody set him up, he was just completely and utterly lost. 'I just ended up here and I don't know how to get out, where do you start, I would love to get my own place but I don't even know how to live in my own place', so that terrifies him too. (P.I., 2009f, 492-500)

You put a seventeen year old in an apartment by themselves ... They maybe get a little bit of support from a housing worker on occasion, but otherwise they're like 'what do I do? I don't know, I'm lonely, I'm scared, I'm going to invite all my buddies over and have a party.' (P.I., 2009m, 280-281)

Feelings of isolation, combined with high anxiety about leaving behind their street families or the sudden reappearance of street friends or lovers can result in a volatile mix in which youth make choices that can have negative consequences on their housing environment, potentially leading to eviction and a return to homelessness.

Finally, interviewees note that while for some youth transitioning to adulthood is an inevitable and relatively short transition period, for some youth, especially those dealing with significant mental health illnesses and substance misuse issues, their transition to a state of independence is likely to be a long-term, lengthy process, requiring more extensive supports.

There's kind of two different categories of support for the youth. There's youth who need short-term transitional support, they need to learn the skills, but they can learn the skills to be independent. But there are some youth, maybe those with more severe mental health issues, who will need ongoing support. (P.I., 2009c, 31-50)

Youth with higher needs may take a significantly longer time to transition to adulthood. Unfortunately, for many youth, government services for homeless youth are available until the age of majority only, which disrupts their development. The following section examines the institutional factors that undermine youths' opportunities to maintain stable housing as they transition from care.

6.3.2 Transitioning from Care

Almost all housing and support services provided by the provincial government to youth
in care end once youth have attained the legal age of majority, which is 19 in British Columbia.
The end of service can be distressing for youth in care, who lose services and financial support
from MCFD after turning 19. Interviewees note that the age of majority 'cut-off' disenfranchises
street-involved youth in the middle of their transition away from street life, resulting in re-
entrenchment in the street environment. Indeed, 19 is the age at which many youth are seriously
beginning to consider transitioning away from the street environment:

> *We want be able to say, if you are still working with them on their 19th birthday*
> *on an approved plan, we need to be able to work up to 21 at least with youth.*
> *From a practice perspective, that's a key year developmentally for our youth –*
> *21. Just at the time when young people go 'oh, I got to get my[self] together' is*
> *the time we go 'yes, I'm sorry, we're not serving you anymore.'   And then*
> *they're trying to serve kids in the years when they don't want to hear it. It's not*
> *practice based.* (P.I., 2009i, 186-196)

The age of majority cut-off creates a disconnection between policy and practice: although
practice-based evidence suggests that youth can more effectively transition to adulthood if
supported to the age of 21 (Peters, et al., 2009; Wade and Dixon, 2006), current government
policy demands that support end at age 19. One service provider likened the cut-off as a 'door
waiting to slam' (P.I., 2009i, 184). Unfortunately, the impending closure of a youth's file often
precipitates a crisis in his/her life as s/he anticipates being cut-off from support:

> *I find that they distance themselves if they are aging out at 19 and they know that*
> *services are ending, they distance themselves from their workers. Or they'll*
> *create a crisis, often a crisis will come up right before, so they can't transition*
> *because they're not ready.* (P.I., 2009h, 306-310)

These comments illustrate the strong need for exit planning services to assist youth in establishing
an independent home or in enrolling in adult services. Without a strong cross-ministerial
mandate, MCFD social workers supporting youth over 19 or BC Housing managers working with
17 year olds are operating outside of their mandated job descriptions. In aggregate, the ad-hoc,

case-by-case nature of the current system results in poor hand-offs to adult services. In the worst case this results in discharge directly to the street:

> *As far as I can tell there is no coordination whatsoever between those two agencies. When a youth leaves Ministry care, officially on their 19th birthday, they lose any funding that the Ministry was giving them, or to the family that was caring for them. Often there are youth certainly who are kicked out of their homes and are left on the street with no jobs, with very little education, having a very poor history in Ministry care, and there's no way to pick it up, certainly from the government agencies, there's no one picking it up.* (P.I., 2009d, 253-261)

Underfunded and without a clear mandate, youth services in Metro Vancouver do not adequately assist youth to transition to independent living, resulting in high proportions of youth remaining homeless or under-housed.

Some interviewees also expressed concern that MCFD's Youth Agreement Program is being used as an alternative to providing comprehensive services for older street-involved youth.

> *[MCFD's] focus is on younger kids, and trying to help younger youth, and I think unfortunately within the institutional framework that they are working in and the resource environment that they are working in, they see older youth as a lost cause, which isn't true at all, they just need the right services geared towards them. But so long as they are resourced the way they are, they've got their hands tied.* (P.I., 2009d, 296-307)

Interviewees also expressed concern that MCFD has already cut the rental subsidies available through the new *Agreements with Young Adults* program by 8% (P.I., 2009a; P.I., 2009f; P.I., 2009h).

Diminished housing supply, limited access, and unstable transitions prevent street-involved youth from finding and maintaining stable housing in Vancouver. Correspondingly, policies that increase housing supply, mitigate landlord discrimination, reform housing services, and accommodate youths' transitions from care are likely to be effective in re-housing street-involved youth. In the next section I draw upon case studies of effective practices and policies in

other jurisdictions to develop four policy options to improve the housing tenures of Vancouver's street-involved youth.

7: Case Studies of Effective Policies and Programs

As explored above, a range of factors, including inadequate housing stock, limited access, and poor discharge planning contribute to the continued homelessness of Vancouver's youth. To examine policies that address issues of housing supply and access while also assisting youth in transitioning to independent living, I selected four case studies from the United States and the United Kingdom. To identify the cases, I defined the base unit as 'jurisdictions providing services to stably house homeless youth.'

I selected cases for cross-unit analysis using a 'most-similar' approach. This method focuses on cases that are similar to the base case (Vancouver) on the grounds that the characteristics that they share can be held constant, enabling the researcher to identify characteristics in which they differ as the cause of the variation (Gerring, 2004). All four cases are similar to Metro Vancouver in that they deal with urban homeless populations with high rates of mental health and substance misuse issues, including street-involved youth populations. Governments in both the United States and the United Kingdom use a similar service-provision structure to Canada, consisting of a combination of direct government services and community-based, not-for-profit supports.

The cases describe policy interventions that address the barriers of low supply, limited access, and unstable transitions. Although some pilot projects currently operating in Vancouver include elements of these programs, the interventions I identified have not yet been implemented in Vancouver. Because of the similarities to the Vancouver case, if the homeless population is more stably housed post-intervention in a different jurisdiction, the policy intervention could be effective in the Vancouver context. I selected the first two cases to examine the characteristics of interventions designed to increase housing supply and homeless peoples' access to stable

housing: 1) Pathways to Housing in New York City and 2) Foyers in the United Kingdom. The second set of cases, 3) Specialized Leaving Care Services in the UK and 4) Extended Foster Care in the US, examine policies intended to support youths' transitions to adulthood.

7.1   Supportive Housing Programs

As identified through the key informant interviews, factors preventing youth from exiting the street are lack of affordable housing stock and challenges in accessing housing. In particular, low incomes, landlord discrimination, and systemic barriers, such as abstinence-based housing programs, limit youths' access to stable housing. Recent studies conducted in Vancouver (Eberle, et al., 2007) and key informants identified supportive housing as an effective method for assisting youth in exiting the street (P.I., 2009c; P.I., 2009f; P.I., 2009g; P.I., 2009h; P.I., 2009n). Pathways to Housing in New York City and Foyers in the United Kingdom are modes of supportive housing not available for youth in Vancouver. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of these programs, followed by a more detailed description in the sections below.

Table 2   Policies to Increase Supply and Access to Stable Housing

Characteristics	Case	
	Pathways to Housing	**Foyers**
Supply		
Housing Type	Scatter-site units in private rental market, no more than 15% of a building	Purpose-built, congregate housing, average size 21-50 beds
Access		
Cost to Tenant	Subsidized by government income assistance rates	Subsidized by government income assistance rates
Landlord Type	Private, not-for-profit intermediary	Not-for-profit
Eligibility	Participants must be homeless and dealing with a mental illness	Youth aged 16-25
Available Services	Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	Psychological support services, social/leisure and IT facilities, on-site vocational training services, 24 hour staffing
Linkage of Housing and Supports	Participants must meet with ACT member once a month. Participants chose the frequency and type of services that they receive	Services linked to residence in the facility. Some foyers offer support in obtaining 'move-on' accommodation post-foyer placement.
Outcomes		
	Housing retention rate of 80 to 88% for a two-year period	Average length of stay of foyer residents is 12 months. 61% of ex-residents in full time or part time work or a combination of education and work 60% of ex-residents live in social housing, 10% in the private rentals

7.1.1   Pathways to Housing

Researchers in Vancouver and other jurisdictions have noted a gradual shift among policy makers towards a "housing first" approach to policy and planning for homeless adults, which aims to house individuals as quickly as possible in permanent housing while also providing appropriate services (Eberle, et al., 2007; Kraus, et al., 2005; Calgary Homeless Foundation,

2009). Pioneered by Pathways to Housing in New York City, Housing First approaches have been effective in addressing the needs of chronic homeless populations facing severe mental health and addictions issues (Culhane, et al., 2002; Patterson, et al., 2008).

Pathways to Housing is a not-for-profit organization that provides immediate access to housing and support services for homeless people in New York City. Pathways secures housing units in the private market by working with a network of 115 landlords. Pathways does not rent more than 10 to 15% of the units in any one building to foster community integration and to avoid housing 'ghettos' (Kraus, et al., 2005), an approach which is also termed 'scattered-site' housing. A crucial aspect of Pathways' approach is that it provides participants with direct access to permanent housing, independent of services or requirements for treatment. To be eligible for the Pathways program, participants must be homeless and dealing with a mental illness; unlike more traditional transitional housing programs, clients do not have to be in recovery to access housing, and if clients refuse treatment for substance misuse they do not lose their housing status (Kraus, et al., 2005; Tsemberis, 1999). Pathways participants pay 30% of the rent, which is usually provided through their social security income. Pathways ensures that landlords receive rents in a timely manner and intervenes if there is any threat of eviction.

Pathways is client-directed, in that the client determines the range of supports s/he needs to remain stably housed (Kraus, et al., 2005). Pathways uses Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), which is a model of case management where a multi-disciplinary team of professionals provides services to participants (Kraus, et al., 2005: 7). Social workers, psychiatrists, vocational trainers, addiction recovery specialists, and peer service workers provide a variety of services, including psychiatric and substance abuse treatment, vocational services, health care, and family reconnection (Kraus, et al., 2005). The ratio of staff to client ranges from 1:8 to 1:10, and staff are on-hand to respond to clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Over time, as clients stabilize,

Pathways withdraws the intensity of support and assists participants to access appropriate community services as needed.

Pathways to Housing has conducted extensive evaluation of its services by comparing the housing outcomes of a group of 242 Pathways clients with a control group using the existing New York Housing service system.[9] Pathways reports that 80 to 88% of its clients remained stably housed over a four-year period from 1993-1997, in comparison to 47% of those accessing the emergency housing system (Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000).

7.1.2 Foyer Model

Foyers are a youth-targeted housing intervention common in the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States (Quilgars, et al., 2008; Eberle, et al., 2007). In the UK, the central government introduced Foyers in the late 1980s as a response to growing unemployment and low youth wages. Foyers are defined as "an integrated approach to meeting the needs of young people during their transition from dependence to independence by linking affordable education to training and employment" (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006: 10). In 2007, the UK had 130 Foyers in operation supporting more than 10,000 young people annually (Quilgars, et al., 2008).

Foyers are a youth-dedicated, congregate housing approach that combines hostel-like living accommodation with on-site employment, education and training services. Although the number of beds ranges considerably among foyers throughout the UK, the majority of foyers have between 21 and 50 beds for youth. Foyers are a response to an urban problem: 97% of UK facilities are located in urban areas. Most foyers include common recreational and social space and IT facilities, and some foyers include sports or fitness facilities. Although youth can stay in

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[9] Tsemberis and Eisenberg (2000) define New York's existing service system as a 'linear residential treatment model' in which homeless individuals are required to move from outreach services to emergency shelters to substance misuse treatment and finally on to congregate housing, followed by a move to independent living (488).

foyers up to age 25, in practice the majority of youth using foyers are under the age of 21 (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006).

Over the last twenty years, the focus of foyers has shifted towards addressing housing shortages, with an increased recognition of the "stratification between youth with high-support needs and those with low-support needs" (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006: 14). The majority of foyers are staffed 24 hours a day, providing on-site social/psychological support services. Foyers also connect youth to a variety of training services, including numeracy, literacy, and pre-employment courses. Some foyers employ their own staff to provide on-site training, while other foyers contract external organizations, such as colleges, or employment organizations to provide services to youth (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006). The degree to which foyers are able to respond to the needs of 'chaotic' youth depends on the expertise and experience of staff, which ranges considerably among foyers (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006: 22).

The average housing tenancy in a foyer is 13 months (Smith, et al., 2006). Some foyers also own 'move-on' accommodation, which is independent housing available for youth to move into post-foyer, usually in adult housing facilities also owned by the foyers' parent housing association. Most housing associations see move-on accommodation as a transitional stage of housing and limit youths' tenure to 12 to 24 months (Lovatt and Whitehead, 2006). Recent studies from the UK report positive outcomes for youth following their Foyer placement (Quilgars, et al., 2008). In their longitudinal study of 126 foyer ex-residents, Smith and associates (2006) found that 50% of youth were engaged in full time or part time employment and/or pursuing educational studies a year after leaving their foyer. Seventy percent of youth had secured stable housing after their foyer placement, with two thirds of youth living in social housing and 10% renting housing in the private market (Smith, et al., 2006).

7.2 Transition Policies

Youth experiencing unstable transitions from care are also more likely to stay street-involved. The next two cases—Specialized Leaving Care Services in the UK and Extended Foster Care Services in the US—describe policies designed to increase youths' housing and employment outcomes after leaving care. Table 3 summarizes their characteristics.

Table 3   Policies to Assist Youths' Transitions

Characteristics	Case	
	Specialized Leaving Care Services	**Extended Foster Care**
Eligibility (Age)	Services available to youth until age 21, can be extended to 25 if continuing in education	Services available until age 21
Supports for Transitioning to Independent Living	Financial support provided for youth aged16-17, career planning services, personal advisor	Provides financial support to foster homes to cover room and board costs, Medicaid costs and vouchers for post secondary education and training
Legislative mandate	National *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* sets out goals and objectives for local authorities	Federal *The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* provides federal funding to cover State costs
Outcomes	64% of youth in stable accommodation 10 months after leaving care	58% of youth remaining in care to age 21 were enrolled in educational programs, 38% enrolled in college.

7.2.1 Specialized Leaving Care Services

In the United Kingdom, specialist services designed to provide youth leaving care with housing, finance, employment, and personal support have been in operation since the mid 1980s (Stein, 2006; Dixon, et al., 2006; Quilgars, et al., 2008). Similar to case management approaches, specialist teams work with youth to develop a transition plan for leaving care, linking youth to independent housing, employment, or educational services. Youth also receive additional supports after leaving care, such as a personal advisor who can provide youth with psychological/social support to the age of 21, or to age 25 if youth continue in their education.

In 2000, the UK central government standardized transition services for youth through the *Care Leavers Act (2000)*, which provided local authorities with a significant mandate to address the needs of youth leaving care. Local authorities are required to assess and meet the needs of 'all eligible young people,' provide pathway planning for each individual youth to independence that includes relevant partners, and allocate a personal advisor to each youth who is responsible for coordinating services and providing consistent support through the transition. Importantly, the local authority has full financial responsibility for all homeless youth aged 16 to 17 (Dixon, et al., 2006), including responsibility for providing housing.

Research evaluating the impact of leaving care teams finds that the new legislation has contributed to a range of positive outcomes including:

> The increased take-up of further education; ... improvements in financial support for young people provided by local authorities; the increased provision of supported accommodation; a strengthening of leaving care responsibilities, especially through the introduction of needs assessment and pathway planning; more formalized interagency work; and improved funding for leaving care teams (Stein, 2006: 275).

In their study of 106 youth leaving care in seven local authorities throughout England, Wade and Dixon (2006) found that 64% of youth were in stable accommodation after leaving care, either staying "in the same accommodation, or having made one move since leaving care" (202). Wade and Dixon note that living in stable accommodation was correlated with strong life and social skills, engagement in education, training or work, reduced substance misuse and criminal activities and a more positive appreciation of their mental health (203). For some youth, housing can be the initiating spark that creates a 'virtuous circle' of improved mental health and life skills, which in turn improves educational and employment opportunities, ultimately strengthening youths' long-term housing outcomes (Wade and Dixon, 2006: 203).

7.2.2   Extended Foster Care

Another promising practice in addressing the needs of youth leaving care is to extend the age limit for child welfare services. In the United States, the federal government has recently passed an amendment to *The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* that allows states to claim reimbursement for the costs of retaining youth in foster care until age 21. Eligible costs include payments to foster families for room and board, Medicaid expenses and educational vouchers (Peters, et al., 2009).

Initial results from the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, a longitudinal study of 732 care leavers in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, suggest that remaining in foster care until 21 is a key determinant of improved educational outcomes. The Midwest Study researchers found that Illinois youth remaining in foster care to age 21 were two times more likely to have completed a year of college than their counterparts in Iowa and Wisconsin, where youth are required to leave care at age 18 (Courtney, et al., 2007). The authors also conducted a multivariate regression to control for observed differences in baseline characteristics including gender, race, care history, mental health diagnosis, and educational histories. They found that Illinois youth were 3.5 times more likely to have completed a year of college (Courtney, et al., 2007: 4).

7.3   Case Study Best Practices

The case studies illustrate a variety of practices that have been successful in addressing the barriers of supply, access, and transitions in other jurisdictions. The barriers of low income and landlord discrimination can be mitigated either through non-profit landlord liaison services or direct housing provision in a congregate model. Evidence suggests that street-involved youth can remain stably housed when provided with a range of supports tailored to their needs. Housing first and harm reduction services can be especially effective in increasing the housing tenures of 'hard to house' individuals dealing with mental health and/or addictions issues. In comparison,

congregate settings such as Foyers can be useful in supporting youth to develop their human capital, building their social networks, life skills, and level of education. Youth can either transition to adulthood through the gradual withdrawal of supports in the scattered-site model, or through specialized transition services that assist youth in developing housing and employment plans for their lives post-care. Effective services tend to be relationship-based: programs with low case ratios and 24 hour staffing are likely to be more flexible, more responsive, and ultimately more successful in stably housing youth.

The case studies suggest that youth experience improved outcomes when their transitions from care more closely parallel the leaving-home experiences of their housed peers. When youth receive financial and social supports past the age of 18, they demonstrate longer housing tenures and higher educational outcomes. The recent results from the Midwest study indicate that support in the years immediately following the age of majority is particularly important. They further show that an initial government investment can yield significant gains in youths' productivity and lifetime earnings via increased educational attainment (Peters, et al., 2009).

Finally, the case studies also demonstrate that youth experience improved housing outcomes in jurisdictions where governments have mandated street-involved youth as a priority. Homelessness is a cross-cutting social problem impacting a variety of government departments, including health, welfare, and correctional services. In both the UK and the US, shifts in national government policies have resulted in changes to the range of youth services available at the local level and a renewed commitment to the housing, educational, and employment needs of vulnerable and marginalized youth.

8: Policy Options

Based on my literature review, key informant interviews, and case studies, I present five policy options, including the status quo, to re-house street-involved youth in Metro Vancouver. Research suggests that effective responses to homelessness include a combination of housing, income, and service supports (SPARC BC, 2003). I have also considered policies designed to facilitate youths' transitions to adulthood in order to meet the specific needs of homeless youth.

To allow for a comparative evaluation, I have designed each policy option to include a bundle of housing, service, income, and transition supports. Where possible, I have drawn from the case studies and key informant interviews as to the most likely or appropriate combination of services, varying the types of housing, income supports, and services among the proposed options. Because of this, in some options the proposed supports could be interchanged; for example the scattered-site option could include a higher intensity of support service similar to that provided in the foyer option instead of the proposed life skill training services.[10] The proposed alternatives are additions to the status quo; some options expand upon existing programs and policies, while others introduce completely new facilities and supports.

8.1   Status Quo

As I examined in section four, street-involved youth in Vancouver are serviced primarily through drop-in centres, adult emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and rental subsidies administered through the Youth Agreements Program. Additional housing and service supports are available through the BRYC pilot landlord liaison program and the Inner City

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[10] While I have chosen not to evaluate each type of housing, support services, or income supports separately to facilitate a more meaningful comparison between policy options, I discuss the possibility of alternative implementation arrangements below in section 11.

Mental Health psychiatric outreach program. The Agreements with Young Adults Program provide some opportunities for youth who have signed a Youth Agreement to access rental subsidies to the age of 25.

8.2   Scattered-site, Market Housing with Community Supports

[Scattered-site] is effective because the youth can transition out without blocking a bed for someone else. You take the services and the subsidy away and give it to someone else, who probably doesn't want to live in that unit anyway, so you've got the constant ability to turn the program over without disrupting somebody's life. (P.I., 2009g, 732-738)

Drawing on promising housing-first practices in other jurisdictions, this policy option creates youth-dedicated scattered-site housing units in townhouses, basement suites, and apartment buildings across the city by acquiring housing from individual property owners in Vancouver's private housing market. The option encourages expansion of housing portfolio development programs like the program currently operated by Broadway Youth Resource Centre as a mechanism to alleviate barriers of landlord discrimination. Youth would be linked through the program to a support worker, who would provide landlord liaison services, negotiating any conflicts between youth and property owners. Additional service supports would be provided by youth-service organizations providing life skills and pre-employment training.

The option would require a reform of the Youth Agreements income assistance program. To increase accessibility and reduce the inconsistencies generated by categorical targeting, the new youth rental subsidy program would be based solely on age and income tests. By de-linking income and service supports, this option provides youth with a greater level of control and choice over the types of services they receive, which has been an effective practice in housing other 'hard-to-house' populations. The option addresses youths' transitions to adulthood through the practice of convertible leases, which allows youth to assume full responsibility for their housing from the private landlord when they no longer require service supports. This option does not

require extensive government restructuring or reform, but rather depends upon increased

investment and expansion of existing pilot programs.

8.3 Dedicated BC Housing, Case Management Support

We need to develop some dedicated supportive housing for this population, recognizing [their] unique needs between the ages of 16 and 24. There is plenty of evidence to show that if you can invest housing and support services in that range, it is going to pay dividends later on. (P.I., 2009n, 161-167)

The second policy option proposes youth-dedicated housing through the allocation of

youth floors in current BC Housing buildings. Rent would be geared to income, as per BC

Housing placements for other populations in need. Based on the Assertive Community Treatment

(ACT) model, professional staff would provide intensive individualized supports to youth outside

regular office hours. Staff would manage low caseload ratios of 1:8 youth. Case managers would

also connect youth to appropriate life skills training, education, and employment services.

This policy option provides some transitional support to youth with high needs, such as

mental illness and substance misuse issues. If youth require long-term support, they would

remain in the BC Housing unit and adult health services would take over providing service

supports. The option would require changes to *Housing Matters* to include youth as a priority

population. In terms of services, the option expands upon Vancouver Coastal Health's existing

Supported Independent Living Program by providing more intensive case management supports.

8.4 Non-Profit Housing, One-Stop-Shop Support (Foyer Model)

There is a lot to be said for one-stop shop and a single point of access ... as opposed to taking the bus over there, and [going] elsewhere for something else. (P.I., 2009n, 221-231)

Based on the foyer model explored in the case study, this option encourages the

development of congregate housing owned and operated by not-for-profit societies or housing

associations. The provincial government would provide partial funding for construction and

operating costs; not-for-profits would use provincial funding to leverage individual and corporate donations. The housing units would be similar to hostel-like accommodation, with individual rooms and fridges but shared cooking and socializing facilities. Housing could be constructed on existing youth hub sites in the City of Vancouver or through acquisition of new land in other neighbourhoods outside of the downtown core.

The foyers would provide 24 hour staffing with a professional staff, including social workers, psychiatrists, vocational trainers, and peer support workers. Building upon the success of pilot programs like the Inner City Mental Health Program, the housing would include on-site psychiatric services. Foyer staff or contracted training organizations would provide on-site vocational or educational services to youth, tailored to their skills and abilities. The policy would also support foyers providing culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal youth, such as alternative healing models for youth dealing with substance misuse. This option provides intensive life skills, education, and employment supports with the aim of transitioning youth to independent living after a 12 to 24 month stay. Where possible, the length of stay would drive youths' transitions as opposed to the age of majority cut-off.

8.5   Foster Home Extended to Age 21, Specialized Transition Services

We are creating community in a very challenged way ... we're the doorway to multiple communities ... People need to have relationships. (P.I., 2009i, 287-292)

The final policy option proposes increased investment by the Ministry of Children and Family Development in foster home placements for youth aged 16 to 21. The option requires legislative changes to the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act,* and MCFD would act as the lead agency in driving the reforms. Instead of signing Youth Agreements, youth would be able to remain in their placements until the age of 21. I anticipate that the increased stability and long-term benefits generated through a longer placement would encourage youth currently in the system to remain in their foster placements; but in order to increase access, homeless youth who

have previously left care, or youth who have left their families as teenagers would also be able to return to a new placement. The option includes an income supplement based on current MCFD foster care rates, but MCFD would provide additional funding to youth to pursue further education. This option would also provide increased training for caregivers to support youth dealing with mental health and/or substance misuse issues.   When youth demonstrate the developmental capacity to transition to independent living, specialized leaving care teams would provide transition services, including a personal advisor mandated to remain available for youth up to the age of 25.

9: Criteria and Measures

My study uses four criteria and related measures to evaluate the proposed policy options and the status quo. The first criterion assesses the effectiveness of the options in addressing the policy goal of stably housing Vancouver's street-involved youth. The other three criteria assess the options' relative costs, stakeholder acceptability and ease of implementation. Table 4 presents a brief definition of each criterion and the measures used to assess the policy options, which I describe in greater detail below.[11]

Table 4   Criteria and Measures

Criterion	Definition	Measurement	Score
Effectiveness			
Increases Housing Supply	Does the option increase the supply of housing units available to street-involved youth?	Creates new stock Acquires existing stock Does not create new stock	High (3) Medium (2) Low (1)
Accessibility to Target Population	Are the barriers of low income, low educational attainment/employment and landlord discrimination addressed in the program design?	Addresses 3 barriers Addresses 2 barriers Addresses 0-1 barriers	High (3) Medium (2) Low (1)
Includes At-Risk Groups	Does the policy address the specific needs of 1) youth with mental health and/or substance misuse issues 2) Aboriginal youth 3) sexually exploited youth?	Includes 3 groups Includes 1-2 groups Includes 0 groups	High (3) Medium (2) Low (1)
Fosters Stable Transitions	Does the option support youths' transitions? Does the policy 1) increase youths' life skills, 2) provide coordinated discharge planning for youth in care, and 3) smoothly transfer youth to adult services if needed?	Includes 3 best practices Includes 2 best practices Includes 0-1 best practices	High (3) Medium (2) Low (1)

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[11] To formulate the measures for these criteria I have adapted a similar framework used by Borowko (2008).

Criterion	Definition	Measurement	Score
Cost			
Cost	In comparison to the status quo, what are the annual operating and amortized capital costs of the policy?	$0 - $9,999/youth $10 - $19,999/youth $20,000+/youth	High Medium Low
Stakeholder Acceptability			
Stakeholder Acceptability	To what degree is the option supported by stakeholders, including youth, service providers, government managers, not-for-profit funders, politicians and the public?	Support of 5-6 stakeholder groups Support of 3-4 stakeholder groups Support of 0-2 stakeholder groups	High Medium Low
Ease of Implementation			
Ease of Implementation	What degree of restructuring or reform is required in order to implement the policy?	Requires expansion/reform of existing programs Requires restructuring of government departments and/or intergovernmental agreements Requires legislative changes	High Medium Low

9.1 Effectiveness

Housing Supply. This sub-criterion evaluates the degree to which the proposed option increases the number of housing units available for street-involved youth. As discussed above, one of the key barriers facing youth is lack of housing supply; researchers estimate that Vancouver is currently in need of approximately 600 housing units to meet youths' needs (Eberle, et al., 2007; Streetohome, 2010). These units either need to be purpose-built or acquired from existing stock. Given the high demand for affordable housing, this sub-criterion gives the highest rating to policies that create new stock.

Accessibility to Target Population. This aspect examines whether the program design is likely to address the key factors limiting youths' access to housing: low income and landlord discrimination. Because youth are more likely to maintain long-term housing stability with

secure employment (Eberle, et al., 2007; Wade and Dixon, 2006), this sub-criterion also considers if the policy provides educational or employment supports to youth.

Includes At-Risk Groups. This sub-criterion assesses the degree to which the policy's program design considers the needs of marginalized and vulnerable youth. Through my key informant interviews I have identified three key groups needing specialized services in Metro Vancouver: 1) youth with mental health and/or substance misuse issues; 2) Aboriginal youth; and 3) sexually exploited youth.

Fosters Stable Transitions. This aspect evaluates if the policy option supports youths' transitions to adulthood and independent living. The sub-criterion assesses if the policy option includes basic life skill training and provides supports for youth as they transition from state care to independent living. Because some youth may require more long-term support into adulthood, this criterion also examines the ease of transferring youth to adult services.

The sub-criteria illustrate the trade-offs among the policy options with regard to challenges of supply, access, inclusivity, and transitions. To develop an aggregate ranking for effectiveness to compare with the other criteria, I assigned each sub-criterion rank of 'high', 'medium' and 'low' a numerical score of 3, 2, or 1. Each option scores a total of up to 12 points. Policies scoring 9-12 points rank "high", 5-8 points rank "medium," and 1-4 points rank "low." I used these scores to develop an aggregate effectiveness ranking of 'high,' 'medium,' and 'low' for each policy option, which I used in comparison with the other three criteria.

9.2   Cost

The cost criterion measures the anticipated incremental cost of implementing the program per stably housed youth. The assessment is based on estimates from the literature as to approximate annual cost, including annualized capital costs, annual operating and maintenance costs for housing, and annual cost of support services. This criterion also considers the degree to

which the cost of the policy intervention may be offset by reduced service costs such as emergency health services, shelters, and correctional facilities.

9.3 Stakeholder Acceptability

This criterion evaluates the degree to which a policy is supported by youth, service providers, government managers, not-for-profit funders, politicians, and the general public. Stakeholder Acceptability is measured by the results of key informant interviews. Interviewees were asked to rate the policy options, and I used a multiple sorting technique to elicit an in-depth evaluation of the trade-offs among the policy alternatives.

9.4 Ease of Implementation

This criterion measures the administrative ease in implementing the policy option, based on anticipated levels of multi-sectoral or inter-agency cooperation required. Policies receive a high ranking if they would expand or reform existing programs, while policies requiring extensive legislative changes or department restructuring receive a lower ranking.

10: Policy Evaluation

The five policy options are evaluated according to four criteria: effectiveness, cost, stakeholder acceptability, and ease of implementation. Assessments are drawn from my key informant interviews, case studies, and stakeholder interviews. To evaluate the trade-offs among the proposed policy options, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four representatives of stakeholder groups. Using a qualitative research method called multiple-sorting technique, interviewees were asked to identify key criteria in order to illustrate significant differences and/or similarities among policy options and to draw out richer qualitative responses.[12] Interviewees were also asked to rate each policy option on a scale of one to ten with regard to effectiveness, cost, stakeholder acceptability, and ease of implementation. The policy evaluation is thus informed by my research findings and stakeholders' responses.

Table 5 provides an overview of my policy analysis, followed by a more detailed discussion of the evaluation of the policies under each criterion. I evaluate the policy alternatives using the Goeller scorecard technique (Olewiler, 2009). This evaluation approach does not aggregate results to a single figure but instead uses visual cues to illustrate the trade-offs among policy options. In the following matrix, green indicates the best option, yellow intermediate, and red the worst of the policy options. Through my assessment, I do not intend to present a comprehensive assessment of each policy's inherent value, but rather aim to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the options relative to each other.

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[12] See Appendix C for a full list of sorts generated during the policy interviews.

Table 5   Policy Evaluation Matrix

Criterion	Status Quo	Scattered-site	BC Housing	Foyer Model	Extended Foster Home
Effectiveness	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Cost	High (inexpensive)	Medium (Moderate)	Low (expensive)	Low (expensive)	Low (expensive)
Stakeholder Acceptability	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium
Ease of Implementation	High	High	Medium	High	Low

10.1 Effectiveness

I measured effectiveness using four sub-criteria drawn from my key informant interviews and case studies. The following matrix provides an overview of the ratings of each policy option with regard to the sub-criteria.

Table 6   Effectiveness Sub-Criterion

Criterion	Status Quo	Scattered-site	BC Housing	Foyer Model	Extended Foster Home
Increases Housing Supply	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Accessibility to Target Population	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Includes At-Risk Groups	Low	Low	High	High	Medium
Fosters Stable Transitions	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	High
Score	**4**	**7**	**9**	**10**	**10**
Ranking	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**	**High**	**High**

10.1.1 Increases Housing Supply

Status Quo. As examined in section 4.2.1, the current housing system in Metro Vancouver is short approximately 600 beds for street-involved youth. Although some gains have been made in acquiring stock through Broadway Youth Resource Centre's landlord liaison program, without increased funding the status quo is unlikely to meet current need.

Scattered-site. This option has been successful in other jurisdictions, including New York City, Toronto and Calgary (Streetohome, 2010; Tsemberis, 1999) in acquiring additional housing for homeless populations in need. Some stakeholders stress that some of these gains may be because of much higher vacancy rates in other jurisdictions in comparison to Metro Vancouver (P.I., 2010c). A resourced outreach program supported by the real estate industry may motivate lower-income landlords to support the program (P.I., 2009o). To meet the full demand, property owners are likely to need additional incentives, such as density bonusing in new condominium developments, in order to participate in scattered-site housing programs.

BC Housing. Several of the key informants identify BC Housing units as a possible mode of increasing Vancouver's youth housing supply by allocating units to youth away from other populations (P.I., 2009f; P.I., 2009g; P.I., 2009m). As with the scattered-site option, the alternative is unlikely to meet the demand without renewed capital investment from the provincial or federal governments, because of BC Housing's aging stock and limited supply.

Foyers. This option is most successful in increasing housing supply because it creates new stock. An added advantage of this option is that housing stock can be located in areas outside of the downtown core throughout Metro Vancouver, where street-involved youth can remain in their own neighbourhoods.

Foster Homes. This alternative depends on MCFD to recruit new foster parents and caregivers to participate in the foster care program. As with the scattered-site option, this alternative is sensitive to the private rental market. Because individuals can easily find renters in

the Vancouver market, caregivers will likely require additional incentives to provide housing to youth. One stakeholder notes that MCFD is already experiencing shortages of foster parents (P.I., 2009b), and so this option is unlikely to meet the demand significantly.

10.1.2 Accessibility to Target Population

Status Quo. As I explore above, the status quo does not adequately address the barriers of low income, landlord discrimination, or low educational attainment.

Scattered-site. This option is designed to diminish landlord discrimination and is likely to minimize the potential for eviction, while the reformed income assistance program ensures that youth have access to a guaranteed rental income. Stakeholders were less positive that this option would provide sufficient support for youth to improve their educational prospects, noting that for many street-involved youth managing an independent home would likely take up most of their focus and time (P.I., 2009d).

BC Housing. As with other social housing programs, the mandated support for youth under this alternative would alleviate the barriers of landlord discrimination and low income. Although the option does include more intensive case management supports that could include some accompaniment to educational or employment services, as per housing first-best practices, this option does not require youth to engage in educational training in order to remain housed.

Foyers. This alternative scores 'high' by alleviating all three barriers to access. As with the BC Housing option, the provision of social housing diminishes problems of low income and landlord discrimination by transferring funding responsibilities to the operating housing association. Foyers have also demonstrated successful educational outcomes for youth in other jurisdictions (Smith, et al., 2006). Vancouver stakeholders note that some studies have found on-site vocational supports to be less effective than *in situ* training programs for adults with mental

health issues (P.I., 2009o). However, in comparison to the previous two alternatives, this option rates a ranking of 'high.'

Foster Homes. This alternative addresses all three barriers in its program design. Current MCFD allowances to caregivers and foster parents are tagged to average provincial rents ($909.25/month) and are likely to adequately meet youths' need for room, board, clothing, etc. (MCFD, 2010). Based on the case study, the combination of extended care to age 21 and additional supports for education is likely to increase youths' educational outcomes significantly.

10.1.3 Inclusion of At-Risk Groups

Status Quo. Key informants stress that the status quo is ineffective in addressing the needs of Aboriginal youth, sexually exploited youth, and youth with mental health and substance misuse issues.

Scattered-site. Although the scattered-site option is effective in housing adults with mental health and substance misuses issues, stakeholders emphasize the scant documented evidence as to the efficacy of housing-first policies for youth with similar needs (P.I., 2010c; P.I., 2010b). The relatively low level of supports is likely to be less effective for youth with severe illnesses, who need a more intensive suite of supports. This alternative focuses on placing youth in independent living, and it does not address the specific needs of Aboriginal and sexually exploited youth.

BC Housing. The Assertive Community Treatment model provides flexible, responsive services to youth and is likely to be effective in meeting the specific needs of all three vulnerable populations (P.I., 2009o; P.I., 2010b; P.I., 2010c). Low caseload ratios would allow staff to develop strong relationships with youth and to facilitate youths' connections to new communities.

Foyers. Similarly to the BC Housing model, this option uses a congregate model to provide intensive networks of support to high-needs youth, including on-site psychiatric care for

youth experiencing mental health or substance misuse issues. The effectiveness of the option depends upon the experience and training of the staff to respond to youths' needs. The UK case study suggests that quality of care can range considerably among foyers depending upon each foyer's funding arrangement and focus; for the purpose of my study, I assume the intent of this option is to care for youth with high needs.

Foster Homes. Because this option also allows for kinship placements, it is likely to be the most effective for Aboriginal youth, who can remain connected to their larger communities. Stakeholders emphasize that although the Extended Foster Home option provides the most responsive, relationship-based care to youth, the success of the option depends upon the capacity of foster home caregivers, as well as the availability of additional community supports, especially mental health services (P.I., 2010b; P.I., 2009o). Because the experience of the foster home caregivers is more variable than that of trained staff, I assume that caregivers are less suited to meet the needs of sexually exploited youth, who may need supports that are more intensive.

10.1.4 Fosters Stable Transitions

Status Quo. As explored in section 4.2.3, transition services available to youth are scant in Metro Vancouver. Although a few youth access supports through Vancouver Coastal Health's Supported Independent Living Program or through the Agreements with Young Adults rental subsidies, the quality and extent of services provided is minimal.

Scattered-site. This option facilitates youths' transitions by supporting youth to obtain the life skills needed to manage their own households. Because of the relative independence of housing and supports in this option, service providers can withdraw support services as needed, giving youth the option to maintain the unit once they have transitioned to adulthood (P.I., 2009o). Stakeholders caution that success in a scattered-site placement requires a high degree of functionality and developmental maturity to begin with (P.I., 2009g). The option does not

provide any additional supports for youth needing to transition to adult services for ongoing support.

BC Housing. This alternative also provides life skill supports to youth through the case management team. Similar to the scatter-site model, this option also allows service providers to withdraw supports while still maintaining youth in the social housing unit as required. Youth can also be transferred to adult case management services if needed.[13]

Foyers. This option provides a high degree of intensive supports to youth designed to build youths' life skills, emotional capacities, and employment opportunities over a 12 to 24 month period. This alternative does not provide youth with specific transitional services, nor include services to transition youth to adult services.

Foster Homes. Of all the options, this alternative includes the most elements to facilitate stable transitions for youth. Extending foster care until age 21 is likely to provide youth with the opportunity to improve their education and access higher paid employment. Specialized transition services assist youth in managing their exit from youth services, and personal advisors can connect older youth to adult or community services as needed.

Stakeholders emphasize that part of the challenge in providing support to transitioning youth is in the degree to which the option links housing with supports. For foyers and foster homes, housing and supports are 'interdependent' in that services are linked to 'bricks and mortar' buildings. On the one hand, these options provide youth with an incentive to engage with a high degree of service support while they are housed; on the other hand, the benefits of the

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[13] Stakeholders note practical difficulties in transitioning youth to adult services because of differences in eligibility criteria between youth and adult case management services. While youth mental health teams will support youth dealing with 'softer' mental health diagnoses such as conduct disorders or anxiety disorders, adult services are much more restricted to providing support to individuals with more extreme disorders such as schizophrenia. In practice, the differences in eligibility incentivize providers to restrict youths' access at intake, rather than requiring a youth to exit supported housing when s/he turns 19 (P.I., 2009g).

intensity of service are diminished when youth are required to move out of their housing (P.I., 2009g; P.I., 2009o).

In contrast, scattered-site and BC Housing models enable service providers to withdraw supports while still providing youth with subsidized housing. Although housing and support services are ideally 'de-linked' in these independent models, in practice governments find it politically difficult to justify providing financial subsidies to youth without also providing service supports (P.I., 2009o). Thus, youth living in long-term scatter-site placements are incentivized to over-subscribe in supports so that they can maintain their housing.

10.2 Cost

The following table presents total incremental costs per stably housed youth for each option.[14]

Table 7   Cost Criterion

Criterion	Status Quo	Scattered-site	BC Housing	Foyer Model	Extended Foster Home
Total Cost (2010 $CDN)	$0	$15,000	$27,900	$27,900	$27,231
Ranking	High (inexpensive)	Medium (Moderate)	Low (expensive)	Low (expensive)	Low (expensive)

Status Quo. Because this criterion considers costs incremental to the current system, the status quo ranks favourably with costs well below those of the other alternatives. Previous cost effectiveness studies document that chronically homeless adult populations place a high demand on government services, including service costs in health, welfare, and criminal justice systems (Culhane, et al., 2002; Eberle, et al., 2001; Berry, et al., 2003). A 2001 study conducted in BC

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[14] Estimates are based on a per-unit cost rather than a per-placement cost. Estimates thus do not include potential savings due to vacancies between placements during the year (for example when one youth leaves the program prior to another entering the program).

found that an average homeless individual incurred $15,341 ($16,259 in 2010 dollars) in provincial service costs (Eberle, et al., 2001). Other research studies document that provision of supportive housing results in a reduction of emergency and correctional service usage costs, which can offset some of the costs of providing new services. A comprehensive study based on service usage records of 4,679 homeless and formally homeless individuals in New York City finds supportive housing to be associated with a 30% reduction in service costs (Culhane, et al., 2002). The potential savings would offset the costs of the proposed options; because empirical evidence is lacking as to variations in service reductions among different types of supports, I assume that the cost savings would apply equally to each of the alternatives.[15]

Scattered-site. This option ranks favourably among the proposed alternatives because of low operating and maintenance costs and moderate support services. Based on the average monthly rent of $755 for a bachelor apartment in Metro Vancouver in 2009 (CMHC, 2009a), I estimate that the proposed youth income assistance program will cost approximately $9,000/year per youth to secure housing in the private rental market. Supported Independent Living case management services currently cost approximately $2,200/year per individual (Streetohome, 2010); I have added an additional cost of $3,800/youth to account for landlord liaison and scattered-site procurement costs.

BC Housing. The annual operating and maintenance costs per BC Housing unit are relatively low, at $5,700/year (Streetohome, 2010). I assume that although BC Housing already owns and operates the buildings, the incremental cost of this option includes construction costs to account for those individuals currently housed under BC Housing policies who would be displaced by youth. Capital costs approximate the cost of congregate housing at $9,800/year. This option provides youth with Assertive Community Treatment services, costing an additional $12,400/year (Streetohome, 2010).

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[15] Based on Eberle and associates' calculation of social service costs and using the New York reduction rate in service costs, the provincial government would save approximately $4,877 per housed youth.

Foyers. Because of the capital costs incurred through new construction, this option ranks as the most expensive of all the alternatives. Based on current construction and debt financing estimates,[16] the annual capital cost of this option would be $9,800/year. The operating, maintenance, and support service costs would be equivalent to the BC Housing option, totalling $18,100.

Foster Homes. Based on current MCFD foster care payments, the current basic housing rate for a youth aged 12 to 19 is $909.25/month, totalling an annual cost of $10,919. To account for the additional costs of providing support to high needs youth, I have also included the cost of foster payments for 'Level 2' youth, who are defined as youth with more complicated developmental needs, complex health needs and challenging behaviours that may impede the youth's daily functioning (MCFD, 2010).   The current MCFD support payment for a 12 to 19 year old Level 2 youth is $1,140/month, or $13,684. To account for the educational subsidies, I have included the average annual tuition cost for an arts student at an urban college in 2009/10, which is $2,628/student (MAVED, 2010).[17]

10.3 Stakeholder Acceptability

Table 8 assesses the anticipated stakeholder support for each policy alternative, based on my research interviews.

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[16] Streetohome estimates capital costs based on surveys by Altus Helyar, BC Housing, and Intracorp and the estimates have a range of uncertainty of plus or minus 15%. Debt financing is estimated across construction and operating phases at 5% over an 18 month construction phase and 25 year amortization period (Streetohome, 2010: 51).

[17] This is likely a conservative cost estimate because the majority of street-involved youth have not completed high school; however the case study findings discussed in section 7.2.2 indicate that youth are three times more likely to achieve high school graduation and go on to college if housed until age 21.

Table 8   Stakeholder Acceptability Criterion

Criterion	Status Quo	Scattered-site	BC Housing	Foyer Model	Extended Foster Home
Stakeholder Support	2 groups	3 groups	6 groups	5 groups	4 groups
Ranking	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium

Status Quo. The key informants interviewed for my study were unanimous in expressing their discontent with the current system. Because youth homelessness is not a high priority in public debate, the status quo is likely to be acceptable to politicians and the general public, since any investment in youth housing is likely to draw increased attention to the problem and could generate backlash from the general public.

Scattered-site. Findings from the interviews as well as previous studies conducted with street-involved youth (Eberle, et al., 2007; P.I., 2009a; P.I., 2009h; P.I., 2010b) find that initially youth prefer the independence of scattered-site housing. This option is less attractive to government managers and service providers; informants argue that in practice over time youth come to appreciate the stronger relationship-based supports available in congregate or family settings (P.I., 2010b; P.I., 2009a). Stakeholders also note that scattered-site housing is difficult for politicians to 'sell' because of the public's fear of homelessness and NIMBYism, especially with regard to decentralized social housing (P.I., 2010c).

BC Housing. Managers, non-profit funders, and service providers expressed a high degree of support for this alternative, favouring the intensity of services and opportunities for peer-support afforded by the model.

Foyers. This alternative is likely to garner a similar amount of support from practitioners, government managers, and non-profit funders as the BC Housing option because of the congregate model and range of supports. Stakeholders noted that this option might be less

attractive to politicians because of the reluctance to engage in new capital construction of social housing, especially in Metro Vancouver (P.I., 2010c).

Foster Homes. Stakeholders expressed mixed support for this alternative. While practitioners appreciate the relationship-based focus, the option requires a strategic cultural shift within MCFD, which may not be supported by government workers. As with the scattered-site alternative, extending foster care requires a more sophisticated awareness among the public as to the specific challenges facing youth leaving care. Unless constituents develop a strong understanding of the marginalized and vulnerable status of street-involved youth, politicians are unlikely to want to engage in any major legislative reforms.

10.4 Ease of Implementation

The final criterion assesses the kinds of reform required to implement the proposed alternatives.

Table 9   Ease of Implementation Criterion

Criterion	Status Quo	Scattered-site	BC Housing	Foyer Model	Extended Foster Home
Implementation Complexity	Implemented	Program Reform	Ministry Reform	Program Reform	Legislative Reform
Ranking	High	High	Medium	High	Low

Status Quo. This option in currently implemented and requires no incremental change.

Scattered-site. The provincial government could implement this option in a relatively short time frame because the option builds upon existing programs and supports. With the BRYC landlord-liaison program already in place, the province could easily stream additional resources to BRYC or other existing youth hubs to secure additional sites. The option does require some

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reform to provincial ministry practices, with the Youth Agreements Program reform being the most significant.

BC Housing. This option requires the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to incorporate responsibility for youth under the age of 19 into its housing mandate, shifting internal priorities away from other homeless populations in the absence of increased resources. The Ministry of Health, MHSD, and MCFD would likely need to develop an inter-governmental protocol to allow departments to share case management information about individual youth.

Foyers. As with the scattered-site alternative, responsibility for securing capital funding coordinating services lies primarily outside of the provincial government with the voluntary sector. A combination of provincial, federal, and private sector funding could finance capital development; existing MCFD and Vancouver Coastal Health partnerships would deliver the support services.

Foster Homes. This option requires extensive strategic coordination among provincial ministries and a significant shift in the province's current approach to street-involved youth. To extend foster care to age 21 would have significant budgetary impacts on MCFD and require a complete reorganization of Ministry priorities to shift some resources away from child protection to youth services. MCFD would also likely need to develop more extensive recruitment strategies to find appropriate foster parents. The province would also need to reform the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act (1996)* to extend the age of eligibility.

10.5 Policy Evaluation Summary

To return to the comparative evaluation matrix (Table 5) above, each criterion is shaded according to a 'traffic light' schematic, with green indicating 'best,' yellow 'intermediate,' and red 'worst.' Options are considered to 'dominate' others if they are superior on one or more criteria and no worse on others (Olewiler, 2009).

Although the status quo ranks high under the implementation and cost criteria, these gains are offset by low effectiveness and stakeholder rankings, where all the proposed alternatives dominate the status quo. Among the four remaining policy options the extended foster home is dominated by the others under every criteria; the effectiveness of the option in addressing the policy problem is offset by high costs, implementation difficulties, and moderate stakeholder support.

Among the remaining three policy options, no alternative dominates on all criteria. The scattered-site option is the least costly of the alternatives, is relatively easy to implement, and is moderately effective and agreeable to stakeholders. In a paired comparison, the BC Housing alternative demonstrates a higher degree of effectiveness than the scattered-site option and garners a greater degree of stakeholder support, but it is more difficult to implement because of the necessary restructuring of government departments. In another paired comparison, the foyer model presents similar benefits to the BC Housing option: both options are effective in addressing the policy problem and securing strong stakeholder support. The foyer model is better than the BC Housing model because it easier to implement. In the final paired comparison between the scattered site and foyer alternatives, the foyer model ranks better or equal to the scattered-site option on every criterion except cost. Thus based on this 'run-off' between options, the foyer model emerges as a marginally preferable alternative, garnering a high degree of effectiveness, stakeholder acceptability, and ease of implementation offset only by high capital costs.

11: Policy Recommendations and Implementation

Based on my policy analysis, the foyer model emerges marginally ahead of the other two options and is comparatively the most 'workable' of all of the proposed options. Because the evaluation is comparative and does not evaluate the inherent value of each policy in addressing the policy problem, I suggest that the foyer model is not conclusively the 'best' policy option. In the absence of a clear 'winner' among these three options, I recommend the complementary implementation of the scattered-site, BC Housing, and foyer alternatives in order to reduce the scope and depth of homelessness experienced by youth in Metro Vancouver.

As I mentioned above, the proposed 'bundles' of services are not mutually exclusive; findings from the literature and the research interviews stress that communities adopting a range of housing options are more likely to achieve lasting success in reducing homelessness and ensuring stable accommodation for street-involved youth. Thus while the foyer model is likely to be more successful in providing high-needs youth with intensive support, investment in the scattered-site model could provide higher functioning youth with a significant boost in securing employment. Allocating some BC housing units to youth would create an effective temporary measure while foyers are financed and built. Although the extended foster home alternative did not emerge as a strong option, aspects of the policy, such as the specialized leaving care service teams, would enrich the proposed policy options and address the lack of transitional services in the foyer model. Thus my policy analysis recommends that the BC provincial government pursue three compatible courses of action to address youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver: acquisition of scattered-site accommodation, allocation of BC Housing units for youth, and construction of youth foyers.

Through my case studies and interviews I have identified several factors that constrain effective implementation of these policy options. The following section considers ways in which strategic political commitment, youth-centred practice, and accountability mechanisms facilitate policy implementation to re-house street-involved youth.

11.1 Strategic Political Commitment

It does need a kind of strong champion at a policy level to say okay, this is what we're going to do, we're going to bring those resources together and we're going to run it, under that kind of model. (P.I., 2009n, 234-237)

Effective implementation is likely to take place only if the provincial government demonstrates a strategic commitment to re-housing street-involved youth. In his classic analysis of the mechanisms by which policy alternatives reach governments' decision-making agendas, John Kingdon (1995) argues that three separate process streams need to be aligned: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the political stream. For Kingdon, the problem stream is the process by which a problem is recognized as such by government officials and placed on the government agenda. Kingdon's second stream is the policy stream, comprised of academics, analysts, and think tanks, which is responsible for generating solutions. The third stream is the political stream, which refers to the political context, political actors, and decision-makers. Kingdon stresses that only when all three streams are 'coupled' do issues get onto the decision-making agenda. He notes: "A problem is recognized, a solution is available, and the political climate makes the time right for change" (1995: 88). Thus a problem is identified in the problem stream and taken up by government officials, a solution from the policy stream 'attaches' to the problem, and the political context is supportive of the new policy change.

Kingdon's theoretical frame is useful in illustrating the challenges that advocates face in bringing youth homelessness to the policy agenda. Youth homelessness is a 'wicked' problem that cuts across organizational boundaries (Saint-Martin, 2004). Competing administrative

systems, differences in eligibility criteria, and legislative barriers preventing provincial ministries from sharing information across departments or with service providers all work against a youth-centred approach that ensures that youth are provided with the supports needed to transition to independent living (P.I., 2010a; P.I., 2010c). Re-housing Vancouver's street-involved youth requires strong integration among children's, housing, and health ministries, with supporting contributions from ministries of education and justice. In the case of youth homelessness, institutional practice tends to encourage inertia rather than incremental change; as a result, meaningful change is likely to occur only under a strong, deliberate, strategic commitment mandated by the political stream (P.I., 2010c). As demonstrated in the United Kingdom, a strong legislative commitment can result in significant organizational restructuring and improved outcomes (Stein, 2006).

11.2 Youth-Centred Practice

A child-centred model to me is also a community-centred model where the community has a say, a healthy say, in how we take care of our kids, and we don't leave our kids on the street. (P.I., 2009f, 190-194)

The results of key informant interviews confirm findings from the literature that street-involved youth are alienated from traditional support models prevalent in adult housing services. Practice-based research suggests that as with adult 'hard to house' populations, flexible, youth-centered approaches are likely to be the most effective in facilitating stable housing tenures among youth (Kraus, et al., 2005; Kidd, 2004; Karabanow, 2008; Karabanow, 2004; Karabanow and Clement, 2004; Kelly and Caputo, 2007). Using a theory of change model, youth-centred approaches focus on providing consistent adult relationships for youth that do not flag in the face of cycles of engagement and disengagement common among street-involved youth (McLean, 2005). Youths' returns to the street are understood as a part of a long-term transition out of the street environment. Service providers noted that focusing practice on connecting youth to the larger community is a crucial step in stably housing youth.

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Effective practice works with youth to build on their strengths to develop new identities separate from their street-based identities and helps youth to transition to independence once they are developmentally ready. In his research on the exiting process of street-involved youth, Jeff Karabanow describes this process as follows:

> Service providers play a significant role in supporting young people to regain or rebuild a sense of self. A majority of participants described diverse service provisions as 'surrogate families' and 'brokers' between street culture and mainstream living (Karabanow, 2008: 780).

Relationship-based practice fosters connections between youth and the broader community, providing youth with a base of support beyond individual case workers. Informants stress that this kind of practice requires a significant level of investment in staffing and support. Case management is effective only if staff can conduct intensive assessments of individual youth's needs, which requires flexibility among managers as to expected caseloads (P.I., 2009o). Supportive housing options are viable only to the extent that funders understand the relative equity of housing and support: without strong investment in both, the proposed interventions are likely to be ineffective in addressing the policy problem.

11.3 Accountability and Evaluation

There just isn't the space for us to work with our funders to look at practice, to be curious, to be looking at outcomes rather than outputs. (P.I., 2009i, 200-202)

Finally, my research findings suggest that all of the proposed policy options require new systems of evaluation and accountability in order to assess the effectiveness of any program. My analysis of the status quo finds that the province is currently operating without meaningful outcomes or indicators of success with regard to street-involved youth. Because of this, provincial ministries and service providers often find themselves at odds, with the province holding service providers to a system of outputs that stifle experimentation and innovation. A service provider comments:

Agencies need to have a say in what is being tracked. The last thing they want is the government telling them 'we want a certain number of bed-nights,' because they know it is not a helpful indicator. You would never have a government telling industry what outcomes it should be tracking without first engaging with industry, so why does that happen in the social service sector?(P.I., 2009d, 377-385)

One way of increasing levels of trust between the two sectors, as well as strengthening accountability structures, would be to invest in arms-length bodies that foster dialogue among the provincial ministries and service providers in order to develop robust indicators for stably housing street-involved youth. Research suggests that outcomes-based planning can also improve integration, resulting in more streamlined case management (CCHRC, 2002). An arms-length body would allow for increased accountability structures beyond funding contracts and provide mechanisms by which practice outcomes could inform the development of new policy solutions within government.

Increased dialogue between the province and service providers would also assist in the development of comprehensive assessment tools that ensure program take-up by at-risk youth. The inevitable upshot of developing policies to increase street-involved youths' access to housing is that some youth with lower needs will try to access housing, despite other alternatives that may be open to them. For example, interviewees noted that the scatter-site housing is likely to attract higher functioning youth, some of whom may not actually be in urgent need of government-sponsored housing (P.I., 2009c). The province can mitigate the 'draw' of youth housing by using comprehensive assessment tools to assess youths' degree of need. Interview informants note that many providers currently use a range of diagnostic tools, such as psychiatric assessments and developmental scales such as Global Functioning Scores to track youths' capacities (P.I., 2009d; P.I., 2009e; P.I., 2009g); these scales could be used to establish baseline ranges required for service. A more refined assessment process will ensure that youth most in need access government-sponsored housing, while deterring youth from leaving otherwise stable housing conditions for more attractive supportive housing programs.

12: Conclusion

Policy makers across Canada are confronted with the unprecedented growth of homelessness in their communities. In British Columbia, previous research finds that the homeless population is a heterogeneous group with a variety of different and sometimes conflicting needs. The provincial government has begun to take this diversity into account, developing priority services for adults with mental health and/or substance misuse issues, seniors, and women fleeing domestic violence (MHSD, 2009a). Yet street-involved youth aged 16 to 18 are rarely prioritized as a population in need, despite their status as a marginalized and vulnerable population.

My study finds that street-involved youth fail to obtain stable housing in Metro Vancouver because of diminished affordable housing stock, limited access to housing, and unstable transitions to independent living. Based on key informant interviews, case studies, and my policy analysis, I recommend that the provincial government invest in three types of supportive housing to re-house street-involved youth: scattered-site accommodation, dedicated spaces in BC Housing buildings, and purpose-built youth foyers.

Housing street-involved youth is an intricate process, situated at the nexus of conflicting political jurisdictions and mandates. It is not surprising that the BC provincial government tends not to target youth as a core population in housing need. Yet my research finds that youth are not a 'lost cause.' Just as the government has begun to adapt services to provide effective housing supports to 'hard-to-house' adult populations, so can services be adapted to stably house street-involved youth. Investment in housing street-involved youth may be a challenging investment, but it is a smart investment, without which we run the risk of standing by while today's homeless youth become tomorrow's homeless adults.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Service Provider Interviews

1. Describe the youth population that you work with.

2. What are the key barriers facing youth aged 16 to 18 in obtaining permanent, stable housing?
   - Elaborate on each, please.

3. What kinds of housing and support services have you found to be effective in addressing these barriers?
   - Connect each of these to barriers you identified. What are the roles of yourself and of other agencies in this process?

4. What opportunities are there for partnerships between housing and service providers to address these barriers?
   - How would you envisage these operating?

5. What opportunities are there for partnerships among the provincial government, municipalities of Metro Vancouver, the health authorities, and the not-for-profit sector to permanently house street-involved youth?
   - What would be needed for such partnerships to be established and to operate effectively?

6. Based on my research to date, I have developed the following policy options to address the key barriers facing youth (describe options).
   - On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate each option with regards to effectiveness, acceptability, and ease of implementation?
   - Please elaborate.

Policy Maker Interviews

1. Describe strategies or policy initiatives within your organization that address the needs of homeless youth in Metro Vancouver.

2. What is your understanding of the extent and scope of youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver?

3. What are the key barriers facing youth in obtaining permanent, stable housing?
   - Elaborate on each, please.

4. What policy initiatives or strategies have been successful in addressing youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver?
   - Are you aware of initiatives or strategies in other jurisdictions that would be worth reviewing for possible implementation in Metro Vancouver?

5. What are the key challenges facing policy-makers in addressing youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver?
   - What would be required to overcome these challenges?

6. What opportunities are there for partnerships among the provincial government, municipalities of Metro Vancouver, the health authorities, and the not-for-profit sector to permanently house street-involved youth?
   - What would be needed for such partnerships to be established and to operate effectively?

7. Based on my research to date, I have developed the following policy options to address the key barriers facing youth (describe options).
   - On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate each option with regards to effectiveness, acceptability, and ease of implementation?
   - Please elaborate

Appendix B: Policy Evaluation – MST Criteria and Categories

Table 10   MST Key of Policy Options

Number	Policy Options
1.	Status Quo
2.	Scatter-site
3.	BC Housing Youth Dedicated Units
4.	Non-profit Housing (Foyer Model)
5.	Extended Foster Home, Transition Services

Table 11   MST Not-for-Profit Funder #1

Criteria	Categories	Sort
Effective for youth with high mental health needs	Low support	1
	Medium Support	2 5
	High Support	3 4
Linkage of Housing and Supports	Relative Independence of housing and supports	1 2 3
	Relative interdependence of housing and supports	4 5
Effective support services for transitioning elements	More effective	5
	Less effective	3 2 4
Cost	Lower cost in first year of operation	3 2
	Higher cost in first year of operation	4 5
	Lower ongoing costs	4 5
	Higher ongoing costs	3 2

Table 12   MST Housing Service Provider

Criteria	Categories	Sort
Network of Support	More accessible support	3 4 5
	Less accessible support	1 2
Effectiveness in addressing legal barriers facing minors in renting housing	High	3 5
	Medium	2
	Low	1 4
Support Services	More effective	3 4 5
	Less effective	2
	Not effective	1
Reliability of contact, availability, trust, safety and consistency of service	More	4 5
	Less	1 2 3

Table 13   MST Non-Profit Funder #2

Criteria	Categories	Sort
Political Considerations	Most sellable	3
	Requires work	2 4
	Least sellable	1 5
Demonstrated, evidence-based long-term outcomes	Best long-term outcomes	4 5
	Medium outcomes	3
	Little	2
	Low	1
Comprehensiveness of support personalized to individual needs	High	3 4 5
	Low	2 1
Number of youth housed with a limited budget	High	3 2
	Lower	4 5
Cost	High costs	2 5
	Medium costs	4
	Low costs	3

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