

**Home Street Home:
Preventing Youth Homelessness in Vancouver**

by

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Abstract

The harms of youth homelessness are well-described in the academic literature, but less is known about transitions into homelessness among at-risk youth. Given the importance of preventing youth homelessness, and in particular, the first incidence of homelessness, quantitative and qualitative data from street-involved youth in Vancouver were analyzed in order to determine significant factors associated with this transition and generate policy options for addressing this issue. Ultimately, this study recommends placing youth workers in secondary schools to support the academic and social development of at-risk youth, as well as provide connections to appropriate community supports such as housing. This is the first known study to directly ask youth for their thoughts on how to prevent the first incidence of homelessness, and the results from this Capstone provides policy-makers with opportunities for targeted interventions to address youth homelessness in Vancouver.

Keywords: Youth; homelessness; prevention; addiction; public health; public policy

*To the street-involved youth of Vancouver,
whose strength and spirit
should be an inspiration for us all.*

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List of Acronyms

Term	Definition
ARYS	At-Risk Youth Study
BC ID	British Columbia Identification Card
GLMM	Generalized linear mixed effects model
I.D.	Personal identification
MCFD	Ministry of Children and Family Development
NIMBY	“Not in my backyard”
SFU	Simon Fraser University
SRO	Single room occupancy
UHRI	Urban Health Research Initiative

Glossary

Term	Definition
ARYS	A longitudinal cohort study of at-risk street-involved youth in Vancouver. This research study uses quantitative data from ARYS, and youth interviewees were recruited from ARYS participants.
Foster home / Foster care	These terms are used interchangeably to indicate a living arrangement where a child or young person has been removed from their parents' home and is living with "foster parents", who are paid to provide a home-like environment for the youth. This may also include group homes operated by the MCFD.
Homeless youth	This term describes a young person or group of young people who are living in a shelter, are sleeping outside, are couch-surfing, or living in an SRO.
Insite	This is the name of the only government approved supervised injection site in North America. It is located in the downtown eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver.
NIMBY	A common term used to refer to a person who may support a service for marginalized people in principle (such as emergency shelters or supervised injection sites), but oppose the service when there are plans for it to be located in the person's neighbourhood, or "backyard".
SRO	A term used to describe a single-unit dwelling, often with a shared bathroom. In Vancouver, these rooms are relatively inexpensive and are commonly occupied by low-income residents of the downtown eastside. They are known for poor living conditions due to lack of building maintenance, drug-fueled violence, bed bugs, and unscrupulous landlords and building managers.
Street-involved youth	A term used to describe a young person who is or young people who are heavily involved in the street economy and who experience some form of housing instability (Marshall, Kerr, Qi, Montaner, & Wood, 2010).

Executive Summary

Youth homelessness is an enduring concern among researchers and governments. This issue spans provincial and municipal concerns, as services for youth are derived from both these levels of government. Although this is a province-wide issue, this Capstone focuses its scope on the City of Vancouver due to Vancouver's unique street sub-culture.

The Province of British Columbia is responsible for the safety of all youth (Province of British Columbia, 1996) and has committed to provide affordable housing to those in need (BC Housing, 2010). Therefore, *the Province of BC has failed to effectively address the pathways into homelessness for at-risk youth, which negatively impacts their health and well-being*. The purpose of this research is to identify these pathways into homelessness and investigate youths' opinions on effective services to prevent the first incidence of homelessness. The first incidence of homelessness is particularly important because experiencing homelessness once is associated with becoming homeless again (Fournier, Toupin, Côté, & et al, 1995; Sosin, Piliavin, & Westerfelt, 1990).

Although youth homelessness is a well-researched phenomenon, there are few studies which examine the factors that contribute to transitions into homelessness among youth and youths' desires for preventative services. The quantitative research reported here directly investigates the factors associated with transitioning into homelessness among youth in Vancouver, and interviews with key stakeholders provides a greater depth of information about effective policy options for preventing first-time homelessness. The data corroborates many findings from the literature, including the role of substance use, availability and barriers to services, and the role of schools.

To reduce youth homelessness in Vancouver, via preventing the first incidence of homelessness, three policy options were developed from the research: a British Columbia Identification Card (BC ID) obtainment program in schools, an increase in supportive housing, and the placement of a youth worker in secondary schools. Each alternative was assessed on the following criteria: effectiveness, equity, implementation,

affordability, and acceptability. Youth workers in secondary schools performed well on these criteria with barely any trade-offs, therefore it is recommended that youth workers be placed in secondary schools as soon as possible and the other two options be considered as longer term approaches to supplement the efforts of the youth workers.

Overall, this Capstone strengthens the consensus in the existing literature around pathways into homelessness and reinforces the need for comprehensive approaches to addressing this issue. Any future research should consult with experts in the field and expand upon the case study here in order for youth to provide a voice in terms of what they need to prevent homelessness and receive appropriate care.

1. Introduction

Youth homelessness has increased by 5% between 2002 and 2011 in Vancouver (Basi, Clelland, Khind, Morris, & Severinson, 2012), despite an assortment of shelters, programs, income assistance, and other services.¹ This increase raises the proportion of homeless youth (aged 13 to 24) from 15% to 20% of the total surveyed homeless population in Vancouver (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2011). This proportion is similar to the City of Calgary, which estimates that approximately 700 homeless youth comprise 20% of their total homeless population (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2011), and also comparable to Australia, where the best available data shows that a third of homeless individuals are below the age of 18 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Street-involved youth appear to be coming to Vancouver from other locations; in one survey, only 24% of homeless youth identified Vancouver as their home community, with 31% of younger youth from elsewhere in British Columbia and 61% from elsewhere in Canada (Eberle Planning and Research, Kraus, & Woodward, 2007).

Generally, homeless youth have experienced significant childhood trauma (Hyde, 2005) and once on the streets, engage in risky drug use and sexual behaviours (Hyde, 2005; Marshall et al., 2009; Weber, Boivin, Blais, Haley, & Roy, 2002). The Province of British Columbia is responsible for the safety of all youth (Province of British Columbia, 1996) and has committed to provide affordable housing to those in need (BC Housing, 2010). Consequently, *the Province of BC has failed to effectively address the pathways into homelessness for at-risk youth, which negatively impacts their health and well-being*. This includes underage youth whose families are unable to provide a safe housing environment, and older youth whose families were unable to adequately prepare them for transitioning to independent living.

¹ It is difficult to determine if this represents an increase over the previous decade, since the first Vancouver homeless count took place in 1999.

My motivation to work on this issue comes from a desire to help vulnerable populations. Youth themselves are a vulnerable group because they are susceptible to risk-taking and substance use (Churchwell, Carey, Ferrett, Stein, & Yurgelun-Todd, 2012; Steinberg, 2004) due to under-developed cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functions (Steinberg, 2005). Consequently, youth need support as they transition into adulthood, and ultimately, take over complete responsibility for themselves (Kothari, 2005). Furthermore, I feel that if public policy can help at-risk youth transition into safe and stable housing environments, the current and future well-being of these youth can be increased. This issue became very dear to me as I worked at the Urban Health Research Initiative (UHRI) over the summer of 2012 and was given access to their data on at-risk youth in Vancouver.

Over the course of this study, I outline the local institutional context for youth homelessness in Vancouver. This Capstone focuses on the City of Vancouver because its established street sub-culture and notoriety draws youth from outside the Lower Mainland and the province (Fast, Small, Wood, & Kerr, 2009; McCreary Centre Society, 2002). I review the literature around barriers to youth service use, and then perform a quantitative analysis to determine specific social, structural, and behavioural variables that are related to youth transitioning into homelessness. Next, I interview key stakeholders to discuss needs around housing and which services or improvements to services would be most useful to prevent the first incidence of homelessness. Given the risk of becoming homeless a second time after being homeless once (Fournier et al., 1995; Sosin et al., 1990), this is an important issue. With this information, I develop policy options aimed at preventing youth homelessness and then evaluate the policy options to provide a final recommendation(s). Many of the issues and policies discussed here are applicable to transitions into *and out of* homelessness. Although time constraints limit this study to examining only transitions into homelessness, it is possible to extrapolate to transitions out of homelessness.

2. Background

It is notoriously difficult to provide resources to marginally housed youth because of their lack of visibility to service providers (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007). There are a number of reasons for this, such as high residential mobility, active avoidance of shelters and service providers, congregating in inaccessible locations, and being visually indistinguishable from housed youth (Ringwalt, Greene, Robertson, & McPheeters, 1998). The invisibility of this population, partially due to the difficulties counting those who are “couch-surfing” (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007), is reflected in a wide-range of results from attempts to count the number of homeless youth in Vancouver (50 to over 700 youth); previous research has consolidated this range and estimated the actual numbers to be between 300 and 700 on any one day (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007). These numbers are somewhat low compared to Los Angeles and San Francisco, which are comparable cities to Vancouver; those cities have approximately 26,000 (University of Southern California, 2007) and 4,000 homeless youth (San Francisco Mayor's Office, 1996), respectively.

The current response to addressing youth homelessness in Vancouver is primarily through the services of uncoordinated community-based groups, which provide everything from shelter, food, and assistance with job seeking. The federal, provincial, and municipal governments engage in some partnerships with these organizations, mostly providing funding to complement private donations. The child welfare system in British Columbia is expected to ensure that at-risk youth and their families are supported, but some youth who experience time in government care remain vulnerable to homelessness (de Best, 2012; Evenson & Barr, 2009).

Often, these youth are marginally housed because they face difficulties locating housing services that work for them (Krusi, Fast, Small, Wood, & Kerr, 2010). Some youth-specific shelters are disliked by homeless youth because they require attendees to perform chores and be substance-free, and staff members may restrict television

watching to certain times and programs. Restricting youths' activities and denying shelter to youth who are intoxicated are, almost literally, turning youth away from using services. Indeed, some youth choose to face the dangers of sleeping on the street rather than use these shelters (Krusi et al., 2010).

Even though adult services generally have less restrictive rules, these are undesirable to youth (Krusi et al., 2010). For example, single-occupancy rooms (SROs) are a common low-barrier and low-cost form of housing for adults with addictions in Vancouver. Youth are able to rent a room in a single-room occupancy hotel (SRO) but fear the drug-fuelled violence associated with them. One youth in a study by Krusi et al. (2010) described the environment as a place where *"[y]ou could hear people smashing each other out, fighting, screaming and flailing through the halls and knocking on your door in the middle of the night."* Furthermore, youth fear that they may be preyed on by older and more experienced street persons (Krusi et al., 2010), including being coerced into selling drugs or performing sex work (Shannon et al., 2008).

Youth also prefer to use services specifically for them because they see the use of adult services as a symbolic transition to becoming someone who is "entrenched" in the street scene (Krusi et al., 2010). Using the same services as those entrenched adults feels like "giving up" on their hopes and dreams of reintegrating into society (Krusi et al., 2010). The result is that youth turn again to sleeping on the streets where they feel safer and live according to their own rules.

There are many dangers and harms associated with sleeping on the streets, or even in a shelter (see Appendix A), which leads the British Columbia government to spend approximately 33% more on services for a homeless person than on a socially housed unemployed person (Millar, BC Housing, & Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2009). One study in New York found that a homeless person with severe mental illness used an average of \$40,449 per year in services (Culhane, Metraux, & Hadley, 2001); this figure was reduced by \$12,145 once provided with supportive housing. Given the figures here, housing can be seen as an absolutely crucial component of any poverty reduction initiative, and also essential to reducing expenditures on this population. The success of "housing first" initiatives is also evidence of this (Atherton & Nicholls, 2008;

Padgett, Stanhope, Henwood, & Stefancic, 2011; Pearson, Montgomery, & Locke, 2009).

The risks and costs associated with homelessness have not gone unnoticed by Canadian governments and community organizations. The province has a partnering strategy with the federal government that brings in \$12-15 million per year to fight homelessness. Within this plan, youth have been specifically identified as a vulnerable population. The Greater Vancouver Area has a regional homelessness plan, and the City of Vancouver incorporated that plan's framework into its own homelessness action plan. In addition, the Vancouver Foundation, a non-profit organization, has made housing a priority and raised \$750,000 in donations towards supportive housing. Unfortunately, youth homelessness has increased amidst this attention and funding (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2011).

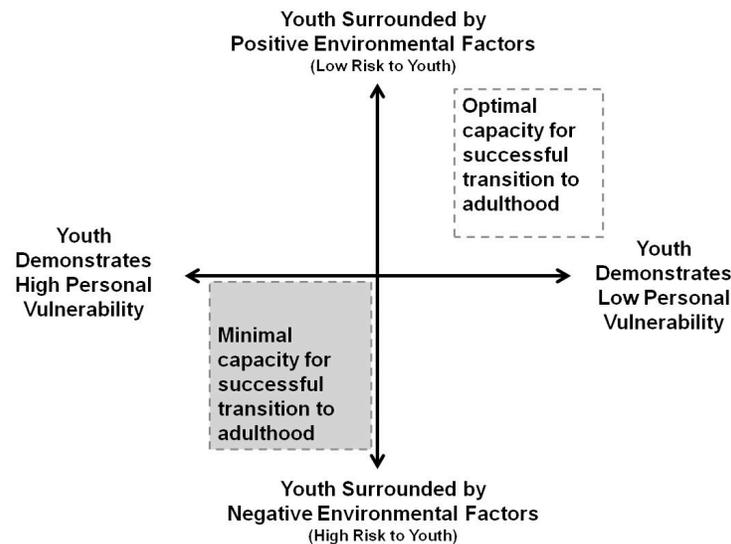
Given the relationship between homelessness and risky drug and sexual behaviours, it is particularly concerning that youth continue to become homeless in Vancouver. My research provides a quantitative and qualitative approach to examining transitions into homelessness, something which has been lacking in the literature. The next section provides a review of the scientific literature about youth homelessness.

3. Literature Review

3.1. At-Risk Youth

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in British Columbia has created a risk framework to identify the most at-risk youth using two dimensions: environmental factors (positive or negative) and personal vulnerability (high and low) (Figure 1) (Ministry for Children and Families, 2000). Negative environmental factors include homelessness, poverty, school failure, and cultural conflict. High personal vulnerability includes youth who use substances, have experienced severe emotional trauma, and have a history of abuse (physical, sexual, and/or emotional).

Figure 1. *The combined effects of environmental factors and youth vulnerability. (Figure adapted from Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2000)*



All youth fall somewhere along each of these dimensions. Youth who grow up in healthy families are surrounded by positive environmental factors and have low personal

vulnerability (white box in Figure 1). This group is most likely to successfully transition to adulthood. Youth who are surrounded by negative environmental factors and exhibit high personal vulnerability (grey box in Figure 1) may struggle with their transition to adulthood. Youth who have difficulty transitioning into adulthood may face challenges with completing school, finding work, and finding housing. For this reason, the MCFD prioritizes youth in the “minimal capacity” quadrant (the grey box) for their direct services. As may be expected, many youth who experience homelessness, coming perhaps from this “minimal capacity” quadrant, share certain demographics.

3.1.1. Demographics

Certain demographics and individual characteristics are over-represented among street-youth in Vancouver and Canada, including: people of aboriginal descent (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2011), lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered individuals (McCreary Centre Society, 2001), experience being in government care (Evenson & Barr, 2009), and older youth between the ages of 19 and 24 (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2011). A review of available literature and the internet revealed no average age at which youth enter homelessness, but it is suspected that many youth transition into homelessness around the age of 16, when they are no longer required to be in school.

3.2. Cycle of Homelessness

Homelessness itself is not a static experience, and marginally housed and street-involved youth may experience many changes in housing status over a short period of time. The Life Cycle Model of Youth Homelessness strives to understand these changes by describing the different stages youth pass through (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002). The four main stages include: (i) the Mainstream stage where youth are living with their families or the “non-homeless world”, (ii) First on the Street as the first time a youth is homeless, (iii) the Stasis stage as a period of relative stability on the street as the youth develops routines, contacts, and is habituated to street-life, and (iv) Disequilibrium as a time of personal instability caused by being a victim of violence, illness, being robbed, or anything that prompts youth to question their life on the street.

Youth may move from Mainstream into First on the Street and back again (“Early Return”), and may move from Disequilibrium back to Stasis. If, after the Disequilibrium stage, the youth decides to return to the non-homeless world (“Extrication”), they complete the cycle back into Mainstream. This study is focusing on the movement from Mainstream to First on the Street, which may be precipitated by a catastrophic event at home or otherwise feeling that there is no choice but to leave home (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002).

It is important to note that involvement in crime is not reflected anywhere in this cycle. Youth may turn to crime in order to meet survival or addiction needs, and may consequently become incarcerated; incarceration itself has previously been associated with homelessness due to the lack of bridging services for offenders post-release (S. A. Gaetz & O’Grady, 2006).

Ideally, policy options for preventing youth homelessness can eliminate this cycle by ensuring that youth never move from the Mainstream stage into First on the Street. Sometimes, however, youth do feel the need to leave home, and their reasons for doing so are explained in the next section.

3.3. Entering Homelessness

3.3.1. *Running To and From Something*

Youth who become homeless are generally thought of as “*running from*” or “*running to*” something (Homer, 1973). Those who are *running to* something may be seeking out exciting and interesting experiences such as highs from substance use, travelling, and complete independence (Fast et al., 2009). They may also be seeking out something as innocuous as a place where they feel accepted (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007). These youth may not be experiencing particularly distressing incidents in their home life, but may find themselves emotionally unfulfilled nevertheless.

Youth *running from* something are typically escaping a difficult home life and tend to have more severe family lives than those who are *running to* something (Homer, 1973). This may include interpersonal conflicts with siblings, parents, or extended family,

and may also include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. A study of street-involved Vancouver youth found that 25.73% of the youth had experienced sexual abuse and 43.93% had experienced physical abuse (Rachlis, Wood, Zhang, Montaner, & Kerr, 2009). Other factors may include discipline problems, teenage pregnancy, sexuality issues, poor supervision at home, neglect, and substance abuse problems (with the youth and/or the parents).

A study in California interviewed 50 homeless youth and discovered an active sense of agency and resiliency among them (Hyde, 2005). A theme that emerged from this study was that many of these youth accepted that they were at least partly to blame for some conflicts in their family home, but simultaneously felt empowered enough to remove themselves from the situation and become independent.

As many of these “running from” situations involve child abuse, child welfare agencies are often engaged with the family. Their involvement, although well-meaning, is itself considered a risk factor for transitioning into homelessness.

3.3.2. *The Role of the MCFD*

It is estimated that 8,548 children were in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in 2009-2010 (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2011), and approximately 15% of youth in care “age out” every year (Rutman, Hubberstey, Feduniw, & Brown, 2007). Children and youth enter the care of the MCFD because they have experienced abuse such as physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, neglect, deprivation of necessary medical care, or emotional harm (Province of British Columbia, 1996).

When youth transition out of care (“age out”), they are at risk for future homelessness (de Best, 2012); a survey of homeless youth in Canada found that 43% had been involved with Child Protection Services, and 68% had previously been in a foster home or group home (Evenson & Barr, 2009). These figures are slightly higher than other countries; between 30% and 41% of homeless youth in London, England and the United States have spent time in foster care, respectively (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006).

In 2012, the MCFD in British Columbia had four programs for assisting youth in their transition to independence (de Best, 2012). The “Independent Living” program provides financial and emotional support to youth aged 17 who are transitioning out of care. “Youth Agreements” are provided to youth between the ages of 16 and 18 and who are living independently. The MCFD does not become their legal guardian, but provides education, financial, and emotional support. “Agreements with Young Adults” is for youth aged 19-24 intent on continuing their education (secondary, post-secondary, life skills, or job training) or completing a rehabilitation program. The last program relies on community services to provide supports to youth based on contracts with the MCFD. Despite these four programs, youth exiting the system still experience poor outcomes, such as incomplete high school education and mental health issues (de Best, 2012).

These programs are well-intended, but their effectiveness can be compromised by broader economic forces. Given that Vancouver’s housing and rental market can be prohibitive for even well-established adults, youth do not always have the option to move in with other similarly-aged responsible youth, or have an apartment of their own. Some youth found adult roommates or expressed interest in living with their older romantic partner, at which point the MCFD denied the youth the rental supplements (Millar et al., 2009).

It may be argued that the biggest reason for these poor outcomes is that youth transitioning out of care do not have the life skills necessary to succeed on their own (de Best, 2012; Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007), which is something that youth themselves acknowledge (McCreary Centre Society, 2008). These life skills include grocery shopping, meal planning, budgeting, decision-making, using community resources, and dealing with health issues (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; Rutman, Hubberstey, Barlow, & Brown, 2001). This issue is particularly important because even one incident of homelessness can further disadvantage young people.

3.4. The Dangers and Harms of First-Time Homelessness

The first incidence of homelessness is concerning for a number of reasons. One study of adult males in Toronto found that first-time homeless shelter attendees did not

differ significantly from frequent attendees on a number of factors including psychiatric profiles, substance use profiles, and previous hospitalizations (Goering, Tolomiczenko, Sheldon, Boydell, & Wasylenki, 2002). This is concerning because these results show that there do not seem to be quantifiable differences between the two groups, and therefore those who find themselves homeless for the first-time have already “achieved” the profile of someone who is chronically homeless. This suggests that they are likely to become chronically homeless themselves. In addition, two other studies found a pattern where first-time homeless shelter attendees exited homelessness, but 25-60% of those individuals returned to homelessness (Fournier et al., 1995; Sosin et al., 1990).²

These data provide support for (a) preventing homelessness entirely, and (b) specifically targeting those who are homeless for the first-time to ensure that once those people exit homelessness, they have the resources to remain housed. There is, unfortunately, a lack of information about first-time homelessness among youth, and in particular, how to prevent the first incidence of homelessness among youth in Canada. Service use may play an important role here, as it can help youth navigate life away from their family home.

3.5. Service Use among Youth

At-risk and street-involved youth use a number of social services, including: homeless shelters, temporary housing, health clinics, addictions services, emergency rooms, employment services, and meal programs (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2011). There are a number of different barriers, however, to these services actually being used by youth. The first three barriers listed below represent the most common barriers to service use from this research.

Restrictive Rules. As mentioned previously, youth avoid shelters and services that have restrictive rules such as curfews, restricted television watching, and sobriety (De Rosa et al., 1999; Krusi et al., 2010). Youth have stated that they would rather sleep on the street than live under these rules (Krusi et al., 2010).

² It is unclear why these two studies produced such a wide range.

Providing Personal Identification. Some services require youth to provide personal identification, which puts underage youth in a difficult position for two reasons. Firstly, these youth may suspect that shelter staff will attempt to contact their guardians to either bring the youth home or tell them where the youth is. Services may have a policy against doing that, but because some youth may have difficulty trusting adults, youth may avoid the service anyway (De Rosa et al., 1999). Secondly, even if they felt comfortable showing their identification, up to 56% of youth do not have any (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012); it is unclear why so many youth are without personal identification.

Service Personnel. One of the most important aspects of services is their staff and how they relate to young people. Youth prefer staff members or organizations that are non-judgemental and give the youth some time to warm up to them before offering resources or advice. This includes not being pressured to do anything, but receiving resources when youth decide the time is right (Garrett et al., 2008). Although counter-intuitive, a flexible and patient-centred approach appears to be the best approach for marginalized youth (Kidd, Miner, Walker, & Davidson, 2007). Many youth have had negative experiences with adults, and are therefore reticent to trust service staff (Carlson, Sugano, Millstein, & Auerswald, 2006; Feldmann & Middleman, 2003).

Identity. Youth may refuse shelters or other services because they feel that it would impinge on their identity as independent individuals (Hyde, 2005). Traditionally, refusal to accept help has been seen as an indication of psychological pathology, but Hyde points out that, at least for some youth, this narrow thinking has completely ignored youths' sense of identity and agency (Hyde, 2005).

These barriers to service use mean that youth must receive help elsewhere, and may turn to their peers, rather than service providers or healthcare professionals for help and advice (Smith, Saewyc, Albert, MacKay, & Northcott, 2007). This is concerning because homeless youth are at risk for many serious dangers and harms from risky drug and sexual behaviours, and trained professionals are the best people to help youth deal with those.

This issue is very important to the research question. If effective low-barrier services are available and at-risk youth are aware of them, then it is expected that youth may find their way into housing and out of homelessness more easily. Based on the existing literature and these known barriers, services must hire trustworthy and knowledgeable staff, relax their rules, and refrain from asking for personal identification. Once youth are connected with effective services and their basic needs are being met, youth can focus on obtaining housing.

3.6. The Benefits of Stable Housing

A recent study of street youth in Montreal found that residential stability is associated with less daily alcohol consumption, polydrug consumption, drug injection, sex exchange, and multiple sex partners (Roy et al., 2011). The implication is that residential stability is protective against a number of different harms to youths' health, and as discussed previously, these particular harms are quite serious and can place youths' lives in danger.

A similar study examined the effects of residential instability (Weir, Bard, O'Brien, Casciato, & Stark, 2007). Hard drug use, needle sharing, sex exchange, and unprotected sex were all significantly associated with unstable housing in multivariate analysis. This same study also found that participants who needed but did not receive housing services were significantly more likely to engage in hard drug use and sex exchange as compared to those who received or did not need housing services. Given the benefits of housing stability and harms of housing instability, housing youth should be a priority for any government.

3.7. Critique of Literature

There is a large body of academic and grey literature examining the phenomenon of youth homelessness, and although the risk factors associated with homelessness are well-defined, there is less information about which risk factors are significantly associated with transitions into (and out of) homelessness. As governments

must balance delivering services and budget shortfalls, quantitative information about these specific factors can assist governments in providing focused policy responses to targeted problem areas.

This issue is compounded by the treatment of marginally housed youth as a homogeneous population in quantitative research. There is little research focusing on gender differences between these groups; most research exploring gender differences looks at female sexual experiences such as sex work, number of sex partners, and unprotected sex. Also, older and younger youth tend to be grouped together, eliminating the possibility of detecting differences between these two groups.

In addition, there are no known studies that ask street-involved youth directly about what they would have needed in order to avoid becoming homeless. This is essential for developing effective policies to address youth homelessness because important factors for youth may not be captured in surveys or statistical analysis. There is, of course, a wide range of literature published on the topic of youth homelessness and difficulties youth face, but since there is little information about what preventative policies youth themselves would like to see, more research is necessary.

3.8. Conclusion

The literature outlines a number of factors that are identified as broadly contributing to youths' pathways into homelessness. Conflict with the family and the (sometimes) ensuing involvement of the MCFD are all noted as risk factors for youth homelessness, in addition to difficulty accessing services. As outlined in Section 3.7, the literature lacks quantitative information about the pathways into homelessness, and lacks input from youth about their desires for preventative services. Given the substantial benefits associated with housing, the Province and City of Vancouver should continue their efforts to eliminate or reduce youth homelessness. The next section outlines the methods for data collection used to develop policy options to prevent the first-incident of homelessness among at-risk youth in Vancouver.

4. Methods

The research question is: how can the first incidence of homelessness be prevented among youth in Vancouver? This Capstone uses a mixed methodology of a literature review, quantitative and qualitative data collection. The literature review synthesizes the results from available research on this topic and the quantitative data identifies specific factors that are significantly associated with youth transitioning into homelessness. It does not focus directly on the first incidence of homelessness, but provides a broader picture of contributors to that change among a large number of street-involved youth that, in turn, provides direction for the qualitative interviews with youth. The qualitative data collection is intended to provide a fuller and more nuanced picture of youth transitioning into homelessness and how to prevent the first entrance into homelessness. It is anticipated that the breadth of this data will adequately inform my policy options. Details of the data-collection methodologies are outlined below.

4.1. Literature Review

The literature review was conducted between September 2012 and February 2013. This study uses Canadian and international academic and grey literature. Academic sources were located primarily through Google Scholar, and reference lists of relevant articles were consulted for further research. Grey literature sources were mostly found on websites related to the provincial and municipal governance of British Columbia. The results from this literature review are described in Section 3.

4.2. Quantitative Methods

This data addresses the policy problem by providing statistical information about which variables are associated with youth transitioning into homelessness. The

information derives from the At Risk Youth Study (ARYS). ARYS involved the recruitment of youth aged 14-26 who are heavily involved in the street economy. In brief, snowball sampling and extensive street-based outreach methods were employed to reach youth. To be eligible, ARYS researchers required participants at recruitment to be between the ages of 14 and 26 years, have used illicit drugs other than marijuana in the past 30 days, and provide written informed consent. At enrolment, and on a bi-annual basis, participants completed an interviewer-administered questionnaire that included questions related to demographic information and drug use patterns. Interviews took place in the ARYS office located in the Downtown South area of Vancouver. Participants also meet with a study nurse and provided a blood sample for serologic testing. At each study visit, participants are provided with a stipend (\$20 CDN) for their time.

Because this Capstone reports research undertaken through a separate initiative (Cheng et al., 2013), please see Appendix B for a detailed description of this methodology.

4.3. Qualitative Methods

In order to gain a fuller understanding of youths' experience with homelessness and feasible policy options to avoid homelessness among this group, I conducted six interviews with two groups of stakeholders: youth and professionals in the field of youth homelessness. The youth stakeholder is a case study involving one at-risk marginally housed individual in Vancouver. Consultation with at-risk youth in Vancouver is important because if the policy options are not acceptable to youth or not appropriate for them, then they are less likely to succeed. The professionals constituted a Research Scientist, Youth Addictions Practitioner, Retired Teacher, and Regional Planner from the Metro Vancouver Homelessness Secretariat, and Ethnographer who has been working with youth at the At-Risk Youth Study for the past 5 years (Ethnographer). These interviews ranged between 15-30 minutes and were conducted over the telephone, with the exception of the Ethnographer who was interviewed simultaneously with Kelly. No financial compensation was given was participating.

All interviews were semi-structured, which gives the interviewer the freedom to adapt the interview to the interviewee (Robson, 2011). This may include changing the wording of questions, changing the sequence of questions, and adjusting time spent on each topic.

4.3.1. Youth Stakeholder

This youth was recruited from an eligible pool of ARYS participants, the same study group as the quantitative data collection. The purpose of using ARYS participants is to maintain internal validity and consistency by using the same population for the quantitative and qualitative data. Eligible youth for this study included those aged 19 to 24, currently housed, and who experienced homelessness at least once. Homelessness was defined as youth who have ever experienced homelessness because they were forced to leave home by their parents/guardians, or chose to leave home for themselves. This does not include youth who experienced homelessness because of their parents' or guardians' living situation.

The recruitment of this youth was jointly co-ordinated between myself and the Coordinator of Youth Ethnographic Studies at the Urban Health Research Initiative. The interview took place in the ARYS office (located at the corner of Drake Street and Howe Street); a location the youth was already familiar with as a participant in the ARYS study. Only one interview was performed because youth from this population are often difficult to contact, and once contact has been established, it can be challenging to coordinate specific times and places to meet. Two youth had originally been scheduled for interviews, but one did not show up.

The participant provided informed consent and I conducted the interview. An interview schedule was created to assist in the data collection (Appendix C). Topics covered included information about the participant's current living situation, experience with homelessness, thoughts on stable housing, and what he or she would have needed to prevent the first incidence of homelessness.

4.3.2. Professional Stakeholders

Professional stakeholders were recruited from personal networks, and all participants provided informed consent. Eligible participants included any person whose professional obligations bring them in contact with the issue of youth homelessness in Vancouver. The role of these professional stakeholders is to: (a) discuss the most important factor(s) contributing to youth homelessness and how to prevent the first incidence of homelessness for youth (see Appendix D for an interview schedule), and (b) provide feedback on the three policy options outlined in Section 7. The results from part (a) are outlined in Section 6.1.2, and responses to part (b) are integrated in Section 8.

4.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis for the interviews follows a six-step process for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps include: (i) becoming familiar with the data, (ii) generating initial codes for the content of the interview, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing the themes, (v) defining and naming the themes, and (vi) producing the report. For the interview with the youth stakeholder, steps two through four were performed using ATLAS.ti software version 7.0.83. The process of defining and naming themes was an iterative process as the transcript of the interview was reviewed. Certain topics or subjects that appeared often, or perhaps appeared only once but seemed important were coded as “themes”. See Appendix E for a list of codes generated from step two. Only results from the fifth and sixth steps are included in this report. Although the interviews with the professional stakeholders were not recorded, the six steps were followed as closely as possible. Both themes arising from the professionals’ interviews are reported in the results section (Section 6.1.2).

A thematic analysis is useful because it allows the researcher to identify important topics or ideas that are raised in the interview. Steps one through five of Braun and Clarke’s process are dedicated to discovering those themes.

4.5. Ethics Approval

This research study has received ethics approval from Simon Fraser University's Office of Research Ethics. This study requires authorization to use secondary data from the ARYS study and includes: a formal letter from a Co-Principal Investigator of the ARYS study, certificate of ethics approval from the University of British Columbia for the ARYS study, and a copy of the consent form given to youth participating in the ARYS study. Other related documents include a consent form and study information document for my youth interviewee, and the ORE Tutorial Certificate.

There are some risks to this study which may affect youth. The primary risk is the possibility that the youth will be harmed by the discussion of their life experiences, which may be painful to recollect and share. The secondary risk affecting the youth is the possibility that their identity will be revealed through human or technological error. The third risk is that the investigator may be required to breach confidentiality if (i) the participant indicates that he or she is in immediate danger of hurting him or herself, or (ii) the participant is an immediate threat to another person, or (iii) if there is a subpoena or court order requesting access to the data.

The risks to the professional stakeholders were minimal, and mostly concern the risk of breaching confidentiality. The following section presents the results from the data-collection.

5. Quantitative Findings

5.1. Results

During the study period, 996 participants were recruited into ARYS among whom 685 participants were eligible for this analysis, including 219 (32.0%) women, 447 (65.2%) persons of Caucasian ethnicity, and 173 (25.2%) persons of Aboriginal ancestry. The median age of participants in the study sample was 22 years (inter-quartile range [IQR] = 20-24). This sample contributed a total of 2,997 observations. The median number of follow-up visits was 4 (IQR = 3-5), and the median number of months between study visits was 6.5 (IQR = 5.6-8.9). A baseline comparison of those who were and were not excluded revealed no statistically detectable differences with respect to baseline age, gender, and homelessness ($p > 0.05$); however, those included in the study were more likely to be Caucasian ($p = 0.016$).

Among the sample of 685 participants, over study follow up there were 864 observations of “consistently homeless” ($n = 405$, 59.1% of sample), 735 observations of “consistently housed” ($n = 320$, 46.7% of sample), 461 observations of transitions out of homelessness (“homeless to housed”) ($n = 386$, 56.3% of sample), and 252 observations of transitions into homelessness (“housed to homeless”) ($n = 213$, 31.1% of sample). Even though this Capstone focuses on transitions into homelessness, the data for transitions out of homelessness is displayed.

The characteristics of the study sample at baseline stratified by homelessness (in the last six months) are presented in Table 1. The bivariate generalized linear mixed effects model (GLMM) analyses of socio-demographic, behavioural, and other risk variables associated with transitions into and out of homelessness are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Characteristics of street-involved youth at baseline (n = 685).

Characteristic	Total (%) (n =685)	Homeless†		p - value
		Yes (%) (n =493)	No (%) (n =192)	
Older age				
Median (IQR)	22 (20-24)	22 (20-24)	22 (19-24)	0.057
Gender				
(Female vs. male)	219 (32.0)	146 (29.6)	73 (38.0)	0.034
Caucasian ethnicity				
(Yes vs. no)	447 (65.2)	337 (68.4)	110 (57.3)	0.006
Stable relationship (currently)				
(Yes vs. no)	199 (29.0)	127 (25.8)	72 (37.5)	0.002
Regular employment†				
(Yes vs. no)	386 (56.4)	283 (57.4)	103 (53.6)	0.373
Frequent alcohol use (>4 drinks/day)†				
(Yes vs. no)	403 (58.8)	290 (58.8)	113 (58.9)	0.994
Binge drug use*†				
(Yes vs. no)	194 (28.3)	159 (32.3)	35 (18.2)	<0.001
Daily heroin use*†				
(Yes vs. no)	80 (11.7)	56 (11.4)	24 (12.5)	0.676
Daily cocaine use*†				
(Yes vs. no)	27 (3.9)	25 (5.1)	2 (1.0)	0.015
Daily crystal meth use*†				
(Yes vs. no)	99 (14.5)	80 (16.2)	19 (9.9)	0.034
Daily crack smoking†				
(Yes vs. no)	115 (16.8)	94 (19.1)	21 (10.9)	0.011
Difficulty accessing addiction treatment †				
(Yes vs. no)	78 (11.4)	67 (13.6)	11 (5.7)	0.004
Incarceration†				
(Yes vs. no)	134 (19.6)	114 (23.1)	20 (10.4)	<0.001
Drug dealing†				
(Yes vs. no)	368 (53.7)	284 (57.6)	84 (43.8)	<0.001
Sex work†				
(Yes vs. no)	69 (10.1)	56 (11.4)	13 (6.8)	0.073

* Injection or non-injection use

† Refers to activities in the past six months

Table 2. Bivariate GLMM analyses of factors associated with transitioning into and out of homelessness among street-involved youth in Vancouver (n = 685).

Characteristic	Housed to Homeless vs. Consistently Housed		Homeless to Housed vs. Consistently Homeless	
	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p - value	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p - value
Older age (Per year older)	0.96 (0.91 – 1.01)	0.106	1.01 (0.97 – 1.06)	0.528
Gender (Female vs. male)	0.55 (0.40 – 0.76)	<0.001	1.09 (0.85 – 1.39)	0.507
Caucasian ethnicity (Yes vs. no)	1.38 (1.03 – 1.86)	0.034	0.86 (0.68 – 1.10)	0.236
Stable relationship (currently) (Yes vs. no)	0.60 (0.45 – 0.82)	0.001	1.46 (1.16 – 1.85)	0.002
Regular employment† (Yes vs. no)	0.96 (0.72 – 1.29)	0.790	1.34 (1.07 – 1.69)	0.012
Frequent alcohol use (>4 drinks/day)† (Yes vs. no)	2.10 (1.56 – 2.81)	<0.001	0.87 (0.69 – 1.09)	0.230
Binge drug use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.96 (1.42 – 2.71)	<0.001	0.66 (0.51 – 0.85)	0.001
Daily heroin use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.66 (1.11 – 2.49)	0.015	0.64 (0.45 – 0.92)	0.016
Daily cocaine use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.30 (0.40 – 4.29)	0.664	0.52 (0.22 – 1.21)	0.128
Daily crystal meth use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.12 (0.70 – 1.80)	0.630	0.60 (0.42 – 0.84)	0.003
Daily crack smoking† (Yes vs. no)	2.54 (1.67 – 3.87)	<0.001	0.85 (0.61 – 1.18)	0.316
Difficulty accessing addiction treatment † (Yes vs. no)	2.00 (1.19 – 3.36)	0.009	0.46 (0.31 – 0.69)	<0.001
Incarceration† (Yes vs. no)	2.76 (1.87 – 4.07)	<0.001	0.57 (0.43 – 0.77)	<0.001
Drug dealing† (Yes vs. no)	2.26 (1.65 – 3.11)	<0.001	0.69 (0.53 – 0.89)	0.004

Characteristic	Housed to Homeless vs. Consistently Housed		Homeless to Housed vs. Consistently Homeless	
	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	<i>p</i> - value	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	<i>p</i> - value
Sex work† (Yes vs. no)	1.06 (0.60 – 1.89)	0.845	1.20 (0.76 – 1.90)	0.421

* Injection or non-injection use
† Refers to activities in the past six months

The results of the multivariate GLMM analysis are shown in Table 3 and displayed in Figures 2 and 3. Factors that remained independently associated with transitioning into homelessness included: Caucasian ethnicity (adjusted odds ratio [AOR] = 1.58, 95%CI: 1.15-2.17), frequent alcohol use (AOR = 2.33, 95%CI: 1.69-3.22), daily heroin use (AOR = 1.74, 95%CI: 1.10-2.74), daily crack cocaine smoking (AOR = 2.35, 95%CI: 1.46-3.80), being unable to access addiction treatment (AOR = 1.91, 95%CI: 1.11-3.30), recent incarceration (AOR = 2.00, 95%CI: 1.32-3.03), and drug dealing (AOR = 1.53, 95%CI: 1.07-2.17). Factors negatively associated with transitioning into homelessness include: female gender (AOR = 0.68, 95%CI: 0.47-0.98) and being in a stable relationship (AOR = 0.69, 95%CI: 0.50-0.95). Factors that were positively associated with transitioning out of homelessness included: being in a stable relationship (AOR = 1.43, 95%CI: 1.12-1.83) and having regular employment (AOR = 1.28, 95%CI: 1.00-1.64), and factors that were negatively associated with transitioning out of homelessness included: frequent alcohol use (AOR = 0.76, 95%CI: 0.60-0.97), daily heroin use (AOR = 0.66, 95%CI: 0.45-0.97), daily crystal methamphetamine use (AOR = 0.64, 95%CI: 0.45-0.93), being unable to access addiction treatment (AOR = 0.53, 95%CI: 0.35-0.80), and recent incarceration (AOR = 0.68, 95%CI: 0.50-0.92). A report of this analysis has previously been presented (Cheng et al., 2013).

Table 3. Multivariate GLMM analyses of factors associated with transitioning into and out of homelessness among street youth in Vancouver (n = 685).

Characteristic	Housed to Homeless vs. Consistently Housed		Homeless to Housed vs. Consistently Homeless	
	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p - value	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p - value
Older age (Per year older)	0.95 (0.90 – 1.01)	0.097	1.02 (0.97 – 1.07)	0.472
Gender (Female vs. male)	0.68 (0.47 – 0.98)	0.036	0.97 (0.74 – 1.28)	0.814
Caucasian ethnicity (Yes vs. no)	1.58 (1.15 – 2.17)	0.005	0.84 (0.65 – 1.08)	0.172
Stable relationship (currently) (Yes vs. no)	0.69 (0.50 – 0.95)	0.023	1.43 (1.12 – 1.83)	0.005
Regular employment† (Yes vs. no)	0.93 (0.67 – 1.27)	0.630	1.28 (1.00 – 1.64)	0.048
Frequent alcohol use (>4 drinks/day) † (Yes vs. no)	2.33 (1.69 – 3.22)	<0.001	0.76 (0.60 – 0.97)	0.030
Binge drug use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.38 (0.97 – 1.97)	0.072	0.76 (0.58 – 1.00)	0.051
Daily heroin use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.74 (1.10 – 2.74)	0.018	0.66 (0.45 – 0.97)	0.037
Daily cocaine use*† (Yes vs. no)	0.64 (0.18 – 2.28)	0.492	0.64 (0.27 – 1.54)	0.322
Daily crystal meth use*† (Yes vs. no)	1.11 (0.67 – 1.84)	0.693	0.64 (0.45 – 0.93)	0.018
Daily crack smoking† (Yes vs. no)	2.35 (1.46 – 3.80)	0.001	0.96 (0.66 – 1.39)	0.813
Difficulty accessing addiction treatment † (Yes vs. no)	1.91 (1.11 – 3.30)	0.020	0.53 (0.35 – 0.80)	0.003
Incarceration† (Yes vs. no)	2.00 (1.32 – 3.03)	0.001	0.68 (0.50 – 0.92)	0.013
Drug dealing† (Yes vs. no)	1.53 (1.07 – 2.17)	0.020	0.89 (0.68 – 1.18)	0.421

Characteristic	Housed to Homeless vs. Consistently Housed		Homeless to Housed vs. Consistently Homeless	
	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p - value	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p - value
Sex work† (Yes vs. no)	0.88 (0.47 – 1.65)	0.690	1.59 (0.98 – 2.60)	0.061

* Injection or non-injection use
† Refers to activities in the past six months

Figure 2. Substance-related factors associated with transitions into and out of homelessness among a cohort of street-involved youth in Vancouver.

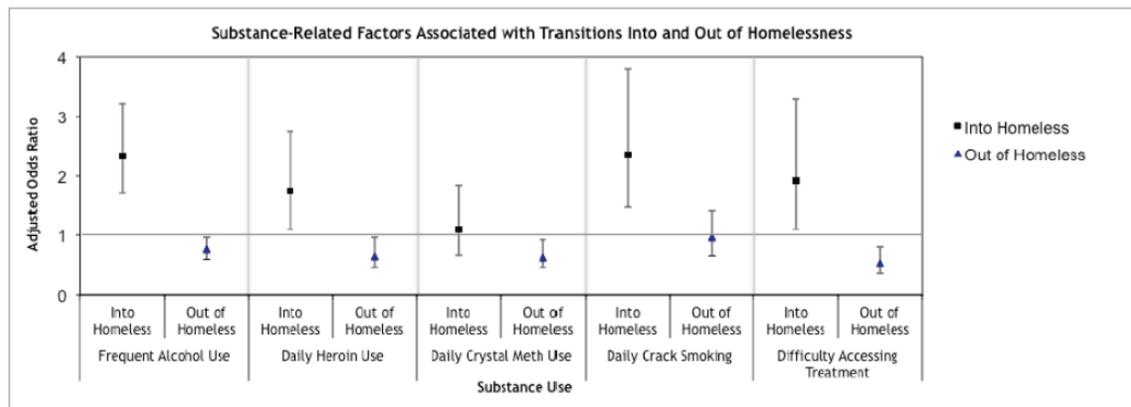
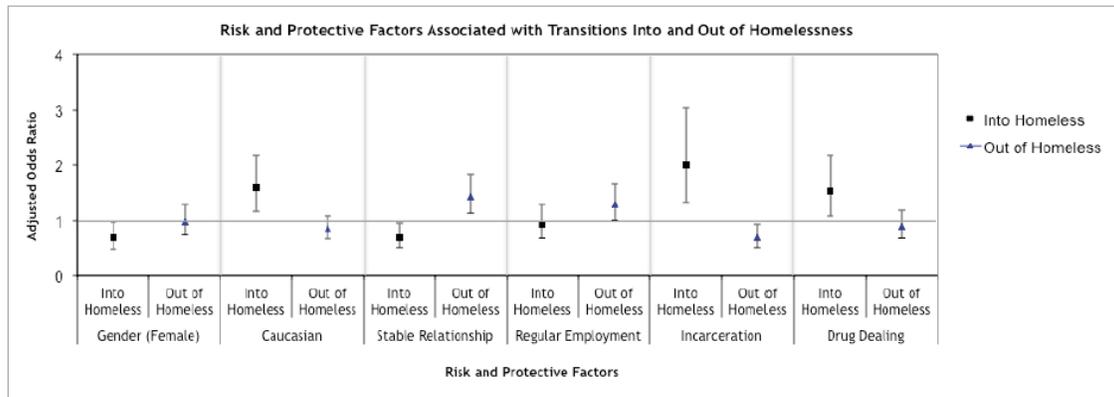


Figure 3. Risk and protective factors associated with transitions into and out of homelessness among a cohort of street-involved youth in Vancouver.



5.2. Discussion

This study demonstrates a high rate of transitioning in and out of homelessness, with 213 (31%) participants making at least one transition into homelessness, and 386 (56%) making at least one transition out of homelessness over the study period. Higher intensity drug and alcohol use, difficulty accessing addiction treatment and recent incarceration were positively associated with transitions into homelessness and negatively associated with transitions out of homelessness. Conversely, being in a stable relationship was negatively associated with transitioning into homelessness and positively associated with transitioning out of homelessness. Regular employment was positively associated with transitioning out of homelessness, while daily crystal meth users were significantly less likely to transition out of homelessness.

The clear association between high intensity drug use and transitions into homelessness found in our study is consistent with existing literature. The relationship between housing instability and substance use is well established (Corneil et al., 2006; Milburn, Rotheram-Borus, Rice, Mallet, & Rosenthal, 2006; Roy et al., 2003), and residential stability has been linked with decreased alcohol and polydrug consumption among street-youth in other settings (Roy et al., 2011). It is unclear why there were large variances in the results for the different drug use variables, however, they all follow the

same pattern of facilitating transitions into and preventing transitions out of homelessness (although not all the associations are significant).

While associations between incarceration and homelessness have been well described among adult substance users (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007; S. A. Gaetz & O'Grady, 2006; Gowan, 2002)(Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007; Gowan, 2002), the relationship between exposure to the criminal justice system and greater likelihood of transitioning into homelessness as well as greater difficulty transitioning out of homelessness among youth has to my knowledge not been previously described. Furthermore, to my knowledge, this study is also the first to document an association between transitions in housing status and difficulty accessing addiction treatment among street-involved youth.

The results from this study also point to two protective factors that merit attention. Firstly, those in a stable relationship were less likely to transition into and more likely to transition out of homelessness. Further study is required to better understand the complex dimensions and impacts of intimate, and non-intimate, partnerships among street-involved youth. Secondly, regular employment was associated with transitioning out of homelessness, and therefore provides additional evidence for investing in job related skills training and job-seeking services for youth (Sonenstein, Marshall, & Tandon, 2011).

Limitations of quantitative data

There are several limitations to this study. First, ARYS participants were not recruited using randomized sampling, and therefore these findings may not generalize to other drug-using youth populations in Vancouver or other settings. However, extensive street-based outreach was used, and the demographic profile of ARYS participants is similar to other street-youth samples in Vancouver (Miller, Strathdee, Kerr, Li, & Wood, 2006; Ochnio, Patrick, Ho, Talling, & Dobson, 2001). Secondly, the analysis does not focus exclusively on the first-incidence of homelessness. Thirdly, the data does not investigate any relationship between transitioning into homelessness and history of foster care. As mentioned previously (Section 3.3.2), a large number of street-involved youth have experienced foster care, and therefore the effects of this should be tested for significance. The data also has some low cell counts, and it does not account for

differences among older and younger youth, and personality disorders, especially anti-social tendencies, or mental health illnesses that may be confounding some of the variables such as regular employment, incarceration, and stable relationship.

6. Qualitative Findings

6.1. Results

6.1.1. Youth Stakeholder

I conducted one in-depth qualitative interview with a 24 year-old street-involved youth (referred to as “Kelly” in this report) to explore policies that would have helped prevent Kelly’s first incidence of homelessness. This interview was conducted in February 2013 in the ARYS office and lasted an hour and half.

Kelly’s first incidence of homelessness was in the middle of grade 10 at the age of 17 in Edmonton. She moved to Vancouver and has lived there for a total of six years, the first three years of which she was homeless, and the last three years have been spent (unstably) housed. Since obtaining housing three years ago, Kelly has lived in four different SROs, but all her housing has been managed by the same service organization. At the time of the interview, she had recently moved into an SRO, but was there only temporarily as she waited for her previous SRO building to be completely upgraded. She was expecting to be transferred again to “a *better [SRO]*” to live until the building upgrades are finished.

A number of different themes emerged from the interview with Kelly, including why she left home, the role of schools, barriers to housing, and the meaning of stable housing. Please see Appendix F for a reflexivity analysis of this interview.

Leaving Home

Kelly stated that because of conflict with her family (likely related to both her mother and father’s mental illnesses), she began living in a group home at the age of eleven, an environment which she described as “*not stable*”. Ultimately, she stated that the reason why she became homeless was “*because of not getting along with my family*”

and stuff". She left her group home and subsequently dropped out of school; an experience typical for youth in care (de Best, 2012).

Kelly explained that it was difficult to think of what could have prevented her first incidence of homelessness, but when prompted, noted that some kind of counsellor who works with families may have helped. As the discussion deepened, however, it became apparent that leaving home was the best option for her. She felt that *"I don't think anything could've helped because I think my mom was just mentally ill and my dad was mentally ill"* and her group home was not a safe environment for her: *"you got people breaking into your room and stealing your stuff"*. Ultimately, she appreciated outreach support to find independent housing (*"I found it helpful that they came right to the shelter"*) rather than interventions to keep her in the group home or reunite with her family.

The Role of Schools

Kelly dropped out of school at the age of sixteen, prior to finishing grade ten. She became pregnant around the same time she dropped out of school, but felt that was not a barrier to her attending school as much as not having stable housing. When asked whether it is too hard to be homeless and stay in school, she replied *"I don't think so. I don't think it's way too hard"*. Over the course of the interview, she expressed desire for graduating from high school, but more than that, she wished she had never left school. When asked how stable housing would make a difference in her life, her first response was *"I want to go back to school so I think I'd probably be able to do that. Focus on school, schoolwork and everything, that's what I would do."* This regret for not finishing school is common among people who dropout from high school (Bowlby & McMullan, 2002; Price Waterhouse, 1990), and points to the need for targeted interventions to give youth the best chance at completing their education.

Barriers to housing

The main barriers to housing described in the interview with Kelly were manifested in requests for personal identification to access services, and refusing to serve youth of a certain age.

Personal Identification

Kelly described nearly being refused housing with an SRO because her and her partner (referred to here as “Luke”) did not have any identification: *“when me and [Luke] first got into the Drake hotel, that was a barrier because neither of us had government I.D. So we almost didn’t get in”*. This is also supported by the literature, which has commented on this barrier to housing (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012).

Many youth may be leaving home before they have obtained formal government-issued identification such as BC ID, a social insurance number or driver’s license. Furthermore, when youth flee their home, they may not think of taking their birth certificate. Kelly questioned the need for identification, and suggested that *“[services] should be a little bit more understanding too and maybe, maybe give you some time or....But yeah, it’s hard to get I.D.”* Kelly named one service that assists youth with obtaining their identification, Covenant House, but noted that Covenant House has a firm age limit

Ageing Out of Services

Services for youth impose some age limits which are a barrier to housing for some youth. One popular service for youth is the Directions Youth Services Centre (Directions). It primarily serves youth aged 18 and under, but will provide some support to youth up to the age of 24. Kelly described Directions as flexible and willing to give her food even though she is slightly over the age limit. Consequently, she stated *“I felt at home at Directions”*. This was contrasted with Covenant House, which Kelly described as inflexible with serving youth over their age limit: *“they don’t really help you anymore”*.

Stable housing

When describing what “stable housing” meant to her, Kelly described a situation where *“you have your daily thing going and you’re just comfortable and happy and content”*. When thinking about this, she saw herself in a condominium where she could live for an indefinite amount of time with Luke. Her dream, similar to the dream of many other marginally housed individuals, was to receive housing through BC Housing, a provincial crown agency in British Columbia. The appeal of BC Housing is that the

housing they provide tends to be in scattered sites. This results in housing recipients being able to experience “normal” housing and live in a healthy atmosphere versus the reported chaos of SROs (Krusi et al., 2010), which Kelly described as *“like a jail cell, it sucks... It’s just like a white room with a bed and a sink and that’s it”*. Kelly explained the main appeal of BC Housing simply as *“[y]ou don’t feel like you’re in the system”*, which echoes the benefits of mixed-housing developments (Brophy & Smith, 1997; Galster, 2007).

This desire to feel independent from a “system” also reflects Kelly’s wish for normalcy. She described her daily routine when she was homeless as consisting of trying to meet basic needs, and complained about how *“you don’t really have time to get your life together”*. She noted that the best part of having housing is *“[m]y family being proud of me and actually having places to mail me stuff and leave messages”*.

Kelly believes that being stably housed would make all the difference in her life. She sees herself going back to school and graduating, and then being able to begin a career, which is only possible with housing: *“it takes up so much time when you’re homeless just getting your basic needs met that you don’t really have time to get your life together”*. Even though a condominium through BC Housing was her ideal housing, she described her time spent living in her most recent SRO (the building that is currently being upgraded) as stable since she and Luke had been living there for a few years and she had made friends with her neighbours. As a testament to the value of providing marginally housed individuals with housing that they can live in long term, even if it is an SRO, Kelly explained how she and Luke had found a continuing education centre before moving out of their SRO because of the renovations: *“me and [Luke] already have a place picked out and... It kind of sucked getting moved from Gastown because it’s really close to where we live... so hopefully if/when we go back to the Dominion [we can] go back there too”*.

Policy Options

A number of possibilities for preventing the first-incident of youth homelessness arose from the interview. These include: supports offered in schools, outreach workers, reasonable rules in housing services, not feeling like “you’re in a system” (via BC Housing), and supportive housing. The supportive housing option was particularly

favourable to Kelly, as she explained how her life would be different if she had access to something like that when she was first leaving her group home *“I think it would’ve been much better. I probably would’ve been able to have a relationship with my daughter and my family would’ve been able to see my daughter too... Things would’ve probably went the way they’re supposed to go”*.

A common quality among these options is that they reach out to youth, meeting them where they are (geographically and personally), and promote independence. Kelly described her attachment to Downtown South, an area of downtown Vancouver that is popular with marginally housed young people, and wished that there more services for her in the area: *“whether or not I’m living [right] here, I still come here every day”*. Policy-makers should consider ensuring that any interventions they design for at-risk youth features these attributes.

This interview raises some tension between best practices as considered by the MCFD and Kelly’s perspective. On the one hand, the MCFD believes that the family is the best living environment for youth (Ministry for Children and Families, 2000), and on the other hand, the participant did not see living with her family as a feasible or desirable option for her. Given that every youth’s situation is different, it is unclear how to generalize from this interview, and more research is needed to unravel this.

6.1.2. Professional Stakeholders

I conducted interviews with five professional stakeholders with expertise on the topic of at-risk youth. Interviews took place between February and April 2013 over the telephone, with the exception of the Ethnographer. These individuals were asked to describe factors that contribute to homelessness, and how they think first-time homelessness can be prevented among youth.

Upstream Factors

The most prominent theme arising from these interviews was the need to address upstream factors; most stakeholders described the early risk factors in the family home as one of the most important contributors to youth homelessness. These factors include issues such as family conflict, mental health issues, learning disabilities

and substance abuse. As described by the Research Scientist, traumatic childhood experiences can have a negative long-term effect on youth, making them more susceptible to a range of harms (e.g. substance abuse) that are associated with transitioning into homelessness.

Furthermore, when asked how they felt the first-incidence of youth homelessness could be prevented, most stakeholders described the importance of addressing issues in the home long before youth may begin thinking of leaving home. Indeed, both the Retired Teacher and the Youth Addictions Practitioner stated that a stable, safe home environment was the most important factor associated with youths' housing stability. Among the Youth Addictions Practitioner, Retired Teacher, and Regional Planner, it was felt that interventions to support the youth and family were best delivered through schools. For the Retired Teacher, the education and socio-economic status of the parents was also an important component of this issue.

The Youth Addictions Practitioner stated that youth need one caring adult in their lives, and this ostensibly simple initiative would make a world of difference for the youth. Ideally, this caring adult is the child's parent, but can also be a teacher, community worker, or any responsible or trustworthy adult with at least the willingness and tenacity to learn how to navigate community and government services. It is important, however, that this caring adult is willing to help the young person over the long-term, as the Ethnographer described the impermanence of some social workers: "*they go on vacation or whatever and then you get transferred over to a new [social worker]... and suddenly they don't know the whole story*". When considered in the context of Vancouver, this caring adult can help youth move past any barriers to accessing services.

This can also foster a sense of belonging among youth, where both the Youth Addictions Practitioner and Retired Teacher felt that a sense of belonging in the school and community were essential for youth. It is important to highlight, however, that all respondents felt that a spectrum of services is critical for youth and families to address the range of social, structural, and behavioural factors that contribute to unstable home environments.

Role of Government

The Regional Planner spoke of the importance of government action and inaction in contributing to youth homelessness. This includes the inability of some government systems (e.g. the child welfare and corrections systems) to provide sufficient care and protection to young people, and lack of meaningful progress on issues like poverty, such as instituting a “living wage” (Neumark & Adams, 2003).

All professional stakeholders also described the lack of appropriate quantity and quality of housing stock in Vancouver. The Research Scientist highlighted the violence and danger associated with some SROs, largely due to the negative effects of drug use, as well as social exclusion in the form of limited ability to participate in the economic, social, and political life of their society. The provincial government has recently embarked on an initiative to renovate SROs (BC Housing, 2012), but the Ethnographer indicated that this is not enough:

You know it's easy for [people] to think, 'Oh, this'll really fix things,' because they've never stepped foot in anywhere or really know [what it's like for a young person to live in an SRO]. They've never had a conversation with somebody about, 'Well, this is actually what it's like'.

Consequently, the stakeholders felt that youth needed better housing, as some existing housing is unsafe and inappropriate for youth.

6.2. Discussion

All stakeholders interviewed echoed a sense of frustration with structural factors in Vancouver that are associated with youth homelessness, such as lack of supports for youth and their families, and a paucity of appropriate housing options. The professional stakeholders consulted here felt that a number of different factors contribute to youth becoming homelessness, but overwhelmingly stated that if the family can be supported, then the likelihood of a young person becoming homeless would be reduced. The concern over lack of appropriate housing stock was reflected by both the youth and professional stakeholders, who each echoed the need for more suitable alternatives to SROs. This is also consistent with the literature describing SROs as chaotic and unsafe

environments (Section 2). Furthermore, the failure of child welfare systems was discussed by both Kelly, who first experienced homelessness after leaving her group home, and the Regional Planner. This is congruent with the literature around outcomes for youth who have experience in government care, and points to areas for policy improvement.

There was some contrast between the youth's responses and the professionals'. The professionals took a much broader approach to considering how to prevent the first-incident of homelessness, looking to interventions in a child's early years to ensure that he or she does not become at-risk for homelessness; Kelly thought primarily of how to move directly into supportive housing after leaving her group home. The views are not entirely incompatible, where Kelly had experienced the failure of child welfare systems and lack of familial support for her parents, and felt the need to think beyond early interventions with the family. Consequently, the qualitative data supports the need for a range of services in order to prevent youth from leaving their family home prematurely and if they do leave home, ensuring a safe out-of-home environment for youth.

Limitations of qualitative data

These qualitative findings have limitations. Firstly, only one young person and five professionals were interviewed. Although the professional stakeholders were a diverse group, representatives from front-line services for at-risk youth (e.g. shelters) would have provided valuable input. Given the time constraints of this research, it was not possible to seek out and interview anyone from this group. In addition, the youth stakeholder interview was a case study and therefore is not generalizable to other populations; Kelly believed, however, that other youth could be helped by the services she suggested. Secondly, Kelly may have been providing socially desirable responses to the interview questions. This was mitigated as much as possible by building rapport with the participant and assuring her that the interview was confidential.

7. Policy Options

Given Kelly's experiences, there are a number of different approaches that one may take to preventing youth homelessness. Although it is clear that the child welfare system is an important factor to consider when exploring risk for homelessness, this research is focused on moving slightly beyond the needs of young children and preadolescents, to providing very tangible and targeted policies for teenagers and young adults.

Policy options addressing this issue can be located within Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's theory, which is used here for its unique placement of human development among different environmental levels, or "systems", in society (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Placing the policy options within this theory has the benefit of providing some perspective for where the option fits in society and how individuals will interact with it. Other theories of human development, such as those from Piaget (Piaget, 1952), Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 2012), and Bandura (Bandura, 1977) tend to focus almost exclusively on the individual, with little reference to the broader social environment.

Bronfenbrenner identifies five systems that co-exist in societies and affect the individual differently. Moving from the broadest to the narrowest system, these include the macrosystem (the culture, attitudes, and ideologies of a society), exosystem (the broad institutions of one's society, social services, the media, and extended social networks), mesosystem (the interaction between the exosystem and microsystem), microsystem (the family, and institutions that individuals interact with, such as schools and health services) , and the individual (including socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, and health) (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Policy options are also situated in one (or more) of three types of youth policy and one (or more) of four different theoretical approaches to working with youth (Jeffrey, 2008).

For the purposes of these policy options, a youth is considered homeless if he or she is sleeping outside, or is unstably housed. Unstably housed youth may be sleeping in shelters or couch surfing (with no certain plans for transitioning into stable housing), or living in single-room occupancy buildings (SROs). Housed youth may be sleeping in their family home, temporary housing, or permanent housing. Youth can be considered housed if they are sleeping in a shelter that is directly connected to longer term housing, and the transition to that can be supported by staff.

The policy options offered here are generated from Kelly’s interview responses, and span prevention services through to out-of-home placement options in an attempt to meet the needs of youth and families, older and younger youth, those from and outside Vancouver, and the range of needs that exist among any heterogeneous group of youths. The status quo has not been considered as a policy option, since the current situation is not ideal.

7.1. Policy Option 1: Personal I.D. Obtainment Program

Level	Type
Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system level	Microsystem
Type of policy	Population-based
Theoretical approach	Risk prevention and resiliency

This policy option creates a personal identification obtainment program for youth to access housing-related services. As mentioned in the literature review and by Kelly, youth can be turned away from services if they do not have identification, and obtaining identification can be a time-consuming process. This was echoed by the Ethnographer, who hears youth say their number one priority is getting their identification.

Most children growing up can depend on their parents to have all the necessary documents and assist them with applying for a British Columbia Identification Card (BC ID), but many children do not have this luxury. Also, youth may not think of taking their birth certificate when they leave their homes for the street (Vilbert & Meyer, 2011).

This policy option will not prevent youth from leaving their family home, but it is expected to ensure that youth are not left on the streets because of no personal identification.

This program will be situated in schools, and should be “opt-out” so that most students and families participate, even those who do not consider themselves to be “at-risk”. Some students drop out of school at the age of 14 or 15, but most tend to stay until they are no longer legally required to (age 16) (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). Therefore, a program targeting students in grade 7 or 8 will capture most students who drop out of school. Schools are already used for similar purposes, such as for administering vaccines, and it is expected that using the school as a home base for the program will increase connections with both parents and teens.

This policy option is unique, given that there are no known programs like this in any community or school. Because there are no “tried and true” program formats described in the literature, the exact form of this program may be determined at a later time through the use of focus groups or consultations with school staff. Generally, however, it will require either the young person or a parent to bring certain documents to school, where a staff member or trained volunteer will assist them to apply for a BC ID. There are obviously confidentiality issues to be resolved and the issue of students carrying around their birth certificates at school, but parents can be asked to come to the school carrying the necessary documents. If adult volunteers are used, criminal record checks can ensure that no one with a history of fraud or other criminal behaviour is privy to the private information on birth certificates, social insurance numbers, and bank cards. In the event that a student does not have the identification needed to obtain BC ID, the volunteer or staff person should assist the family as much as possible and continue following through with the service until the young person has their BC ID. If parents are involved, the school must ensure that these clinics are provided at a number of times during the day, with translators, and after school to match the schedules of all parents.

In addressing this issue of identification, an alternative policy option is a government mandate that services stop requiring identification. I decided to offer an identification obtainment program instead because (a) having identification is generally useful and most families can benefit from assistance with this process, and (b) services

for street populations have security and safety concerns, which are partially addressed by knowing exactly who is in the building.

7.2. Policy Option 2: Supportive Housing

Level	Score
Bronfenbrenner's ecological system level	Exosystem
Type of policy	Targeted policies for sub-groups
Theoretical approach	Risk prevention and resiliency

This policy option fits with Kelly's experience, recommendations in other reports for solving youth homelessness in Vancouver (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007; Millar et al., 2009), and suggestions from the professional stakeholders. As described in the interview, there are two building construction projects currently underway in Vancouver that provide this particular supportive housing service. This policy option will be evaluated based on the existing situation in Vancouver, with the goal to increase the number of supportive housing units if deemed favourable.

When considering policy options aimed at housing youth and providing them with supports, this option was seen as preferable to a more incremental approach that would see shelters partnering with existing housing, rather than building entirely new buildings. This approach was rejected because the number of appropriate supportive housing units already in Vancouver is woefully inadequate. In 2007, a report counted 169 beds for youth from a combination of services such as safe houses, emergency shelters, transitional housing, and supportive housing (Kraus & Woodward, 2007). Given the most conservative estimate of street-youth in Vancouver on any one day (Section 2), these beds can accommodate just over half of those youth.

This policy option creates a fully supported housing program for youth (younger and older), which has an emergency shelter on the ground floor, and supportive housing above. It is expected that this option will fill a service gap for older youth, as described by the Ethnographer, although the Regional Planner suggested that rent subsidies would also be an effective route to accomplish this. Regardless of their situation or

circumstances, youth can access both the shelter and housing by their own initiative or by referral from a professional. Eventually, youth will be able to move out of the housing complex with a network of support, life skills, and a job. Independent living is considered ideal, and reflects a desire, as described by Kelly, to obtain housing where “[y]ou don’t feel like you’re in the system”.

One feature of this policy option that will be important is maintaining connections with school. Kelly reflected that even though living at home was not an option for her, she would have liked to complete her schooling as she lived at a shelter. This policy option will give youth the opportunity to live away from home and school attendance will be encouraged and actively supported.

The government, BC Housing, or a non-governmental organization may own and/or operate the facilities. Based on the literature review, it is essential that the staff members working with youth are able to be non-judgemental and refrain from pressuring the youth to change their behaviours. Similarly, the rules in the shelter and building should be as non-restrictive as possible, while maintaining order and safety. This includes taking a harm reduction approach, which will tolerate substance use. Although it may be counter-intuitive to have few restrictions on youth, this is consistent with a “housing first” approach (Atherton & Nicholls, 2008) and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954), where people must have their basic needs met (such as housing) before any behavioural or developmental issues can be addressed.

7.3. Policy Option 3: Youth Worker in Secondary Schools

Level	Score
Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system level	Microsystem
Type of policy	Targeted policies for sub-groups
Theoretical approach	Risk prevention and resiliency

This policy option would see a youth worker brought into secondary schools to interact with and support youth who seem to be at-risk for homelessness. This policy option is generated from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, which collectively

point to the harms of substance use and difficulty accessing addiction treatment as factors associated with transitioning into homelessness, and the benefits of providing assistance for the family, and providing youth with a supportive adult. There are alternative routes to reducing substance use among youth, such as drug education programs and increased addiction treatment availability, but introducing a youth worker in schools best fits the data gathered from Kelly (Section 6.1.1). The youth worker is also well-placed to connect youth with services to reduce substance use and otherwise address any social and development issues.

Youth who are at-risk for homelessness may not be attending school regularly, but most youth attend until the age of 16, when they are legally allowed to discontinue their education (Vallerand et al., 1997). Because British Columbia does not have middle schools, youth enter high school in grade 8, around the age of 13 or 14. This is well before the age at which youth are legally able to stop attending school, and will also catch youth who repeated a grade (making them older at the time of entry into high school).

It is unclear exactly what this arrangement would look like, but based on preliminary research, it appears that a partnership with a non-profit organization would be ideal; the Regional Planner also supports a partnership like this. This will relieve schools of the burden of hiring and paying for youth workers entirely themselves, and relieve both guidance counsellors and counsellors of duties outside their expertise (although the youth worker should be liaising with both). This option also avoids the use of “school liaison officers” (police officers stationed in schools), who youth may have difficulty trusting or approaching.

It is important to note that these youth workers should be able to maintain relationships and provide assistance to youth if they decide to drop out of school. This will ensure that youth have a supportive adult in their life who, hopefully, has built up a rapport with the youth, and can encourage the youth to return to school. If the student decides to return to school, the worker can help smooth the youths’ way by speaking with the principal and liaising with teachers.

This program is aligned with “wrap-around” interventions which are designed to mobilize community and school-based supports around at risk youth (Martin, Tobin, & Sugai, 2003). Generally, wrap-around interventions are a type of planning process which involves the child and family in order to provide a set of services and supports that are uniquely suited to achieve positive outcomes (Wyles, 2007). There are ten key principles that wrap-around interventions should adhere to, some of which include: a community-based focus, “no reject, no eject” policy, creative and individualized approaches to planning and delivery, and the active participation of children and families (Wyles, 2007).

The school will inform its students (and parents) of this new program, and the youth worker will also proactively seek at-risk students. To ensure confidentiality for the youth, the youth worker can ensure that he or she is seen talking with students from various backgrounds, so that being seen with the youth worker is not automatically associated with being at-risk. The youth worker can also have a secure box for youth to slip in requests for appointments, or correspond with youth over email. Furthermore, the youth worker can use his or her off-site office space to meet with youth and their families if there are confidentiality issues in the school.

A youth worker from a non-profit group will already have strong community ties, and be able to bridge the school and community environments smoothly. One possible non-profit organization that would have capacity for such a program is PLEA. PLEA has a number of different programs designed to support youth to meet their developmental, academic, and employment goals. The GOAL program is an example of this, and is supported by a partnership with the school district and MCFD. PLEA’s program is only one possibility for delivering this service to youth; the exact nature and details of this program can be determined at a later time through focus groups with youth, school staff, and youth workers.

While the Vancouver School Board and other secondary schools around the province have adopted the wrap-around approach, their planning around this is not well-described and “wrap-around” appears to be used as more of a “buzz word” than as a fully integrated planning service for at-risk youth. Given the school board’s simultaneous interest in wrap-around interventions and conspicuous lack of overt

integration of this type of youth-centred planning, this policy option is offered as a broad, principled approach that the Vancouver School Board should consider.

8. Criteria and Measures for Policy Options

Policy options are evaluated based on five broad objectives which were developed *a priori* to the development of the policy options. The list of major objectives, criteria, and their measures are set out in Table 4.

Table 4. The major objectives, criteria, and measures used for evaluating policy options in this study.

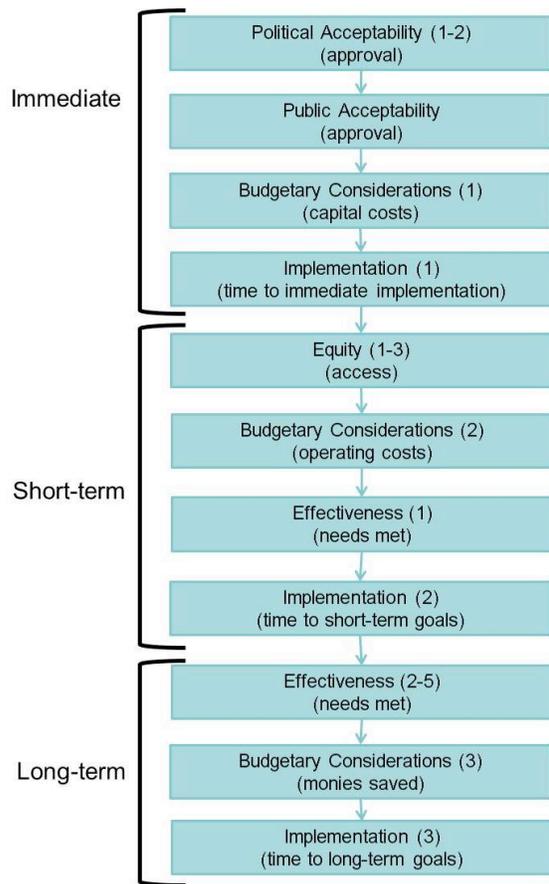
Major Objective	Criteria	Measures
Societal Objectives		
Effectiveness	Ability of the policy option to foster growth in at-risk youth into healthy and responsible adults.	
	<i>Maslow's hierarchy of needs:</i>	Adapted from MCFD principles:
	<i>Physiological and Safety</i>	(1) Involve youth in creating safe environments.
	<i>Belonging</i>	(2) Build on family and adult relationships. (3) Respect culture and beliefs.
	<i>Esteem and Self-Actualization</i>	(4) Youth-centred.
	<i>Integrated service delivery</i>	(5) "High risk youth are supported by an integrated case management and service delivery approach"
Equity	Accessibility of program to at-risk youth	(1) Awareness of program/policy
		(2) Low-barrier entry
		(3) Geographic proximity
Governmental Objectives		
Implementation	Ease of implementation	(1) Time to immediate start-up of policy (estimated # of months)
		(2) Time to meet short-term goals (estimated # of months)
		(3) Time to meet long-term goals (estimated # of months)

Major Objective	Criteria	Measures
Affordability	Total cost of the policy option	(1) Projected capital cost (\$)
		(2) Projected operating cost (\$)
		(3) Projected monies saved (\$)
Acceptability	Approval from Government	(1) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)
	Approval from public	(2) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)

Youth acceptability is not explicitly identified in the criteria because the policy options flow directly from the interview with Kelly.

The criteria here can be expressed in a temporal chain, which illustrates the criteria which must be met immediately and then criteria which becomes relevant in the short- and long-term (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Temporal chain for criteria used to evaluate policy options.



8.1. Ranking of Objectives

The objectives outlined above are all very important when evaluating the policy options, however, there is one objective that supersedes the others. Because preventing the first incidence of homelessness among youth is the main objective of this study, the effectiveness criterion is double-weighted in the analysis.

8.2. Measures

Policy options receive a colour as their score. The colour assigned for each sub-criterion or sub-measure reflects a poor (red), fair (yellow), or good (green) possibility of achieving the sub-criterion's goal. The precise definition of the poor, fair, or

good score changes slightly depending on the nature of the measure. The use of colours, instead of numbers, are required because, for many policy options, only estimates are available and it is therefore difficult to be more precise or exact with the scores. The next section explains each objective and criterion, and details the specifics for scoring each.

Possibility of achieving objective	Colour
Good	
Fair	
Poor	

8.3. Societal Objectives

The societal objectives in this study include criteria that are concerned with the well-being of society, and in particular, youth.

8.3.1. Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion is the most important criteria to this study, and therefore, is double-weighted. This criterion describes the ability of the policy option to meet youths’ basic needs and foster growth in at-risk youth towards becoming healthy and responsible adults. The measures for this criterion situate five working principles for effective youth services developed by the MCFD within Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs describes four stages that must be successively met in order for a person to reach self-actualization: physiological, safety, belonging/love, and esteem (Maslow, 1954). Although this theory is almost seventy years old, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is still relevant today (Serlin, 2011). In particular, the wellness and wholeness of being associated with the achievement of self-actualization is evoked in the concept of “well-being”, which is becoming recognized

as an essential feature of people's lives. Consequently, governments are beginning to incorporate well-being considerations into their policy-making (Bok, 2010).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was selected over other similar theories. The theories of William James (James, 1890), Mathes (Mathes, 1981), and Alderfer (Alderfer, 1972) were considered, but each was deemed to be either too complex or too simplistic for this study; Maslow's provided an excellent balance between breadth and simplicity, which aligned with the intent of this research.

The first stage, physiological, describes the first level of needs that must be met. This includes the provision of food, water, and shelter. The next level is safety, which ensures that there is no threat to a person's body and health. The third condition is belonging. This condition describes the friendship and family connections that a person needs to feel accepted. Esteem, the fourth condition, describes the confidence, respect for others, and respect by others that fosters positive self-esteem. The final stage is self-actualization. In this stage, a person is self-fulfilled and able to realise their potential (Maslow, 1954).

The stages have been modified slightly for the purposes of this study. The original stages include sex (physiological stage) and intimate partnerships (belonging stage) as needs that are necessary for self-actualization. These are legitimate needs for people, but it would be inappropriate for a government-endorsed policy to actively promote or facilitate either of these with the specific intent to increase youths' access to housing. Therefore, they have been removed from the measures used to evaluate the proposed policy options.

Any policy option to prevent youth homelessness will, at the minimum, meet the first condition (the provision of shelter, warmth, and food). Ideally, the policy option fulfills at least some of the other conditions so that the youth have an opportunity to develop their potential as human beings. This criterion rewards policy options that are able to encourage personal growth among the youth.

MCFD's Working Principles for Effective Youth Services

The MCFD created a framework for effective youth policy as a guideline for their own involvement with youth and families (Ministry for Children and Families, 2000). It details their philosophy towards policies and program development for their target population, and consequently, it provides direction for MCFD action. According to the MCFD, youth policies should meet the following five principles.

Involve Youth in Creating Safe Environments

This sub-criterion requires that policy options incorporate a number of different approaches to ensure the health and security of both the youth and families. Policies that meet this sub-criterion will meet youths' basic physiological and safety needs, and provide health information to the youth and families in an easily accessible format. These policies will not restrict information or access to information and will take evidence-based approaches to interventions such as sexual health education. This principle fits both of Maslow's physiological and safety needs.

Build on Family and Adult Relationships

The MCFD recognizes that the family is the preferred living environment for youth, and believes that policies designed for at-risk youth should strive to maintain these relationships where possible. This includes ensuring that both the family and the youth are supported in creating a safe and supportive environment. In a slight deviation from the principles as set out by the MCFD, this research study will consider the development of healthy friendships with peers as part of this principle. These needs are reflected in Maslow's stage of belongingness.

Respect Culture and Beliefs

This sub-criterion evaluates the extent to which a proposed policy or program builds on and preserves the cultural identity of families and communities. Although it is difficult to find a definitive definition for "culture" due to its natural fluidity and ambiguity, for the purposes of this study, culture shall be defined as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2013). Cultural considerations are especially important for British Columbia, which has a high number of immigrants (30%) (British Columbia, no date) and a high

proportion of Aboriginal street-youth (Basi et al., 2012). Because the MCFD's principles have no explicit consideration for those who experience discrimination because of their sexuality, this principle will be adapted to include these concerns.

Policies that meet this sub-criterion will, at the very least, be sensitive to different cultural needs and norms such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, and lifestyle. This includes ensuring that relevant parties are educated about these issues and the policy option is flexible enough to accommodate diverse needs (e.g. same-sex relationships, different religions, different belief systems). This principle also fits with Maslow's need for belongingness.

Youth-Centred

This sub-criterion acknowledges youth as active agents who are capable of understanding much of what is happening in their environment. With this foundation, this principle aims to promote policies that encourage youth to take control over their health and well-being, with adequate support from professionals. Similarly, youth should be treated with respect and fairness. Policies that meet this sub-criterion will operate under the assumption that youth know what is best for their situation and, unless there is an emergency situation, there will be no attempt to control the youth or their actions. This principle fits with both of Maslow's esteem and self-actualization needs.

Integrated Planning and Service Delivery

Integrated planning and service delivery is extremely important for ensuring that youth and families are given the benefit of professionals with different areas of expertise, without allowing the program to fragment. Policies that meet this sub-criterion will support the youth and their families by using a number of different practitioners, and crucially, will assimilate the best practices from each of these to ensure cohesion.

This principle does not fit into Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but is considered as a separate sub-criterion.

8.3.2. Equity

The equity criterion describes the accessibility of the policy option (or program) to all youth. A good policy option must reach a wide range of youth and be geographically available to them. There are three sub-criteria to this criterion.

Awareness of the Policy

The first sub-criterion is awareness of the policy (or program). In order for a policy to be effective, youth must be aware of its existence. Furthermore, *all* youth must be aware of its existence, not just youth in a certain area, at a certain school, or otherwise.

Low-Barrier Entry

The second sub-criterion is that the policy must have a low-barrier to entry. Youth experience a number of barriers to accessing services such as confidentiality, personal identification requirements, and judgemental staff (Ensign & Gittelsohn, 1998; Meade & Slesnick, 2002). A policy option that has low-barrier entry means that staff are sensitive youth needs, do not preach to youth, do not require personal identification, have a stated and upfront policy of not automatically contacting youths' parents (although parents may be contacted with youths' consent and parental contact may be encouraged), and guarantee confidentiality.

Geographic Proximity

The third sub-criterion is that the program must be within a reasonable geographic proximity. A policy option or program must be easily physically accessible to all youth, regardless of their neighbourhood, community, school, socio-economic status, or disability. This sub-criterion strives to recognize that at-risk youth come from all walks of life, and policy makers should not assume that all at-risk youth come from one particular area or prefer to receive services in one particular area. Policy options will meet this sub-criterion if they are located in each neighbourhood or school catchment area.

8.4. Governmental Objectives

These objectives are not specifically concerned with the policy problem of preventing youth homelessness, but are necessary to consider when developing policies that will largely be funded or delivered by governments.

8.4.1. *Implementation*

This criterion describes the ease of implementation for the policy option, using time as a proxy for ease. This includes the length of time of immediate implementation (i.e. the amount of time for the program to begin operating and actually serving youth), and, once the policy option has been implemented, the length of time (estimated in months) required to meet short-term goals (physiological and safety needs) and long-term goals (belonging, esteem, and self-actualization). Given the difficulty with determining precisely when a policy option may, for example, generate a sense of belonging or self-esteem, the policy options are simply compared with each other and the scores assigned are more like a ranking system between the options. Policy options that are expected to take less time to deliver results receive a good score (green), as compared to policy options that take longer (yellow and red)

8.4.2. *Affordability*

This criterion describes how much the policy option will cost and any savings generated. This breaks down into three sub-criteria: projected capital cost, projected operating costs, and projected monies saved. For this criterion, less capital and operating costs are good (green), and more money saved is considered good (green).

Projected Capital Cost

This sub-criterion is concerned with the upfront costs required to start up the policy option or program. This may include resources devoted to conceptualizing the program, land costs, renting or building facilities, printing information packages, advertising, and acquiring equipment.

Projected Operating Cost

This sub-criterion evaluates the ongoing costs associated with operating the policy option or program. This may include monthly rents, salaries of employees, replenishing stock, annual expenses for licenses or taxes, and maintenance.

Projected Monies Saved

As mentioned in Section 3, youth homelessness is very expensive. It creates short-term and long-term costs for policing, medical care, and service use. If youth homelessness is successfully prevented, the municipal and provincial governments can expect to see reductions in spending in certain areas. These savings may take years to materialise, but nonetheless, represent a benefit to both levels of government.

8.4.3. Acceptability

Political Acceptability

Political acceptability refers to the government's willingness to implement the policy. This criterion considers the reactions of both the provincial and municipal governments. The expected reactions are divided into three categories: disapproval (red), skepticism (yellow), and approval (green), with "approval" being the best. This is partly informed by (news) reports related to the policy options presented here or past reactions to policies that are similar in nature or risk.

Public Acceptability

Public acceptability refers to the expected reaction to the policy option from the public. The public's opinion can be influenced by a number of different sources such as social and contextual factors as well as the media and government officials (Iglesias, 2002; Piat, 2000). In relation to housing disadvantaged and marginalized groups, the "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) concept tends to be heard often as people may agree with a policy or program in principle, but bristle at the idea when it is physically situated in their neighbourhood (Devine-Wright, 2009). Similar to political acceptability, this may range from approval (green) to disapproval (red).

9. Evaluating the Policy Options

The policy options are each evaluated based on the criteria and measures outlined in Section 8. To arrive at an overall score for each criterion and policy option, a value of 1 will be assigned to a red allocation, 2 to a yellow allocation, and 3 to a green allocation. The “belonging” sub-criterion of the effectiveness criteria has two sub-criteria of its own, thus being unable to yield a whole number average. Therefore, I assign the total score for belonging by determining which of the two sub-criteria’s scores more accurately reflects the policy option’s ability to foster a sense of belongingness among at-risk youth. Lastly, the total scores given to each criterion are summed and a final score is given to each policy option. The effectiveness criterion’s primacy over the other criteria is accounted for by multiplying the overall score for the criterion by two. Scores for each criterion are decided based on the results from the literature review, quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis.

9.1. Policy Option 1: Personal I.D. Obtainment Program

9.1.1. Societal Objectives

Effectiveness

Physiological and Safety

It is expected that this policy option will remove an important barrier for youth to access shelter and basic resources, since *“if you ask somebody ‘Well, what are you working on right now?’, if they don’t have their I.D, they’re [usually] like ‘Well, I.D. is number one. I gotta get my I.D.’”* (Ethnographer). As the Ethnographer explained, *“it’s something you totally take for granted if you aren’t homeless... It is really the ultimate barrier [to things like renting an apartment independently, or applying for jobs]”*. Although there may be other barriers to youth accessing the services such as judgemental staff

members or restrictive rules, it is important to note that with identification, youth will have the option to access a spectrum of services, versus not have any choice at all.

There were mixed responses from the professional stakeholders about the best setting for this policy option. The Research Scientist felt that at-risk youth would be best served by an organization or community service that assisted youth with the identification process. Other professional stakeholders felt that schools were an adequate venue for this policy option and it was not too late to reach the most at-risk students. This policy option does not, however, assist youth from outside Vancouver or older youth who are outside the school system. For these reasons, this policy option receives a yellow allocation.

Belonging

Build on Family and Adult Relationships

This option adequately builds on family and adult relationships (yellow). It does not interfere with the family unit at all, and if parents are asked to come to the school with the appropriate documentation (rather than the student bringing it to school), this option may assist building the family relationship in a small way. Parents who attend the clinic may use the time to speak with staff members at the school about any issues they may have with their child. The Youth Addictions Worker also felt that this program could create a sense of belonging among senior students in the school, since it is within their abilities to assist directly or indirectly with this program.

Respect Culture and Beliefs

This policy option respects a variety of cultures and beliefs (green). It is anticipated that even though some parents may prefer to deal with obtaining identification for their children themselves, the existence of the clinic does not disrespect their culture or beliefs in any way. It is possible that this option may discriminate against some groups if culturally-sensitive staff and language translators are not provided, but it is expected that all staff and volunteers will be attentive to these issues. Furthermore, obtaining personal identification can enhance one's sense of belonging in society by lawfully placing the individual within the province's borders (Stalder & Lyon, 2003).

Overall score

This policy option receives an overall score of “good” (green) because it may contribute to a sense of belonging with the school community and province.

Esteem and Self-Actualization

The I.D. program does not create any new service or substantially improve an existing service meant to develop youths’ potential; it simply removes one of many barriers to accessing services. Although the involvement of senior students, as per the Youth Addictions Worker’s suggestion, would likely result in increased self-esteem, this policy option receives an overall poor score (red) on this sub-criterion.

Integrated Service Delivery

This policy option does not provide any kind of integrated delivery associated with the cornerstone of integration: connectivity within and between multiple services and providers (Kodner & Spreeuwenberg, 2002). While this program is situated in schools, it operates in a relative silo when compared to something like supportive housing or school-based wrap-around interventions. For this reason, it receives a poor score (red).

Equity

Awareness of Program/Policy

This policy option scores well on this sub-criterion (green) because it will be advertised in schools and parents will need to be made aware of it in order to provide the required documents or consent. Advertisement can be done in school to the students, through parent teacher nights or letters to parents. The parents of the most vulnerable youth are less likely to attend parent teacher nights or read letters from schools, but the students will receive the message.

Low-Barrier Entry

It is expected that this policy option will provide a number of different of times during and after school for parents and youth to attend the clinic and the service will be offered in other languages if necessary. The issue here, however, is that the parents of

the youth who would benefit most from this program are unlikely to attend the clinic, regardless of time of day. It receives an allocation of yellow.

Geographic Proximity

This program will be offered in every school, and therefore should be geographically close and physically accessible to students and parents. Because of the convenience, this option is given a green allocation.

9.1.2. Governmental Objectives

Implementation

Time to Launch the Policy Option

This policy option scores fairly well on this sub-criterion (yellow). Although there is not much required to launch the program, there are some details that need to be resolved, such as whether youth or parents are primarily involved, and whether school staff or volunteers will be assisting with the identification obtainment process. Regardless of who is assisting parents or youth, some training will need to take place, which will increase length of time to operation.

Time to Meet Short-Term Goals

Once youth are able to access services with their personal identification, youth should, theoretically, have their physiological and safety needs met almost immediately (< 1 month). This option is given a high score of green for its ability to facilitate access to basic needs and various other resources.

Time to Meet Long-Term Goals

This policy option is given a poor score (red) for its ability to meet long-term personal development goal like belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Ultimately, this policy option is only as good as the services already available in Vancouver. While there are many services available for youth, there is a lack of certain services which are more likely to assist with personal development, such as supportive housing.

Affordability

Projected Capital Cost

The projected capital cost of this policy option is very low, and therefore receives a green allocation. The program should be run through secondary schools, so their existing space can be used. Staff or volunteers can learn about the identification application process from an employee of the Province of British Columbia, which will cost approximately \$150 for one day's instruction (derived from average salaries of public sector employees in British Columbia) (Statistics Canada, 2012). There will likely be some other expenses related to procuring supplies, but it is expected that this is minimal.

Projected Operating Cost

The operating cost of this policy option is also expected to be very low (green). There may be some ongoing expenditure related to refreshing supplies and training new volunteers or staff members, but these costs are considered to be comparatively minimal. If an employee from the Province continues to train new volunteers or staff once a year, that amounts to \$150 each year (see above).

Projected Monies Saved

This policy option, as mentioned previously, is only as good as the existing services in Vancouver. In itself, it is not expected to generate savings, but if all youth who seek out housing-related services are able to present identification, then it is expected that this will have some immediate and long-term health-related benefits, resulting in less healthcare costs and criminal justice expenditures (S. Gaetz, 2012). Since some youth may still prefer to avoid shelters and other housing services even if they have access to them (Section 3.5), the ownership of personal identification does not guarantee that youth will utilize services. This option receives a poor score (red).

Acceptability

Political Acceptability

Education is a provincial responsibility, and it is likely that the needed funds will come from the provincial education budget. Even though the funds required for this

project are minimal, education funding has always been limited, and has been even more so since the recession. Although it is unclear exactly where the funding will come from, the municipal government will likely not need to contribute much for this program. This option receives a yellow score to reflect the uncertainty associated with the provincial government's acceptance of the program.

Public Acceptability

This policy option is expected to be met with skepticism by the public. Some parents may feel like one of their duties is being taken away from them, and may feel uncomfortable bringing sensitive documents to volunteers or school staff. Other parents may welcome the assistance, especially those who are immigrants or who do not have the time to figure it out themselves. Although all professional stakeholders were generally receptive to this policy option, it receives a fair (yellow) allocation in anticipation of mixed responses from parents, a key stakeholder group.

Table 5. Summary evaluation of Policy Option 1.

Major Objective	Criteria	Measures	Score	
Societal Objectives				
Effectiveness (x2)	Foster growth in youth			
	<i>Maslow's hierarchy of needs:</i>	Adapted from MCFD principles:		
	<i>Physiological and Safety</i>	(1) Involve youth in creating safe environments.	2	
	<i>Belonging</i>	(2) Build on family and adult relationships.	2	3
		(3) Respect culture and beliefs.	3	
	<i>Esteem and Self-Actualization</i>	(4) Youth-centred.		1
<i>Integrated service delivery</i>	(5) Integrated case management and service delivery approach		1	
		OVERALL:	7 (x2)	
Equity	Accessibility of program to all youth	(1) Awareness of program/policy	3	
		(2) Low-barrier entry	2	
		(3) Geographic proximity	3	
		OVERALL:	8	

Major Objective	Criteria	Measures	Score
Governmental Objectives			
Implementation	Time to implement and meet goals	(1) Time to immediate launch of policy (estimated # of months)	2
		(2) Time to meet short-term goals (estimated # of months)	3
		(3) Time to meet long-term goals (estimated # of months)	1
OVERALL:			6
Affordability	Total cost of the policy option	(1) Projected capital cost (\$)	3
		(2) Projected operating cost (\$)	3
		(3) Projected monies saved (\$)	1
OVERALL:			7
Acceptability	Approval from Government	(1) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)	2
	Approval from public	(2) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)	2
OVERALL:			4
TOTAL SCORE:			39

Overall, this policy option appears to be fairly able to prevent the first incidence of homelessness among at-risk youth in Vancouver. The biggest trade-off associated with this policy option is that it does not create anything that is better able to help youth in their current situation or assist them in becoming self-sufficient in the future, except for removing one barrier to accessing existing services. This policy option also may not serve international students or students of new immigrants well due to issues with obtaining government-issued identification; these students do not appear, however, to be particularly at-risk for becoming street-involved.

9.2. Policy Option 2: Supportive Housing

Generally speaking this policy option follows best practices as recommended in the literature, the quantitative data analysis, and the interviews. This includes being a youth-specific service (Krusi et al., 2010), teaching life skills (de Best, 2012), having

reasonable rules (De Rosa et al., 1999; Krusi et al., 2010), and trained staff members (Carlson et al., 2006; Feldmann & Middleman, 2003; Garrett et al., 2008).(Krusi et al., 2010)

9.2.1. Societal Objectives

Effectiveness

Physiological and Safety

This option certainly meets the minimum requirement for youth to be provided with their physiological needs, such as food and shelter. In addition, this option, with careful monitoring and intervention from staff members, can provide youth with an environment free from violence and where the youth are able to begin living a healthy lifestyle free from substance use. All the professional stakeholders felt that supportive housing, and in particular, new supportive housing would help youth transition to an out-of-home setting. Another virtue of this option is that it will assist older youth, which fills a gap in service availability. As the Ethnographer explained: *“suddenly you can’t access these services [in the Downtown South] and there’s nothing for people, really, [who are] in between. It’s like, ‘Well, you have to go to the Eastside, I guess’”*. At-risk youth are not a homogenous group, however, and certain housing models or rules may not work for all youth. Overall, this option receives a green allocation.

Belonging

Build on Family and Adult Relationships

Even though the supportive housing complex will make appropriate efforts to reconcile families, youth will not be living in their family home and familial reconciliation is not always a priority of supportive housing programs (McCreary Centre Society, 2012; Padgett et al., 2011; Pearson et al., 2009). Youth will, however, have the opportunity to develop relationships with other trustworthy adults, such as the service personnel running the housing program. In addition, supportive housing allows youth to live among their peers, rather than isolate them. This is important because many youth may still rely on their peers for advice (A. Smith et al., 2007), rather than turn to professionals or other

adults. For these reasons, this policy option receives a good allocation (green) for this measure.

Respect Culture and Beliefs

Living among their peers, youth in supportive housing can feel a close sense of belonging. Many youth who are at-risk may not have felt like they belonged in their family home or school because they were different in some way (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007). This may be particularly salient for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) youth and Aboriginal youth. For these reasons, this policy option receives a good allocation (green) for this measure.

Overall Score

Overall, this policy receives a good allocation (green) because of its ability to create a sense of community among the housing residents. Although the issue of youth not living with their family-unit remains, the interview with Kelly suggests that sometimes this is the best arrangement for youth.

Esteem and Self-Actualization

Supportive housing provides many opportunities for youth to gain self-esteem. This is a long-term goal, and therefore may take some time to generate, but youth will be given opportunities to cultivate self-esteem through maintaining their school work (Walsh & Donaldson, 2010), a community kitchen, and other psycho-social services offered.

Supportive housing will also give youth a safe, stable, and supportive living environment for them to develop their talents and abilities. A systematic review of interventions for homeless youth found that supportive housing reduces substance use and improves self-reported health (Altena, Brilleslijper-Kater, & Wolf, 2010). It is not expected that youth will stay in the housing long enough to find self-fulfillment, but it is anticipated that they will leave the housing with the tools to obtain self-fulfillment through the development of morality, self-expression, and problem-solving. Connecting youth to employment is also crucial for developing both these attributes and long-term self-sufficiency. This option is given a high score of green.

Integrated Service Delivery

This option receives a good score (green) on this sub-criterion because at least one of the housing units will provide integrated care, which, *“together with partner agencies, will provide support services for both resident youth as well as at-risk youth in the surrounding neighbourhood”* (BC Newsroom, February 15, 2013).

Equity

Awareness of Program

This policy option scores fairly well on this sub-criterion (yellow). Awareness of these supportive housing services can, and should, be easily available to youth via government and non-government websites, print and online advertising, and word-of-mouth from community workers, and school-based workers. Furthermore, both projects underway in Vancouver are linked to well-known service providers for homeless and at-risk youth (Directions and Broadway Youth Resource Centre). There is some concern that only at-risk youth will be made aware of this option since there has been little promotion of this initiative thus far, and it is unclear if there is any formal community awareness plan for all Vancouver-area neighbourhoods.

Low-Barrier Entry

This option is designed to be as low-barrier as possible. The Burrard Street complex does not require youth to be substance-free in order to access their services; they require youth to be non-disruptive (confidential personal communication). The building also has kennels for dogs, so that youth do not have to decide between their pet and their housing. This flexibility is consistent with the emphasis on youth as a heterogeneous population, as described by the Research Scientist. Even with such flexibility, it is likely that this model does not work for all youth, some of whom who may have difficulty being non-disruptive if they have issues that affect impulse control. For this reason, this option is given a fair allocation (yellow).

Geographic Proximity

The two buildings currently being constructed are in downtown Vancouver and East Vancouver. For youth already around downtown or East Vancouver, these locations are quite accessible; for youth in the West Side, south Vancouver, or close to

Burnaby, this is not very accessible. Ideally, this service will exist in every neighbourhood so that youth are able to simultaneously access the service and remain close to their family and school. One virtue of the current projects is that they are not located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, which is "*such a big issue for the people who are part of this study because the people who are part of this study [do not always see themselves as a part of the population of drug-using] adults, like in the Downtown Eastside*". For these reasons, this option receives a fair score (yellow).

9.2.2. Governmental Objectives

Expediency

Time to Launch the Policy Option

This policy option scores poorly on this sub-criterion (red) because of the large resources and time needed to construct supportive housing. The two projects in Vancouver were under construction in early 2013, and are not expected to be ready until spring 2014 (BC Newsroom, February 15, 2013). Even if an existing building is renovated and repurposed, it will still take time before it is functional.

Time to Meet Short-Term Goals

Once the building is operational, youth should have their physiological and safety needs met almost immediately, given how quickly long-term needs can be met (Nelson, Clarke, Febbraro, & Hatzipantelis, 2005). This option is given a high score of green.

Time to Meet Long-Term Goals

Supportive housing can reasonably be expected to create belonging and build self-esteem within a few months (Nelson et al., 2005), but self-actualization may take years to materialize, if it ever does. This option does, however, give youth the best chance to meet these needs compared to the other options. This option is given the highest score (green).

Affordability

Projected Capital Cost

This is a very expensive policy option. Its capital costs, however, may not necessarily be extraordinary. Both buildings being constructed now are being constructed from the ground up, which is a massive capital investment. According to a news release from the British Columbia provincial government, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre project has received a total of approximately \$30 million from the province and City of Vancouver to cover the cost of land and construction (BC Newsroom, February 15, 2013). This policy option could be implemented in an existing building, which would cost some money to repurpose. If the building is in good condition, then it will have significantly less capital costs than the current projects. Because the two projects currently ongoing in Vancouver are being built entirely from the ground up, this study assigns a high cost / low score (red) allocation to this sub-criterion.

Projected Operating cost

This option is expensive to operate. It will require administrative organization, and frontline staff members such as youth workers and counsellors. The cost of services and housing for one formerly homeless individual was estimated in 2001 to be between \$22,000 and \$28,000 per year (Eberle, Kraus, Pomeroy, & Hulchanski, 2001). The Burrard Street complex will require at least \$1.4 million in operating costs per year, which includes the hiring of 12 full-time equivalent personnel (confidential personal communication), building maintenance and upkeep, and supplies. It is anticipated that any future housing projects will have similar costs. This option receives an allocation of red to reflect its comparatively large expenses.

Projected Monies saved

It is expected that this policy option will save the most money over a long-period of time. Although it can cost \$22-28,000 to house a formerly homeless person, service and shelter costs for a homeless person were \$30,000-\$40,000 in 2001 (Eberle et al., 2001). The result is a saving of \$8,000-\$12,000 per person, per year, which is consistent with another report from a local non-profit organization (Eby, 2006). These per person savings are reflected in reduced healthcare costs, such as \$1,971 less in annual

hospitalizations and up to \$9,390 in reduced interactions with the criminal justice system (S. Gaetz, 2012). This policy option receives a good allocation (green).

Acceptability

Political Acceptability

This policy option receives full scores (green) for political acceptability because there are already two buildings being constructed using this policy option. A recent news release from the provincial government speaks approvingly of one of the two developments described earlier (BC Newsroom, February 15, 2013), and describes its almost \$25 million contribution to the project. Furthermore, ending homelessness is a priority of the City of Vancouver (Context Ltd., 2011), and this is evidenced from the City of Vancouver's monetary and in-kind contributions (BC Newsroom, February 15, 2013).

Public Acceptability

Supportive housing may be controversial because (a) local residents may oppose the site of supportive housing in their neighbourhood (NIMBY), or (b) the youth would not be living with their family-unit, which some people may feel is not best for them. The Youth Addictions Worker stated, however, that public opinion is increasing for these projects. Also, similar to the political acceptability criterion, this criterion receives a good score (green) because the two projects already under construction in Vancouver have overcome any public acceptability issues.

Table 6. Summary evaluation of Policy Option 2.

Major Objective	Criteria	Measures	Score
Societal Objectives			
Effectiveness (x2)	Foster growth in youth		
	<i>Maslow's hierarchy of needs:</i>	Adapted from MCFD principles:	
	<i>Physiological and Safety</i>	(1) Involve youth in creating safe environments.	3
	<i>Belonging</i>	(2) Build on family and adult relationships.	3
		(3) Respect culture and beliefs.	3
	<i>Esteem and Self-Actualization</i>	(4) Youth-centred.	3
<i>Integrated service delivery</i>	(5) Integrated case management and service delivery approach	3	
OVERALL:			12 (x2)
Equity	Accessibility of program to all youth	(1) Awareness of program/policy	2
		(2) Low-barrier entry	2
		(3) Geographic proximity	2
OVERALL:			6
Governmental Objectives			
Implementation	Time to implement and meet goals	(1) Time to immediate launch of policy (estimated # of months)	1
		(2) Time to meet short-term goals (estimated # of months)	3
		(3) Time to meet long-term goals (estimated # of months)	3
OVERALL:			7
Affordability	Total cost of the policy option	(1) Projected capital cost (\$)	1
		(2) Projected operating cost (\$)	1
		(3) Projected monies saved (\$)	3
OVERALL:			5
Acceptability	Approval from Government	(1) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)	3
	Approval from public	(2) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)	3
OVERALL:			6
TOTAL SCORE:			48

Overall, supportive housing appears likely to be successful at preventing the first incidence of homelessness among at-risk youth in Vancouver. The biggest trade-off with this option is the cost and time needed to launch the policy option.

9.3. Policy Option 3: Youth Worker in Secondary Schools

9.3.1. Societal Objectives

Effectiveness

Physiological and Safety

This policy option is expected to meet youths' needs for shelter and safety. The youth worker can connect with parents if a youth is not receiving basic needs and resources, and if this does not work, the youth worker can help the youth plan for independence. This may involve planning a move to an out-of-home setting, but most importantly, the youth worker can help ensure that these supports and services are available for the youth by mobilizing their own community-based networks. There was some concern among the professional stakeholders that secondary school was too late to reach the most at-risk youth. Even if the youth were still attending school, there was some doubt that the youth worker would be able to make contact with them. Overall, however, the Youth Addictions Practitioner felt that secondary schools are adequate for reaching at-risk youth, although he felt that it would be useful for youth workers to be in alternative schools as well as mainstream public schools. Furthermore, this option can provide a mechanism for connecting youth with one caring adult, as recommended by the Youth Addictions Worker. Consequently, this approach receives a green allocation.

Belonging

Build on Family and Adult Relationships

A recent literature review of wrap-around interventions finds evidence that they produce better outcomes for the youth and family (Wyles, 2007), although it is unclear what specifically those outcomes were. A qualitative review of parents in Kansas, USA engaged in wrap-around services were largely positive and described improved relationships with their children (Barfield, Chamberlain, & Corrigan, 2005). Some of

these results may come from an enhanced sense of belonging youth experience in their school and community. Fostering a sense of belonging was important for the Retired Teacher and Youth Addictions Practitioner, as they both felt that was an important piece missing from at-risk youths' lives. This is corroborated by the literature, where some youth describe turning to the streets in order to feel accepted (Section 3.3.1). For these reasons, and because of the inherent focus on family in wrap-around interventions, this policy option is expected to perform well on this sub-criterion (green).

Respect Culture and Beliefs

The youth worker is expected to ensure that the wrap-around planning and the team dedicated to supporting the youth and family are culturally sensitive. The family and youth are expected to take an active role in the intervention, and consequently they will be able to describe any particular cultural or spiritual needs they have. Indeed, cultural competence is an element of wrap-around interventions (Bruns, Burchard, Suter, & Leverentz-Brady, 2003). This option receives a green allocation.

Overall score

Overall, this policy option scores very well with respect to fostering a sense of belongingness among at-risk youth (green).

Esteem and Self-Actualization

This policy option receives a high score (green) for promoting self-esteem and actualization among at-risk youth. Because the youth worker will be able to work with teachers and other school staff to keep the young person in school for as long as possible, at-risk youth are much more likely to finish school with this program (Wyles, 2007). Youth will certainly appreciate this, since a majority of high school dropouts regret their decision (Bowlby & McMullan, 2002; Price Waterhouse, 1990).

Integrated Service Delivery

This option scores well on this sub-criterion (green) because it is formed with the specific intent to fully integrate services for youth. In addition, it meets the MCFD's recommendation that integrated services are delivered by community-based groups and

that the worker collaborates and forms partnerships with the community and government (Ministry for Children and Families, 2000).

Equity

Awareness of Program/Policy

Although the school will inform its students of the program and the youth worker will do his or her own “advertising” around the school while connecting with students, there is concern from the Research Scientist that the youth worker will have difficulty identifying and approaching at-risk youth in a discrete and confidential way. Because of these concerns, this policy option receives a medium score (yellow) for this sub-criterion.

Low-Barrier Entry

This program is designed specifically for youth who are struggling, and the youth worker will also be proactively seeking out at-risk youth to connect with. Furthermore, the principles of wrap-around interventions include a “no reject, no eject policy” and flexible planning around individual needs (Wyles, 2007). For these reasons, it receives an allocation of green.

Geographic Proximity

Similar to option 1, this program is situated in schools and will therefore require very little “travel time” for students to see the youth worker. The building should also be accessible to anyone with physical disabilities. This program receives an allocation of green.

9.3.2. Governmental Objectives

Implementation

Time to Launch the Policy Option

Because this option relies on community supports, some of which already exist in Vancouver, it is expected that the length of time to launch the intervention will be relatively short. Start-up can take anywhere between seven months and two years,

however (T. Smith et al., 2004). For these reasons, this option receives a yellow allocation.

Time to Meet Short-Term Goals

It is expected that this program can meet the short-term goals identified for this study quickly since youth can receive rapid support from an easy-to-access individual dedicated to ensuring their basic resources and who can mobilize their own community networks. Given that the long-term goals can be reached in as little as a school year, it is expected that the short-term goals can be reached in less time (Eber, Osuch, & Redditt, 1996; Wyles, 2007). Consequently, this policy option receives a good score (green) on this sub-criterion.

Time to Meet Long-Term Goals

It is unclear exactly how long it will take this option to meet the long-term goals, but evaluation studies of wrap-around interventions have found reduced out-of-home care placements after as little as one school year (Eber et al., 1996; Wyles, 2007). For this reason, this option receives a good score for this sub-criterion.

Affordability

Projected Capital Cost

This policy option scores very well for having low capital costs (green). Because the youth worker will be based either in his or her community office, or the school, the marginal cost of bringing in the youth worker is minimal.

Projected Operating Cost

The operating costs associated with this program are larger than the capital costs. The biggest ongoing expense is the salary of the youth worker, reported to be \$35,300 (Service Canada, 2012). Even though this cost is borne almost entirely by the non-profit organization, the youth worker may increase costs in other organizations or agencies as he or she connects youth with other supports. For example, a 1998 study in the United States estimated that wrap-around interventions cost up to \$18,000 in service use (Johnson, 1998). Furthermore, even though this cost is borne almost entirely by the non-profit organization, the funding for such organizations tends to come from

government funding and private donations, which places some burden on the public (as taxpayers and citizens, respectively). The Research Scientist expressed some concern that just one worker in a school may not be enough, since delivering interventions to one at-risk youth may be very resource-intensive, leaving little time for the youth worker to effectively help others. For these reasons, this option receives a yellow allocation.

Projected Monies Saved

It is difficult to determine exactly how much money this program will save, since wrap-around interventions are often (rightfully) applied differently across providers. Some evaluations of wrap-around programs in the United States have found cost savings related to reduced overall service use (savings of \$1,700 per month per person) (Kamradt, 2001), 32% reduction in emergency room use, 74% reduction for inpatient psychiatry (Grimes et al., 2011), and a greater likelihood of the youth living in the family home (versus other supported arrangements) (Barfield et al., 2005) that could save as much as \$34,000 per year (Johnson, 1998). Another study of wrap-around interventions found that the average cost of treating the injuries from just one victim of violence was equal to the project's annual cost (University of California, 2009). This option receives a green allocation.

Acceptability

Political Acceptability

It is expected that the provincial government will generally approve of this program, since it already supports wrap-around interventions (Vancouver School Board, 2012). The City of Vancouver is not an active participant or contributor to this program, therefore the overall score for political acceptability is good (green).

Public Acceptability

Although the youth worker is expected to engage extensively with the youths' family and families are generally satisfied with wrap-around interventions (Barfield et al., 2005; Winters & Metz, 2009), there may be some cases where the youth worker may be seen as subverting the parent's authority. This may happen if the youth decides to leave home and the workers finds alternative housing for the youth. For this reason, the policy option receives a yellow allocation.

Table 7. Summary evaluation of Policy Option 3.

Major Objective	Criteria	Measures	Score
Societal Objectives			
Effectiveness (x2)	Foster growth in youth		
	<i>Maslow's hierarchy of needs:</i>	Adapted from MCFD principles:	
	<i>Physiological and Safety</i>	(1) Involve youth in creating safe environments.	3
	<i>Belonging</i>	(2) Build on family and adult relationships.	3
		(3) Respect culture and beliefs.	3
	<i>Esteem and Self-Actualization</i>	(4) Youth-centred.	3
	<i>Integrated service delivery</i>	(5) Integrated case management and service delivery approach	3
OVERALL:			12 (x2)
Equity	Accessibility of program to all youth	(1) Awareness of program/policy	2
		(2) Low-barrier entry	3
		(3) Geographic proximity	3
	OVERALL:		
Governmental Objectives			
Implementation	Time to implement and meet goals	(1) Time to immediate launch of policy (estimated # of months)	2
		(2) Time to meet short-term goals (estimated # of months)	3
		(3) Time to meet long-term goals (estimated # of months)	3
	OVERALL:		
Affordability	Total cost of the policy option	(1) Projected capital cost (\$)	3
		(2) Projected operating cost (\$)	2
		(3) Projected monies saved (\$)	3
	OVERALL:		
Acceptability	Approval from Government	(1) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)	3
	Approval from public	(2) Expected reaction (approval, skepticism, disapproval)	2
	OVERALL:		
TOTAL SCORE:			54

Overall, this policy option has minimal trade-offs, as its strength is its ability to meet all the effectiveness objectives while maintaining relatively low costs.

9.4. Policy Analysis Summary

Table 8 below provides an overview of each policy option and their final score.

Table 8. Summary evaluation of policy options.

Major Objective	Criteria	I.D. Obtainment	Supportive Housing	Youth Worker
Societal Objectives				
Effectiveness (x2)	(1) Physiological and Safety	2	3	3
	(2) Belonging	3	3	3
	(3) Esteem and Self-Actualization	1	3	3
	(4) Integrated service delivery	1	3	3
Equity	(1) Awareness of program/policy	3	2	2
	(2) Low-barrier entry	2	2	3
	(3) Geographic proximity	3	2	3
Governmental Objectives				
Implementation	(1) Time to immediate launch of policy	2	1	2
	(2) Time to meet short-term goals	3	3	3
	(3) Time to meet long-term goals	1	3	3
Affordability	(1) Projected capital cost (\$)	3	1	3
	(2) Projected operating cost (\$)	3	1	2
	(3) Projected monies saved (\$)	1	3	3
Acceptability	(1) Approval from Government	2	3	3
	(2) Approval from public	2	3	2
OVERALL SCORE		39	48	54

10. Final Recommendations

Based on the high score and minimal trade-offs associated with youth workers in secondary schools, I recommend the immediate implementation of this policy option as the best approach for addressing the issue of youth homelessness in Vancouver. It is expected that youth workers will strike an effective balance between the I.D. Obtainment program's limited effectiveness and the high costs of supportive housing. Indeed, the youth worker can address substance use issues by connecting the young person with rehabilitation or treatment services, and, if necessary, assist youth with obtaining their BC ID.

These recommendations are intended to capture a range of needs among a heterogeneous population, especially through the youth worker. The youth worker may provide some assistance in traversing this issue, where the youth worker's role is to organize services around each individual youth and their unique needs ("wrap-around"). Consequently, it is anticipated that this option can address any issues related to different intersecting factors and forces in youths' lives, which should be as effective, if not more effective as high-level efforts to coordinate services across providers.

Other jurisdictions have implemented similar initiatives to the youth worker option. Indeed, much of the research about wrap-around interventions comes from the United States (Eber, Nelson, & Miles, 1997; Wyles, 2007) and Australia has instituted a network of school-based social workers (Basi et al., 2012). Although part of the youth workers' responsibilities are to support the family, Eva's Initiatives "Family Reconnect Program", located in Toronto, offers youth the opportunity to reconcile with their family, if possible (Winland, Gaetz, & Patton, 2011). Supportive housing programs are also ubiquitous across many jurisdictions such as the United States, Australia, and United Kingdom (Basi et al., 2012; National Youth Commission, 2008; Quilgars, Fitzpatrick, & Pleace, 2011).

The I.D. Obtainment program's low score is indicative of the need to do more than just reduce barriers to housing; there needs to be an active effort to increase services, and ideally, ensure these new services have no barriers to access. Furthermore, as shown in Table 9, the I.D. obtainment program is not temporally-balanced since it performs better among the immediate and short-term goals, but falls short in meeting long-term goals. Conversely, supportive housing favours long-term goals and disfavors a quick start-up and heavy costs. In comparison to these options, the youth worker program is temporally-balanced.

Table 9. Summary evaluation of policy options re-ordered to reflect temporal chain of criteria (Figure 4).

Major Objective	Criteria	I.D. Obtainment	Supportive Housing	Youth Worker
Immediate Implementation				
Acceptability	(1) Approval from Government	2	3	3
	(2) Approval from public	2	3	2
Affordability	(1) Projected capital cost (\$)	3	1	3
Implementation	(1) Time to immediate launch of policy	2	1	2
Short-term Goals				
Equity	(1) Awareness of program/policy	3	2	2
	(2) Low-barrier entry	2	2	3
	(3) Geographic proximity	3	2	3
Affordability	(2) Projected operating cost (\$)	3	1	2
Effectiveness	(1) Physiological and Safety	2	3	3
Implementation	(2) Time to meet short-term goals	3	3	3
Long-term Goals				
Effectiveness	(2) Belonging	3	3	3
	(3) Esteem and Self-Actualization	1	3	3
	(4) Integrated service delivery	1	3	3
Affordability	(3) Projected monies saved (\$)	1	3	3
Implementation	(3) Time to meet long-term goals	1	3	3
OVERALL SCORE		39	48	54

These policy options are not mutually exclusive and can all be implemented together. Based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses performed for this study and chronic funding shortages of both the provincial and municipal governments, the youth worker is an effective option to introduce immediately and then the governments can take some time to work out arrangements for the I.D. obtainment program and supportive housing. Implementing the remaining two options will complement the work of the youth worker, and help meet some of the youths' needs along the continuum from prevention to out-of-home care. Furthermore, the benefits of supportive housing continue through to assisting youth to find independent, stable housing and effectively "exiting" the system.

11. Conclusion

This research study investigates the issue of youth homelessness in Vancouver and identifies several barriers to youth accessing housing. Through the quantitative and qualitative analyses, (statistically) significant factors contributing to pathways into homelessness were recognized, including the role of addictions, the importance of schools, and the need for low-barrier services. Alleviating these barriers to housing, which are well documented in the literature and identified in this research, is one key area for moving forward. The findings from the policy analyses identifies the supportive housing and youth worker options as promising for reducing these barriers and saving some money in the long term.

In the long term, the City of Vancouver or Province should consider implementing both the I.D. obtainment program and increasing supportive housing to complement and supplement the work of the efforts of youth workers in secondary schools. A mixed approach combining prevention and out-of-home care, as well as a temporal balance among time-oriented goals may assist in addressing transitions into and out of homelessness among youth in Vancouver.

Overall, this Capstone strengthens the consensus in the existing literature and reinforces the need for comprehensive approaches to addressing youth homelessness. It is anticipated that ongoing research and the implementation of policy options will contribute to the well-being of youth.

11.1. Future Directions

Future research should expand upon the youth case study here, and further explore gender or age differences among this population. As active recipients of services, youth should be given more of a voice in terms of what they need to prevent homelessness and receive appropriate care. Furthermore, parents and frontline service

providers are key stakeholder groups, which should be consulted with regards to the acceptability of the policy options identified here. Due to time limitations, it was not possible to interview these groups, which would add a greater breadth of knowledge around what is truly possible to prevent youth homelessness.

In addition, more research on the structural factors that are contributing to youths' transitions into (and out of) homelessness should be investigated. Macrosystems have a profound influence on families and outcomes for youth through the social determinants of health; addressing some of these factors, such as poverty, may provide families with more support (financial, social, and otherwise) to focus on building healthy relationships with their family members, rather than engaging in a constant struggle for basic resources.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

The Dangers and Harms of Youth Homelessness

Street-involved youth are exposed to more risks than those who are not. Studies have found that youth homelessness is positively related to many drug and sexual risks (Feng et al., In press; Marshall et al., 2009; Weber et al., 2002; Weir et al., 2007). This may lead to youth accessing or using public services more than those who are not street-involved. For example, they may find themselves accessing addictions treatment, emergency shelters, needle exchanges, and community clinics for wound care and testing for infections. They may also use hospital emergency rooms in the event of adverse drug reactions or overdoses (Werb, Kerr, Lai, Montaner, & Wood, 2008).

Drug-Related Harms

As many as 50% of homeless youth use substances (Goering et al., 2002), the risks of which include initiation into injection drug use (Feng et al., In press), increased drug use (Rachlis et al., 2009), syringe sharing (Lloyd-Smith, Kerr, Zhang, Montaner, & Wood, 2008), and public injecting (Marshall, Kerr, Qi, Montaner, & Wood, 2010).

Injection drug use is an extraordinarily risky practice among homeless youth. Studies have found rates of injection drug use among homeless youth to be as low as 38% and as high as 54% (Rachlis et al., 2009). In addition, one study found that 60% of youth participants who tried injection drugs once became regular injectors within one month (The Canadian Press, 2012). Notably, the decision making around transitioning into injection drug use appears to be dangerously nonchalant. A 2010 study interviewed youth about their transition from non-injection to injection drug use, and found that for some youth, it was a spur of the moment decision (Fast, Small, Krusi, Wood, & Kerr, 2010). For other youth in the study, their decision reflected a sense of inevitability. These harms are significant, and many youth are subject to both these dangers from drug use and others from unsafe sexual practices.

Sexual-Related Harms

Street involved youth may also experience greater risks related to sex such as multiple sex partners (Marshall, Kerr, Shoveller, Montaner, & Wood, 2009), and sex work (Edwards, Iritani, & Hallfors, 2006) that other youth groups. Up to 70% of at-risk youth engage in unprotected sex (MacKellar et al., 2000), and many youth engage in sex while under the influence of drugs and alcohol (Kral, Molnar, Booth, & Watters, 1997). These activities leave youth vulnerable to blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis C and HIV, and sexually transmitted infections (Roy et al., 2000). The most recent data available from the Public Health Agency of Canada states that the rate of chlamydia among street youth is greater than 10%, the rate of gonorrhoea is 3%, and the rate of genital herpes is 61% (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Syphilis, Hepatitis C, and HIV are more prevalent among older street youth, with rates of 1.3%, 8.7%, and 2%, respectively. These rates are up to ten times higher than the prevalence rates among the general population of youth.

Drug and sexual-related behaviours are not the only ones that place youth at risk for blood borne viruses. Homeless youth may engage in criminal behaviour, which places them in the often unsanitary and inefficacious environment of prisons.

Criminal Behaviour

Some street-youth turn to crime (S. W. Baron & Hartnagel, 1998; S. W. Baron & Hartnagel, 1997; Sanders, Lankenau, Jackson Bloom, & Hathaz, 2009) and drug dealing (Werb, Kerr, Li, Montaner, & Wood, 2008) as a way to support their life on the street and addictions. One study found that childhood abuse (sexual, physical, neglect) is associated with delinquency (Tyler & Melander, 2012), which is concerning since up to 44% of homeless youth have experienced some form of childhood abuse (Rachlis et al., 2009). Notably, there is also some evidence to suggest that there is a link between a youths' time on the street and engaging in the crime of robbery (S. W. Baron & Hartnagel, 1998). Consequently, the accumulation of risky drug, sexual, and criminal behaviours contribute to a number of long term harms associated with youth homelessness.

Long-Term Harms

There are a number of long-term harms associated with youth homelessness, such as future homelessness as an adult. In one study, three quarters of homeless youth progressed to adult homelessness (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008). As mentioned earlier, this is actually a great fear among at risk youth which prevents some of them from accessing adult services (Krusi et al., 2010). Another study found that "experienced" homeless youth were more likely to engage in risky behaviours than newly homeless youth (Milburn, Rotheram-Borus, Rice, Mallet, & Rosenthal, 2006), such as unprotected sex, sex work, and a greater number of sexual partners. Given these long term harms, it is important that the first incidence of homelessness is eliminated among youth. In addition, chronic infections and addiction issues are both short term and long-term issues which may follow youth into adulthood.

Appendix B.

Quantitative Methods

The information derives from the At-Risk Youth Study (ARYS). ARYS involved the recruitment of youth aged 14-26 who are heavily involved in the street economy. In brief, snowball sampling and extensive street-based outreach methods were employed to reach youth. To be eligible, ARYS researchers required participants at recruitment to be between the ages of 14-26 years, have used illicit drugs other than marijuana in the past 30 days, and provide written informed consent. At enrolment, and on a bi-annual basis, participants completed an interviewer-administered questionnaire that included questions related to demographic information and drug use patterns. Interviews took place in the ARYS office located in the Downtown South area of Vancouver, a neighbourhood where street-involved youth feel comfortable (Fast, Shoveller, Shannon, & Kerr, 2010). Participants also meet with a study nurse and provide a blood sample for serologic testing. At each study visit, participants are provided with a stipend (\$20 CDN) for their time.

Offering participants a monetary incentive for participating may be seen as an ethical issue because some youth participating in the ARYS study are minors and parental consent is not sought by UHRI. There is no formal legislation in Canada which provides guidance for this issue, but UHRI has addressed this by collaborating with the provincial Child Welfare Agency and their local Research Ethics Board in order to develop their own protocols.

The University of British Columbia's Research Ethics Board has approved the ARYS study. The study was supported by the US National Institutes of Health (R01DA028532) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (MOP-102742). This research was undertaken, in part, due to funding from the Canada Research Chairs program through a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Inner City Medicine which supports Dr. Evan Wood. Funding sources had no role in study design; in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data; or in the writing of this thesis.

ARYS participants were eligible for inclusion in the present analysis if they completed a baseline survey and had at least one follow-up study visit between September 2005 and May 2012. Transitions in housing status were identified based on reported homelessness (e.g., no fixed address, sleeping on the street, or staying in a shelter or hostel) (yes vs. no) in the last six months. The following four categories for housing status based on two consecutive study follow-up visits were constructed: consistently homeless, consistently housed, homeless to housed, and housed to homeless. Table 1 shows each housing status category and the comparison groups used in the bivariate and multivariate analysis.

Table 1. The categories of housing status used to group participants and comparison groups.

Housing Status	Definition	Comparison group
Housed to homeless	Housed in one study visit and homeless in the subsequent visit	Consistently housed
Homeless to housed	Homeless in one study visit and housed in the subsequent visit	Consistently homeless
Consistently housed	Housed in two consecutive study visits	–
Consistently homeless	Homeless in two consecutive study visits	–

A bivariate analysis was performed in order to explore which factors were significantly associated with transitioning into and out of homelessness. Next, possible confounders were eliminated using a multivariate analysis. In order to perform both these analyses, comparison groups were assigned to each of the target groups of interest. This grouping ensures that the behaviour of participants who transitioned into homelessness or housing was compared to other youth in their same situation. Otherwise, the data would have internal validity issues.

To identify factors associated with transitions into and out of homelessness, a number of explanatory variables of interest were considered, including the following socio-demographic factors: gender (female vs. male); age (per year older); ethnicity (Caucasian vs. other); being in a stable relationship (homosexual or heterosexual), defined as being legally married, common law, or having a regular partner (yes vs. no); and regular employment, defined as having at least one source of income from a regular job (distinguished from temporary, casual, and non-legal forms of income generation by separate response options) (yes vs. no). Drug use variables included: frequent alcohol use, defined as having more than four drinks per day (yes vs. no); binge drug use, defined as a period of using drugs more often than usual (yes vs. no); daily injection or non-injection heroin use (yes vs. no); daily injection or non-injection cocaine use (yes vs. no); daily injection or non-injection crystal methamphetamine use (yes vs. no); and daily crack cocaine smoking (yes vs. no). Other risk characteristics considered included: sex work, defined as exchanging sex for money, drugs, or gifts (yes vs. no); participation in drug dealing (yes vs. no); being unable to access addiction treatment, based on the question: "In the past 6 months, have you ever tried to access any treatment program but were unable?" (yes vs. no); and incarceration, defined as being in detention, prison, holding cell, or jail overnight or longer (yes vs. no). All drug use and behavioral variables refer to activities in the past six months.

Generalized linear mixed effects (GLMM) methods were used to model transitions into homelessness (housed to homeless), and out of homelessness (homeless to housed). The GLMM is used for studies where there are repeated measures, such as longitudinal studies (Krueger & Tian, 2004). In addition, this method was chosen specifically for its ability to model group and individual differences simultaneously (Krueger & Tian, 2004), and describe the change in individual trajectories over time (Finucane, Samet, & Horton, 2007).

GLMM bivariate analysis was used to determine factors associated with transitions into and out of homelessness in unadjusted analyses. To adjust for potential confounding and identify factors that were independently associated with the outcomes of interest, all variables were entered in a multivariate logistic GLMM model. All statistical analyses were performed using SAS software version 9.2 (SAS, Cary, NC). All p-values are two sided.

I contributed to this dataset over the summer of 2012 under the guidance of Kora Debeck (KD), postdoctoral fellow at UHRI and Evan Wood (EW), co-director of UHRI, and with the statistical help of Cindy Feng (CF), assistant professor at University of Saskatchewan. My role began with researching past ARYS studies, and using their results to inform this study design and variables of interest. I researched different statistical techniques, and finally recommended the GLMM model. I discussed the statistical technique with research colleagues: KD, CF, and EW. EW also provided advice on the study design. I prepared a data request for CF, which described the study sample, main outcomes, statistical technique to be used, and variables of interest. Upon receiving the raw bivariate data from CF, KD and I discussed which variables should be included in the multivariate analysis, and sent another data request to CF. Upon receipt of the raw multivariate data, I interpreted the data and then created tables and odds ratio figures to display the data in an easy-to-read fashion. Lastly, I drafted the manuscript for publication, at which point, all co-authors (6 in total) contributed to the main content and provided critical comments on the final draft. For the purposes of this capstone, none of the previously mentioned individuals contributed to its development. Dr. Judith Sixsmith supervised the use of this data and provided guidance in all areas of this work.

Appendix C.

Interview Schedule for Youth Stakeholder

INTRODUCTION

Script: Thank you for coming to talk with me.

How are you doing today?

I'll tell you about myself. I'm a second year student in the Masters of Public Policy program at SFU. I'm originally from a suburb of Toronto and I've been in Vancouver for almost 4 years. I'm writing my thesis on how to prevent youth homelessness in Vancouver.

I expect the interview will take approximately 45 minutes. I hope to use your information and unique perspective to create policies that will help prevent youth homelessness in Vancouver. I also hope to submit my findings and recommendations to policy-makers in Vancouver and/or the province of BC.

I'll briefly describe the sort of things I'm going to ask you about over the next 45 minutes so that you know what to expect. Firstly, I'd like to find out about your current housing situation and any help you've received from the government or other services. Then, I'm going to ask you some questions about what you think about when you hear the words "stable housing". Then, I'm going to ask you about things you think would have helped you avoid ever becoming homeless. I'll explain all that in more detail when we get to it.

Are you still interested in participating?

[At this point I will explain the three reasons for breaching confidentiality, show and explain the consent form, and ask the participant if he or she would like to sign the consent form.]

Do you have any questions before we begin? Either about what we're going to talk about, the forms you signed, or about me?

Please also feel free to ask questions at any time during the interview.

GENERAL

Please describe your current housing situation.

- How long have you been in this situation?
- Who are you living with?
- Where are you living now? (neighbourhood or cross-street is fine)
- Where were you living before that?
- What prompted your last move? (prompted your move to your current situation)
- How happy are you with your current living situation?
- What would you change about your current situation, if anything?

- What did you have to do in order to find (or secure) this housing?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about this?

EXPERIENCES WITH HOMELESSNESS

How many times have you been homeless?

A rough estimate is ok if you don't know exactly.

Please describe the first time you remember being homeless.

- What part of that experience stands out the most for you?
- How long were you homeless?
- Who did you spend most of your time with?
- Where did you sleep when you were homeless?
- Where did you spend most of your time when you were homeless?
- Where were you living prior to becoming homeless?
 - Who were you living with?
 - How long had you been in that situation prior to becoming homeless?
- How did you become housed after this first time being homeless?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about this?

EXPERIENCES WITH HOUSING

- Have you ever received any help with getting housing?
- What helped you the most when trying to access housing or shelter-related services?
How was that helpful?
 - A person?
 - A service/organization?
 - Financial assistance from the government, friend, parent, or otherwise?
 - Other government help?
- What sort of barriers have you experienced when accessing housing or shelter-related services?
- What services have you used to try and access housing or shelter-related services?
 - What was most helpful / unhelpful?
- Describe your best experience with accessing housing or shelter-related services.
- Describe your worst experience with accessing housing or shelter-related services.
- Overall, how do you feel about finding housing in Vancouver?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about this?

PERCEPTIONS OF HOUSING

Stable Housing

- What does stable housing “look like” for you? What does it mean to say you have “stable housing”?
- Describe your ideal living arrangement.
- Do you see yourself receiving any kind of ongoing support? (government/service organization/friends/family/etc.)
- How do you see yourself finding and securing this housing? (government help/friend or parent help/on your own/etc.)
- Where would you be living? (neighbourhood/province/country/etc.)
- What would you be living in? (apartment/house/etc.)
- Who would you be living with, if anyone at all?
- How do you see yourself paying for rent?
- How long would you have to be living there for it to feel “stable”?
- Does “stable” housing have to be permanent?
- What is the biggest thing you need to help get you into stable housing?
- How do you think being stably housed would affect you (your life)?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about stable housing?

EXPLORING THE GAP

- What would you have needed from a service/organization/professional in order to prevent you from becoming homeless?
 - From your family? From friends? From your boyfriend or girlfriend? From a shelter? From a youth drop in?
 - What type of help would have been most useful?
 - Counselling (individual / family)
 - School-based help
 - Easy to access shelter / temporary housing / social housing
 - Other?
- What kind of professional or service would be best suited to provide that help?
- How could a service/organization/professional have helped meet the needs you had at the time?
- When (at what time in your life) would this have been most helpful?
- Do you think that other youth would have found that helpful too?
- What advice do you have for other youth who become homeless, in Vancouver or elsewhere?
- What helps the most?

- What is not as helpful?
- How do you think your life would be different if [youth's stated need] had existed or been there to help you?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about this?

CONCLUSION

- Is there anything else you would like to add to your responses?
- Is there anything you said that you would like removed from the record?

DEBRIEF

- Is there anything you would like to ask me about the interview, how it went, or how your responses will be used?
- I know that we discussed some topics that may have been painful for you, and I am wondering how you feel about the interview and any thoughts you have about how it went?
- Do you feel ready to leave now or would you like more time?

Script: In the event that you feel down or upset about anything you experienced during this interview, I have a list of phone numbers with resources that may help you.

[At this point I will give the participant the list of resources that they can take home with them.]

Thank you very much for your time and sharing your experiences with me.

Appendix D.

Interview Schedule for Professional Stakeholder

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

- What do you think the most important factor or factors are for youth becoming homeless?
- How do you think the first incidence of youth homelessness can best be prevented?

POLICY OPTIONS

- What do you think of a BC ID obtainment programs run through schools as an effective way to prevent youth become homeless?
- What do you think of a graduated housing program as an effective way to prevent youth become homeless?
- What do you think of situating a community based youth worker in secondary schools as an effective way to prevent youth become homeless?

DEBRIEF

- Is there anything that you would like to add to your responses?
- Would you like to modify any of your responses in any way?

Appendix E.

Codes Generated from Case Study

Using ATLAS.ti (version 7), the following codes were generated from the data in accordance with step two of the six-step method described in the qualitative methods section (Section 4.3). These codes are preliminary indicators of content that appeared relevant to the research question.

1. Activities (daily)
2. Barriers to housing
3. Danger / safety
4. Employment
5. Family
6. Frequent housing changes
7. Health
8. Normalcy (a desire for)
9. Policy Options
10. Relationships (romantic)
11. School
12. Shelter
13. SRO / Hotel
14. Service staff

Appendix F.

Reflexivity Analysis for Case Study

The interview went very well in terms of collecting relevant information and I am happy with the results. Overall, Kelly gave very eager, thoughtful responses. She seemed to be very open with sharing her experiences and was able to explain her situation well. She seemed to withdraw slightly, however, at the end of the interview when I brought out the list of services. To mitigate any harm my interview may have caused, I specified in my ethics application that I would provide my interviewees with a list of services they could contact if any of them felt the need to discuss any issues that were brought up in the interview further. As the interview drew to a close, I handed her my two-page list of services, and I felt that she was made uncomfortable by it. The interview, at this point, had lasted almost double the amount of time it was supposed to, and therefore I was conscious of finishing up quickly. I did not ask if she felt uncomfortable, or if she did, why she was uncomfortable. I sensed, however, that she may have been uncomfortable or felt patronized for one (or more) of three reasons: (a) as if I thought she didn't have the good sense to be connected to supports or (b) as if she was not able to find services herself, or (c) the service list was a reminder of the power differential between us.

Further to the issue of a power differential, part of the reason why the interview went well was because the interview had a lot of energy from DF and the participant. Often, the participant would answer a question, and then DF would provide some context around that and validate the participant's response as something that was a real ongoing problem in Vancouver. This served, in my opinion, to reinforce the participant's experience and suggest that everything the participant had experienced was truly a problem, not something the participant had imagined or had uniquely experienced. The participant seemed to appreciate this, and it gave me some useful background information on the participant and the institutional context. Furthermore, the participant in this interview was treated as an expert on social housing in Vancouver, and she talked about how hard she and her boyfriend worked to be on pleasant terms with staff members and proactive in housing matters. The offering of the list of resources may have been a reminder or signal that she was "just an at-risk youth who needed others' help".

The power differential was very salient for me. I was conscious of being someone who lived a more privileged life than the participant, which was somewhat exacerbated by knowing that there were two of us in graduate school sitting with one street-involved young person.

There did not seem to be any gender issues in the interview, since all three attendees were female. That being said, gender certainly affected the interview. Sometimes it felt like three girls chatting, which was a nice feeling, but would not have happened if either of the other two attendees had been male.