ONE-THIRD OF CANADA'S HOMELESS POPULATION IS BETWEEN AGES OF 16-24

HOMELESS NO MORE

PLAN TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS BY 2027

VISION: The Annapolis Valley where all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.

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

GOALS	Prevent youth from becoming homeless through family supports and education.	Rapid rehousing of homeless youth through family reunification or supportive living by utilizing a client-centred approach

THE PORTAL

Contents

Introduction

It is possible to end youth homelessness in The Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. This plan, _Homeless No More_, is written with the perspective of research, proven case studies in other Canadian cities and an understanding of the existing resources and know-how in the community. _Many of the background pieces are taken directly from the work of Stephen Gaetz and others, some are named and others are not._ If priorities are maintained and with the belief that in working together with one dynamic strategy, it can be different for the next generation. Input has been sought from many stakeholders, youth, families, and experienced front-line people that know youth that are or where, homeless. Together, we can end Youth Homelessness.

Homelessness can be defined as _"the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing."_ (CHRN, 2012: 1)

> _This proposed plan is written with the belief that for young people the experience of homelessness – both in terms of its causes and conditions - is distinct from that which impacts adults, and therefore the solutions must reflect these important differences._

The intent of this document is to be:

- Read, examined, and aligned with social priorities in communities
- Shared with the people that can make change
- Discussed and endorsed by teams of people
- Executed by various stakeholders, people that care
- Available to all interested parties & updated annually
- A guide and the actions evaluated after genuine effort is made

Main Sources

Youth Homelessness in Canada Implications for Policy and Practise
http://www.homelesshub.ca/youthhomelessness

A Safe and Decent Place to Live: Towards a Housing First Framework for Youth
http://homelesshub.ca/resource/safe-and-decent-place-live-towards-housing-first-framework-youth

Do we have a problem with youth homelessness in The Annapolis Valley?

Unreservedly, yes. Youth are among the fastest growing and most underserved of Canada's homeless population. They make up 20% of the homeless population. To some, the issue of youth homelessness is unseen and therefore not an issue. To those that know the youth and hear their story, it is a very real and challenging issue. There are different categories of homelessness: *unsheltered, staying in emergency shelters; staying in women's emergency shelters, provisionally accommodated and the hidden homeless.* Often referred to as couch surfing, hidden homelessness includes youth who are temporarily staying with friends, relatives or others because they have nowhere else to live and no immediate prospect of permanent housing. All categories in this plan are of concern. The most concerning is the hidden homeless as there is no reliable data on the hidden homelessness in Canada at the national level and very little at the community level. Those that are hidden are missed and un-accounted for but also at the most risk. The situation for those at risk or those who are couch surfing can change within hours.

The number of Youth in the Valley (between Annapolis Royal and Windsor) who experience homelessness on <u>any given night</u> is estimated to be 70 individuals. *Youth is defined as those that are 16- 21 years of age.*
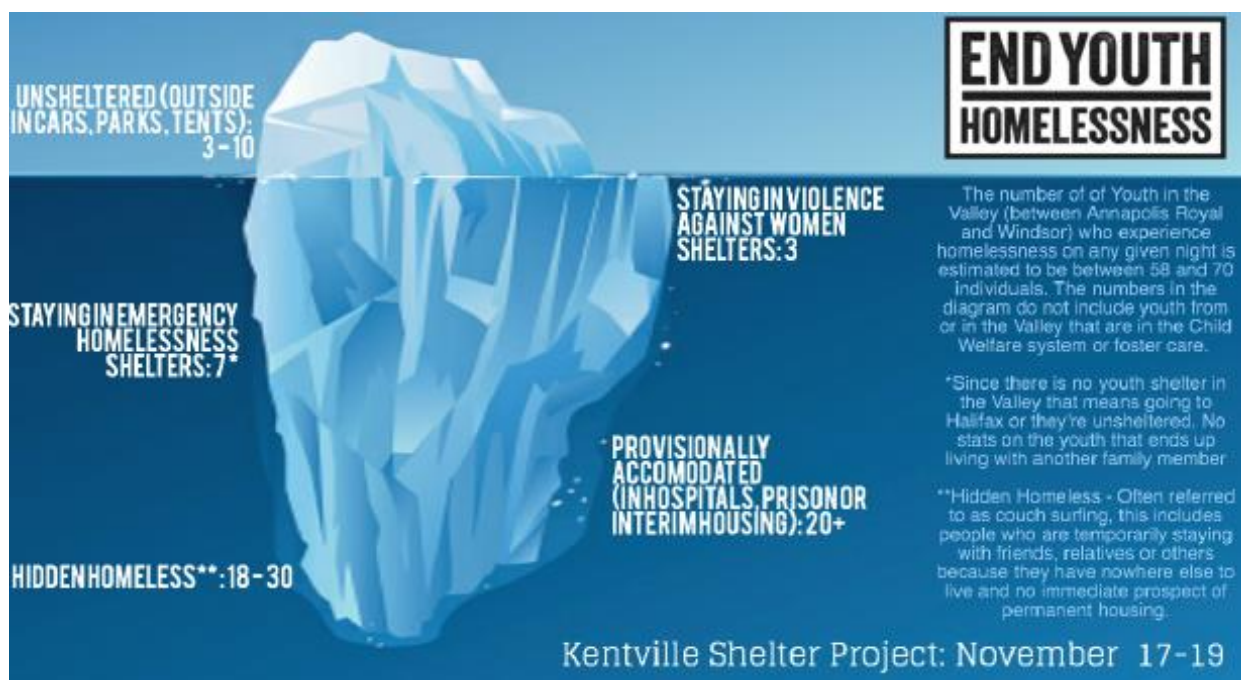
In the last five years, through a multi-agency approach, we have a better understanding of the following:

- The actual numbers of youth that are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The Youth Outreach Program has engaged with a growing number each year that are at risk of being homeless or are homeless. There was 114 youth that were either homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2015/2016.
- Five to ten youth per night could be accommodated in a youth emergency shelter strategy. There is no emergency youth shelter in the Annapolis Valley. Currently *Inn From The Cold* (Kentville) and *Harvest House* (Windsor) can provide emergency accommodation for youth and that is a help but only a temporary relief from the elements.
- The complexity of the family situations that leads to a breakdown like youth homelessness can be prevented. Prevention & early intervention through the work with families is critical.
- Homeless youth are vulnerable to marginalization, sexual exploitation, criminality, abuse, stress, addictions, hopelessness, depression, self-harm, and suicide. The issues become more complicated and acute with each day when a youth is homeless.
- Youth at risk continue to face obstacles in meeting basic needs: shelter, food, health services, and education.
- Youth being at risk is a community problem. Strategies need to include the entire community and based in the local community. The most manageable solutions would be based in each town and village.
- The atmosphere of cooperation of frontline service providers is very supportive and growing in its adaptability and awareness of the problem of youth homelessness.

- Community service providers have consistently agreed that homelessness among youth is a distinct, identifiable problem. If someone is homeless or in an unstable housing situation, the capacity to address other risk factors or deal with past trauma is put off until things can become stabilized.

This proposed plan is built upon a foundation of a Housing First Framework for Youth and it is intended to provide communities and funders with a clear understanding of what Housing First is, and how it can work to support young people who experience or are at risk of, homelessness. The framework reflects a belief that for young people, the experience of homelessness – both in terms of its causes and conditions - *is distinct from that which impacts adults, and therefore the solutions must reflect these important differences.* We cannot take an established approach that works for adults and simply create Housing First "Junior" by changing the age mandate. If Housing First is to work for youth, it must be built upon our understanding of the developmental, social and legal needs of young persons. A more extensive outline of A House First Approach for youth is outlined in A Safe and Decent Place to Live: Towards a Housing First Framework for Youth; Executive Summary, written by S*tephen Gaetz, attached as Appendix A at the end of this paper.*

The Path into Homelessness

Throughout the development of the Homeless No More, research was accessed and community conversations have led to significant insights about the path into and out of homelessness for youth. These community conversations included meaningful discussions with homeless youth.

The path into homelessness is relatively predictable and generally includes some of the following factors:
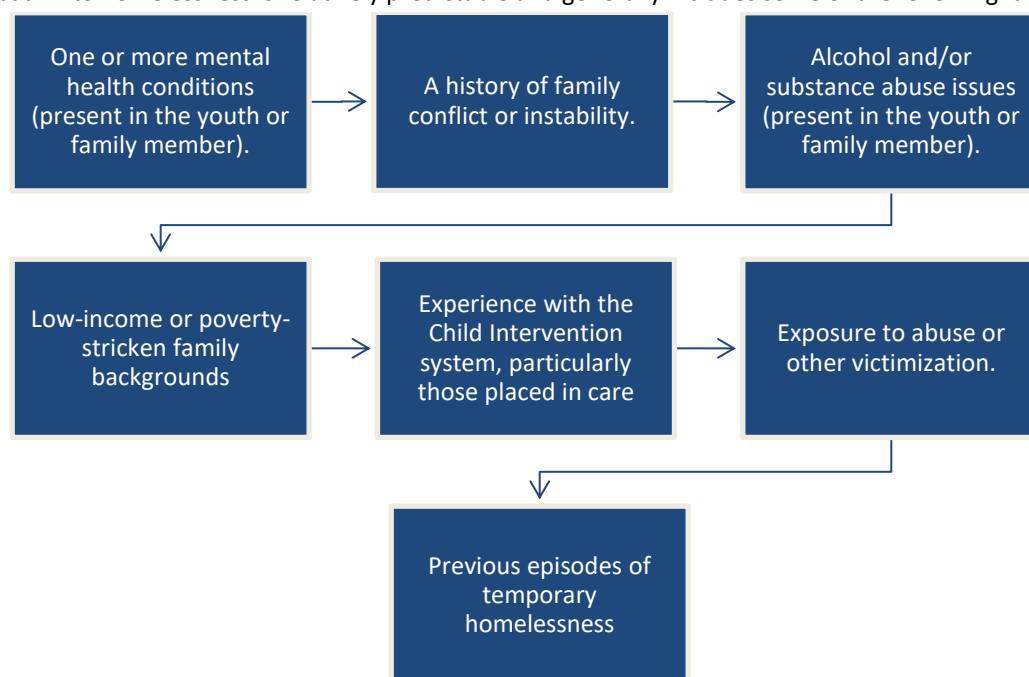
Why a Plan for Youth?

Youth homelessness is an issue that is similar to yet distinct from homelessness in general, and our understanding of and solutions to the issue must be distinct as well.

• *Youth are in the process of transitioning toward adulthood and may not have acquired personal, social and life skills that make independent living possible.*

• *Youth tend to seek access and respond to services and supports differently than other homeless individuals.*

• *They often avoid the homeless-serving system out of fear of authorities.*

• *Youth have particularly challenging issues, and require targeted responses to be rehoused.*

• *For youth under the age of 19, the situation is complicated by the obligation of families and/or the government to care for them and provide for their basic needs.*

• *For youth involved with the Child Intervention System, these issues are further magnified if healthy transitions are not prioritized. Many are waiting until they turn 16, with the "plan" to get out of the system and then they could be homeless.*

Youth living on the street or couch surfing become entrenched in a risky lifestyle very quickly, due to:

• *Quickly developing new social networks with other couch surfing or youth involved in less productive activities*

• *Substance abuse issues for themselves or within the family.*

• *Losing ties with the education system.*

Homelessness is a dangerous, unstable lifestyle for youth, characterized by a number of high-risk, negative experiences, including: • *Violence, victimization, physical and sexual abuse* • *Involvement with police and the justice system* • *Criminal activity* • *Stress, depression, anxiety disorders and suicide. Those that go from shelter to couch to hospital to remanded situations experience a cycle of homelessness.*

Risk Cycle of Homelessness
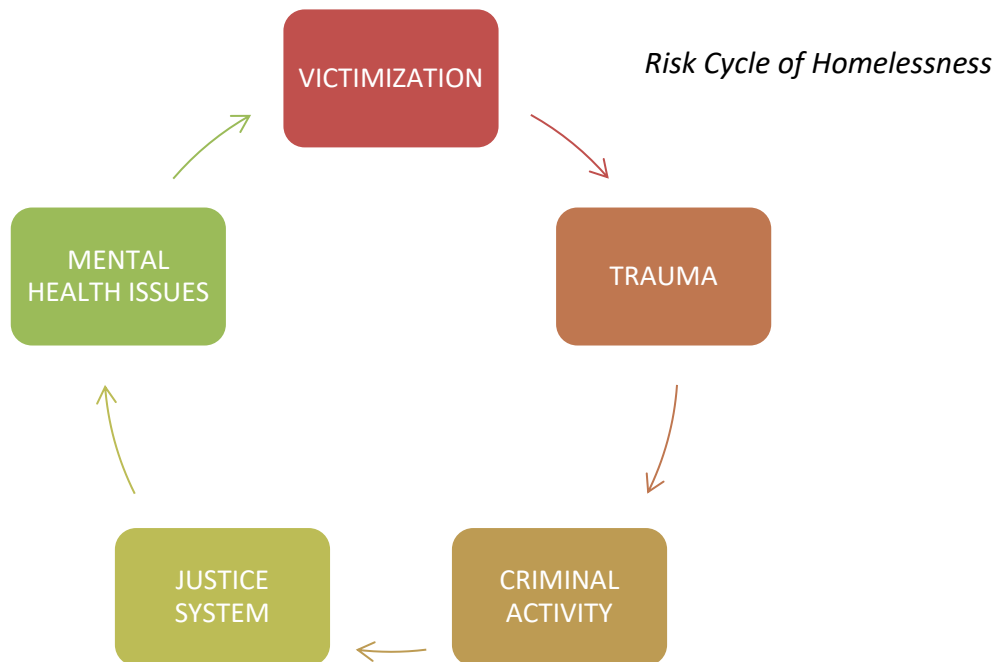
Many homeless youth are struggling with developmental and attachment issues that make their transition to adulthood more challenging. They have never lived independently or developed critical life skills. According to a three-year national research project (Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions, 2009) that tracked the 'lived experience' of 689 street-involved youth in three Canadian Cities:

• 63% grew up in a family that found it hard to maintain housing.

• 62% had dropped out of school, reflecting the lack of support and resources.

• 68% had previous involvement with foster care, group homes or a youth centre.

• 71% had previous criminal justice system involvement.

• 43% had previous involvement with child protection.

The cost to the community

With the increased risk associated with homelessness, youth can wind up in a shelter bed in Halifax, accessing emergency mental health services, a hospital bed in the city or in the Valley or the Waterville Youth Centre. The costs are tremendous. This is tax payer dollars. Time spent in these places seldom results in a better life or a sustainable solution for homelessness. Rental supplements, affordable housing or residential supports are far more affordable for our communities. These options and others described in the Housing First Framework for Youth are also more effective in bringing change, a better life and a sustainable solution to youth homelessness.

AVERAGE MONTHLY COST OF HOUSING SOMEONE WHILE HOMELESS

| $1,932 | $4,333 | $10,900 | $701 | $199.92 |
| Shelter Bed | Provincial Jail | Hospital Bed | Rental Supplement | Social Housing |

Costs should be one aspect that is considered but more importantly is the opportunity that communities are missing out on- the contribution of these young people that may not complete high school, get a decent job, or share the uniqueness of who they are. If 25- 30% of our children are growing up in poverty and a majority of youth that are at risk of homelessness are experiencing poverty, unless there is compassionate, meaningful, and sustainable intervention, our community will not see those youth live up to their potential. Yet with human contact and life giving relationships, these same youth can be future contributing members of our community.

The Annapolis Valley's Solution to Youth Homelessness

The Annapolis Valley's current response to youth homelessness places much of the emphasis on the emergency response. While emergency responses are important and necessary, we cannot rely on these as the 'system' to deal with youth homelessness. The Youth Outreach Program, funded by the Province of Nova Scotia, is based out of the Portal Youth Centre and has been operating for 5 years. The program is relationship based and works with a experienced team of frontline workers from agencies across the Valley. Through that program, youth are engaged but a sustainable solution is still out of reach until the emphasis shifts as described here. Taking a step further, until the community says, "Enough, we need to end youth homelessness", we will continue to see a "band aid approach". The strategies presented in the Youth Plan suggest a new way to address youth homelessness that builds on the three existing components. ***Currently, the response is:***
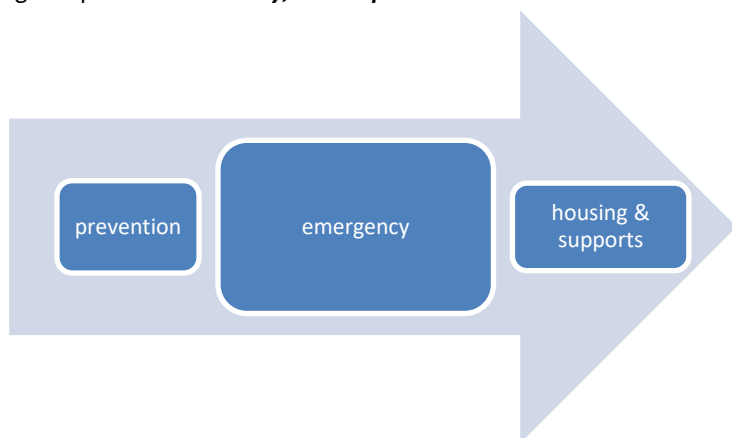
This Youth Plan shifts the emphasis.
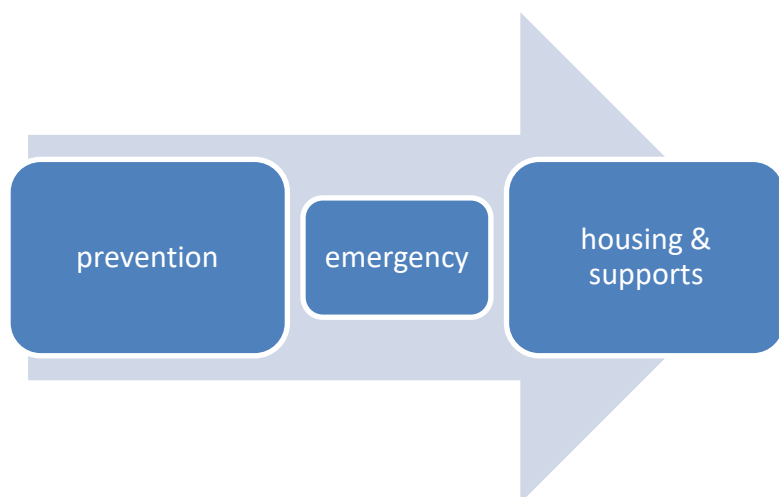
In the *Youth Plan: Homeless No More*, PREVENTION and **HOUSING AND SUPPORTS** become a greater priority. Emergency services are provided, with support, to facilitate this shift in The Annapolis Valley's response. The concepts and priorities were established through community conversations, research, reviews of best practices, and consulting the work of Stephen Gaetz, a nationally recognized and well-respected research authority on youth homelessness in Canada. Principles were also adopted from the success of cities like Medicine Hat and Calgary, Alberta.

Vision and key goals

<u>Homeless No More</u> represents an opportunity to refine specific responses and align ongoing work being guided by a 10-Year Plan. The plan needs to be "owned" by all stakeholders, families, and youth. The plan needs to adapt and change given successes, failures, and changes in the community. Ensuring healthy transitions across the system needs to be emphasized as we change our approach to how we respond to youth who are at risk of homelessness or are currently experiencing homelessness. This will help us achieve our goal of preventing and reducing homelessness. It builds on effective existing community-based services and introduces new evidence-based actions required to address the complex issue of youth homelessness. The Youth Plan is the first area response to homelessness for youth at risk in The Annapolis Valley.

VISION: The Annapolis Valley where all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.

MISSION

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

GOALS

Prevent youth from becoming homeless through family supports and education.

Rapid rehousing of homeless youth through family reunification or supportive living by utilizing a client-centred approach

The Youth Plan defines homeless youth as those who are between the ages of 13 and 24 and:

• *Are without a permanent place of residence.*

• *Live on the street, in shelters or in places that are not intended or suitable for permanent residence.*

• *Are "couch-surfing", or temporarily living with others for short periods of time.*

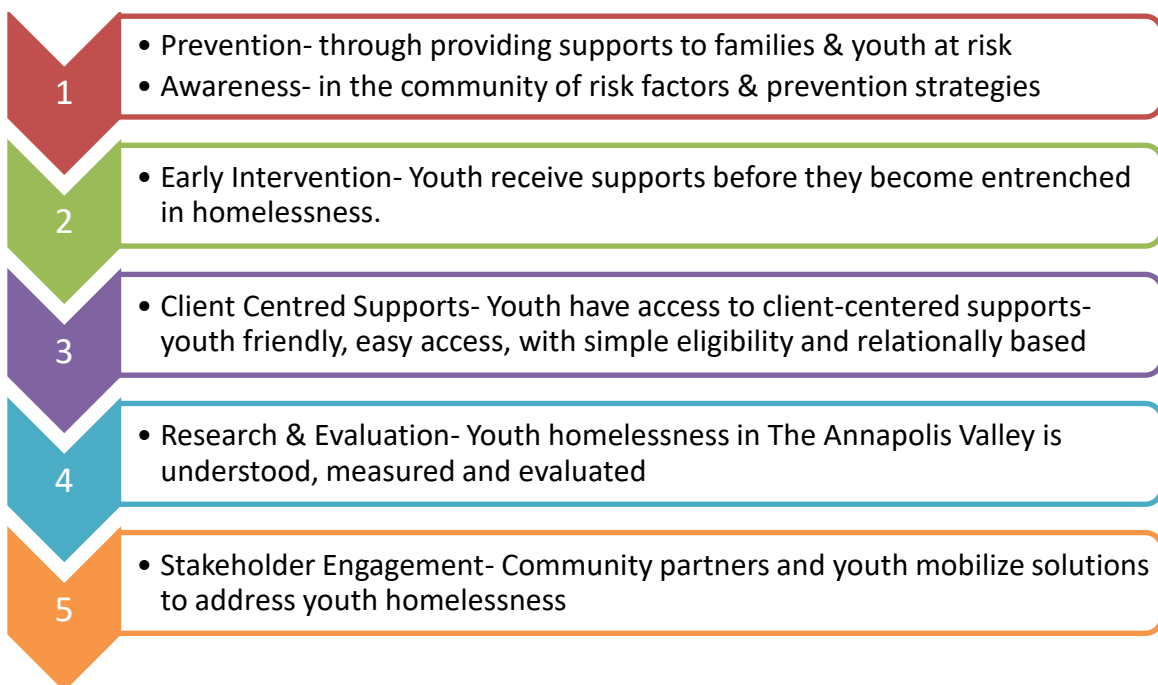With needed time and resources, the youth outreach program coordinator can take the lead given that their priority outcomes are:

1) Youth have increased positive, healthy relationships.
2) Youth have increased access to supports and services to meet their basic needs.
3) Community has increased awareness about the Youth Outreach Program.

These outcomes line up quite well with the outcomes of The Youth Plan: Homeless No More.

The Youth Plan is a unified, integrated, area response to youth homelessness that engages government, communities, parents and youth in building solutions. The priorities of the Youth Plan are:

Figure 1- PRIORITIES

1
- Prevention- through providing supports to families & youth at risk
- Awareness- in the community of risk factors & prevention strategies

2
- Early Intervention- Youth receive supports before they become entrenched in homelessness.

3
- Client Centred Supports- Youth have access to client-centered supports- youth friendly, easy access, with simple eligibility and relationally based

4
- Research & Evaluation- Youth homelessness in The Annapolis Valley is understood, measured and evaluated

5
- Stakeholder Engagement- Community partners and youth mobilize solutions to address youth homelessness

These priorities are in line with a the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services priority on Youth-at-Risk, *"Unfortunately, many of Nova Scotia's youth face social, emotional, economic, family and environmental conditions that make them vulnerable for poor outcomes. In 2015-16, the department will develop a comprehensive framework that will identify ways to support improved outcomes for Youth-at-Risk across all components of its service delivery. Using a social determinants of health lens, which identifies the holistic needs of youth required to meet their full potential, key areas of focus will be housing, health (emotional and physical), income, employment, safety, education, and social connectedness." Page 10 of the* [Statement on Mandate NS Government Website](#)
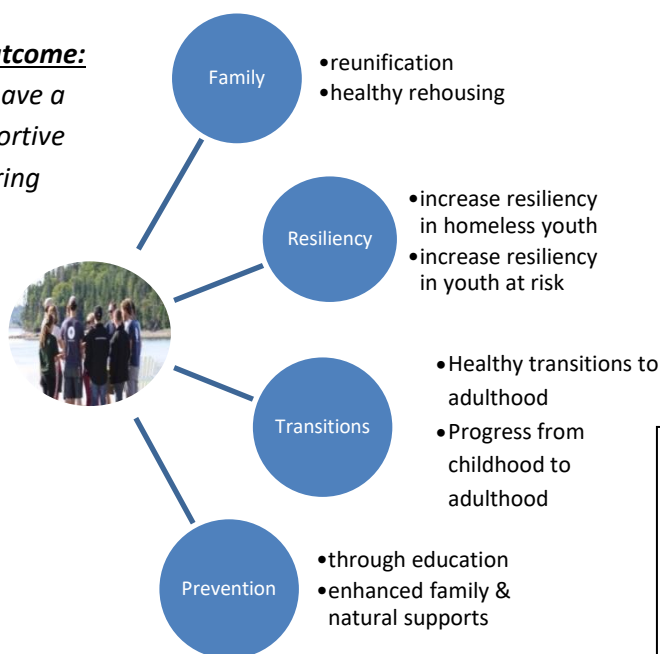
Outcomes

The Youth Plan will ensure that youth are safe, resilient and engaged, by achieving the following outcomes:

- *Increased housing stability for youth through Healthy rehousing or family reunification*
- *Increased resiliency in homeless youth and youth at risk of becoming homeless.*
- *Prevention of youth homelessness through education and enhanced family and natural supports.*
- *Healthy transitions to adulthood.*

Overall outcome:
all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.

Family
- reunification
- healthy rehousing

Resiliency
- increase resiliency in homeless youth
- increase resiliency in youth at risk

Transitions
- Healthy transitions to adulthood
- Progress from childhood to adulthood

Prevention
- through education
- enhanced family & natural supports

Different approach through stages	
Prevention-	birth to 6 years
Early Intervention-	7 to 12 years of age
Intervention-	12- 15 years of age
Engagement-	16- 19 years of age
Sustain-	19- 24 years of age

Figure 2- OUTCOMES

Housing First Approach for youth

Housing First programs – including the Pathways model and the *At Home/Chez Soi* project – specifically prioritize chronically homeless persons with significant mental health and addictions issues. While the question, "Does Housing First work for adults?" has effectively been answered; whether and how it works for youth still remains an askable question.

It is argued here that for young people, the need to get them into housing with appropriate supports as soon as possible is paramount. We know from research that the longer a young person is absolutely homeless or comes to rely on emergency services, the greater their entrenchment in the street youth lifestyle, the more estranged they become from mainstream services, the worse their health (mental health and addictions) becomes, and the greater likelihood of their experiencing crime and violence, as well as sexual and economic exploitation.

"A 'one size fits all' approach proposed by some advocates is actually quite limiting and ignores the incredible variability in needs and circumstances of young people who are homeless".

The Core Principles of Housing First for Youth

1. Immediate Access to Housing with No Preconditions

Key to the Housing First philosophy is that individuals and families are not required to first demonstrate that they are 'ready' for housing. At the same time, housing is not conditional on sobriety or abstinence. Immediate access to appropriate housing and supports is particularly crucial for young people and every effort should be made to divert them from long stays in emergency shelters.

2. Youth Choice and Self-Determination.

Housing First is a rights-based, client-centred approach that emphasizes client choice in terms of housing and supports.

• **Housing** – Young people are able to exercise some choice regarding the location and type of housing they receive (e.g. neighbourhood, congregate setting, scattered site, etc.).

• **Supports** – Young people have choices in terms of what services they receive and when to start using services.

• **Access to opportunities for education and training** – For a long-term and sustainable impact on the lives of young people, they should be encouraged and supported to (re)engage in education and, where appropriate, employment training.

• **Harm Reduction** - A core philosophy of virtually all approaches to Housing First is that there should be no requirement of sobriety or abstinence. Harm reduction aims to reduce the risks and harmful effects associated with substance use and addictive behaviours for the individual, the community and society as a whole, without requiring abstinence

3. Positive Youth Development Orientation.

The focus of Housing First for youth is not merely a successful transition to independent living, but rather, is on supporting a healthy transition to adulthood. Accommodation and supports must first be designed and implemented in recognition of the developmental needs and challenges of youth and second, foster and enable a transition to adulthood and wellness based on a positive strengths-based approach.

4. Individualized and Client-Driven Supports.

A client-driven approach recognizes that all young people are unique individuals and so are their needs. Once housed, some people will need few, if any, supports while other people will need supports for the rest of their lives (this could range from case management to assertive community treatment). Supports may address housing stability, health and mental health needs and life skills.

5. Social and Community Integration.

Part of the Housing First strategy is to help people integrate into their community and this requires socially supportive engagement and the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities. This means housing should not lead to the stigmatization or isolation of clients; young people should have opportunities for social and cultural engagement; support for family reconnection, and opportunities for participation in meaningful activities through employment, vocational and recreational activities.

See Appendix A or go to the Homelessness Hub

Roles

Every member of the community has the potential to play a role in shifting our response to youth homelessness. Youth homelessness is a complex social issue that requires many people working together to build and sustain healthy relationships and capacity in families and communities to reduce and prevent the issue.

Provincial Government

• Establish a shared vision, provincial priorities and policy directions amongst all ministries.

• Facilitate collaboration among individuals, families and communities to prevent youth homelessness through education and awareness.

• Support the provision of coordinated and integrated supports and services at the community level.

• Provide the legislative and policy framework and funding support to address youth homelessness.

• Support opportunities to share knowledge between policy-makers, academics and service providers.

• Support existing best and promising practices and innovative research and programming.

• Ensure healthy transitions across the system of care for youth.

• Ensure the delivery of programs and supports are where people who need it most can access.

• Ensure that frontline staff has the time and freedom to make services more effective at reaching youth and families at risk

Role of Municipalities- County, Towns, and Villages

• Facilitate collaboration among individuals, families and communities to prevent youth homelessness through education and awareness.

• Provide leadership and modeling.

• Provide accessible programming for all members of the community especially children and youth at risk

• Facilitate dialogue of local landlords and homeowners to allow for inclusive housing strategies

• Educate its residents of the issues to reduce stigma and build an inclusive community

• Provide space for youth friendly and safe spaces

Role of Service Providers/Non-Government Organizations and Communities

• Deliver front-line services and supports.

• Collaborate to share best practices and research, and help to identify emerging trends.

• Work with government to identify needs, issues and strategic directions.

• Inform and influence government priorities.

• Identify promising practices and research opportunities.

• Inform and influence community change.

Role of the Private Sector

• Provide leadership and modeling.

• Provide skills training and employment opportunities with needed supports.

• Engage and support employees in building healthy relationships.

• Provide charitable and philanthropic giving.

• Support employees to be engaged in the issues.

Role of Individuals – Youth, Families, Friends and Neighbours

• Take personal responsibility for individual wellness and healthy relationships.

• Become engaged citizens to prevent and reduce youth homelessness in the Annapolis Valley.

• Learn how to identify youth at risk of homelessness and what can be done about it.

Valley Residents Taking Action Responding to youth homelessness will take hard work and commitment on the part of governments, communities, homeless-serving agencies and the private sector. It will also require continuous monitoring and improvement to refine best practices, information and investments.   We can end youth homelessness if we take action on what we say, to "*develop a comprehensive framework that will identify ways to support improved outcomes for Youth-at-Risk across all components of its service delivery. Using a social determinants of health lens, which identifies the holistic needs of youth required to meet their full potential, key areas of focus will be housing, health (emotional and physical), income, employment, safety, education, and social connectedness.*"

RECOMMENDATIONS

Navigate
- Partnerships ***
- Easy access **
- Advocacy***
- ISD Team support
- Youth Engagement *

End Youth homelessness
- Housing First
- Emergency shelter *
- Transitional Housing
- Supported living
- Host Homes *

Education & Work
- Adaptations ***
- Work training *
- Incentives
- Transportation

Community
- Build belonging **
- Increase capacity
- Recreation access*
- Arts, music, food
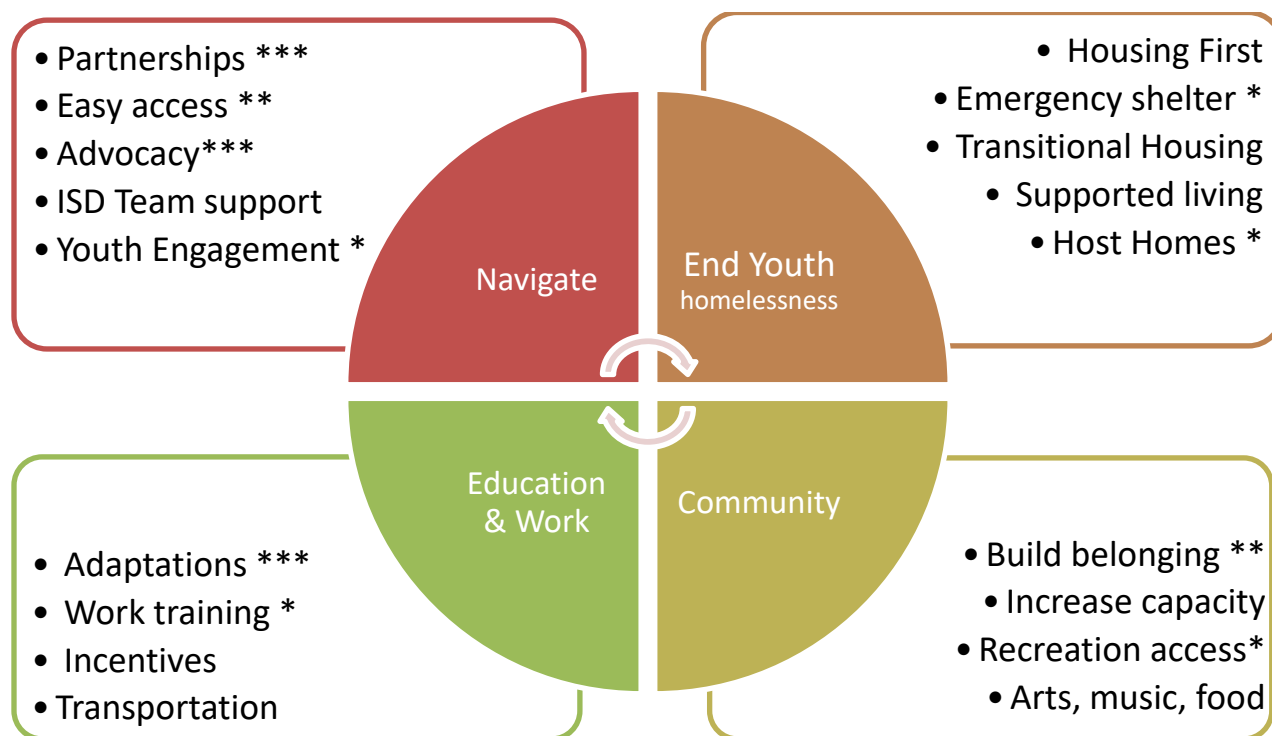
Status in the Valley: *** Excellent; ** very good; * marginal ; - non-existent

The below only defines the areas named. More detail, action plans and timeliness will be identified.

YEAR ONE OUTCOMES

Navigation of support and services (The Portal & frontline service providers)

1. **Partnerships-** *The partnering among frontline service providers and community agencies is very good. Managers can support the plan by granting time for their staff to continue to work together. To re-establish the Youth Connections Team (NS Health) is vital. A list of partner agencies would be maintained by the* Homeless NO More *Lead Team.*
   a) Secure funding/time needed for leadership of the plan.
   b) Identify the partner agencies and establish the work plan and time required.
   c) Meet to adjust the plan- 4 times per year.

2. **Easy access-** *Youth at risk need easy access to services like: Income Assistance, Counselling and Addiction Services, Crisis Response Service, Educational Support, Family Support, Early Childhood, Sexual Health, Recreation opportunities (including art & music), employment training, and Legal assistance. Currently all is available in the Valley.*
   a) The Re-established Youth Connections team to identify all the access points for youth.
   b) A simple survey to evaluate the ease of access and the "youth friendly level" of entry points
   c) Identify the access as related to transportation issues

    d) Improve the link between the community based recreation and frontline workers connected with youth

3. **Advocacy-** *Each youth that is at risk of homelessness needs advocacy. Human resources need to be freed up for this critical role. Access to a telephone and internet is vital for youth that are amongst the hidden homeless.*
    a) Identify phone and internet access points In each community
    b) Post the information for youth
    c) Increase the hours for access at places like The Portal through increased volunteer oversight.
    d) Increase volunteer involvement to ensure that each youth has a mentor (linked with the Rec Buddy Program)

4. **Integrated Service Delivery-** *A complex case protocol was researched and an example from New Brunswick could be established with ease in the Annapolis Valley. 95% of the cases with vulnerable youth are complex. The ISD can be overseen and managed within the Youth Connections Team.*
    a) Introduce the Integrated Service Delivery model and identify the core members.
    b) Secure funding for the increased time for coordination
    c) Evaluate current youth cases for increased support through family intervention and implementation of the <u>Home Secure Program</u>
    d) Maintain the profile and role of the ISD team in the community of front line workers

5. **Youth Engagement-** *Are the services and supports youth friendly and meet the criteria of youth engagement? Youth need to be consulted and involved in all stages of the Plan, <u>Homeless No More</u>. The principle of youth engagement needs to be honoured in all aspects of the plan.*
    a) Work in partnership with the youth engagement committee for King's County.
    b) Assess the need and possible parallel action in Annapolis and West Hants.
    c) Establish the S.A.F.E. plan to increase youth engagement in establishing safe people, safe places and safe talk.

Homeless NO More- Youth Plan (CMHA Project Hope, NS Housing Authority, property managers, The Portal)

1. **Housing First-** *A working strategy team representing all needed agencies be established that would oversee the implementation and adjusting of the plan, maintaining a Housing First Approach for Youth. The team would oversee all aspects of the plan. Members would have a succession perspective where there are changes of personnel.*
    a) Design, secure funding, and implement the Home Secure Program.
    b) Establish a family intervention coordinator and strategy to prevent further stress for youth at risk of homelessness
    c) Launch the Host Home Program as a response to youth homelessness. Hire a Host Home Coordinator.

2. **Emergency shelter-** *Youth under 19 years of age cannot be housed with adults. Host Homes that are supported could act as emergency response to homelessness.*
    a) Further develop a plan with Inn From The Cold for a partnership approach to youth that need emergency shelter.
    b) In conjunction with the S.A.F.E. program establish the SAFE Couch Surfing Network.
    c) Recruit, screen, train and network host homes in each community for both emergency and transitional housing for youth.

3. **Transitional Housing-** *The model used for the Refuge Transitional Housing Program needs to be supported through initiatives like Project Hope- Allen`s Motel. * Replication of the existing program is needed.*
    a) Establish a transitional housing solution for young women, 19- 24 years of age. Assess possible partnerships, VCLA
    b) Pursue the supports required to ensure a Zero tolerance for eviction for transitional housing and supported living.

4. **Supported living-** *There are multiple examples of supervised apartments through examples in other centres. **
    a) Research the possibilities of a supervised apartment program in partnership with Student Services at Acadia University.
    b) Evaluate and more effectively partner with existing resources through NS Housing Authority, Disability Support Program, Child Welfare (changes in the C&Y Act), Income Assistance, and Community Outreach Program (NS Health).

5. **Host Homes-** *in the last four years youth have been established in host homes. Host homes are provided by families or single adults that have the heart and ability to open their home to youth that are homeless. Host homes need to be recruited, screened, trained and networked. Resources currently do not exist.* **Further detail of the strategy for strengthening the family and alternative "homing" of youth, see-** *<u>Home Secure: A proposal for prevention and early intervention (pilot Project proposal stage)</u>*

Education & Work (AVRSB, Employment Ready Agencies, VCLA, The Portal, Local businesses)

1. **Adaptations-** *the Annapolis Valley School Board is committed to re-engaging students that have been non-attenders due to the stresses of family breakdown and homelessness. All efforts to maintain the open and effective partnership needs to be given priority. Tutors, resource staff and behavioural specialists have made a large impact on the transitioning back into education for such students.*
   a) Maintain the partnership with AVRSB
   b) Continue the progression for non-attenders- community support, in-school support, and re-integration
   c) Establish youth community outreach workers at each school not served by Schools Plus.

2. **Work training-** *A working group to be established that ensures that current work training/employment prep programs are hands on and have more immediate application for youth that have not completed grade 12.*
   a) Initiate the discussion that each NS Works Office would have an employment practitioner that is a specialist for youth.
   b) Establish a youth-adult entrepreneur think tank to mobilize youth employment and small business.
   c) Increase the effectiveness of Employment training programs to be youth centred and experiential.

3. **Incentives-** The best incentive for youth on Income Assistance is that they can keep their wages while attending high school. This policy is very helpful. For youth not on income assistance, there needs to be more access to the incentives that exist. Most have no idea what is available to them.
   a) Businesses and educational institutions would partner to double Co-op possibilities for youth.
   b) Investment would be practical and effective for youth to gain employment in the Valley.
   c) Identification of a fund for the establishing of small business ventures and work training not covered by existing sources
4. **Transportation-** If you are outside of the King's Transit route and not in school, there is no viable means to access transportation for support, services or employment preparation.

Community (Municipalities, Community Service Clubs, Churches, Individuals, Community Volunteer Boards)

1. **Build belonging**- without the sense of social inclusion or belonging, youth who have been marginalized through homelessness, will not come forward to participate in any opportunity for recreation, education, work preparation, or support/ services. Every effort needs to be made to make youth feel welcomed, heard, and seen in our communities. A *Safe Places Strategy* would greatly aid the marginalized communities as defined by race, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and any other stigmatized label. Each Community could serve their members by hearing the voice for each of the marginalized groups and communicating back with action that, "*you matter*!"
   a) Assess and establish goals for increasing the community capacity to be a S.A.F.E. Community.
   b) Recruitment, training, support and networking of Host Homes and Safe Couch Surfing Homes.
2. **Increase capacity-** Each community needs to establish a plan to increase the community capacity to understand, be involved in the prevention strategies, and support the response to youth homelessness.
3. **Recreation access-** Programs and subsidies exist but there are still barriers. Recreation and Health Boards can more effectively help people that are not participating by identifying strategies to increase social inclusion. The very popular S.M.I.L.E. program at Acadia University can be adapted for children, youth, and families that need the connection and accompaniment to go into a new place or attend a new program. Rec Buddies has recently been initiated where youth at risk are partnered with varsity team members and university students.
4. **Arts, music, food**- The writers of this plan would include Arts, music and food as a means to build community and pursue the outcomes of this proposed strategy. What many of us take for granted is not accessible or part of the "normal" experience for those that are marginalized through issues around homelessness. These activities are valuable to engage with and support youth as many will not attend many formal supports but rather connect with an arts or music community. Food insecurity is as great an issue as housing or income security. A Safe Spaces Strategy would serve youth with the inclusion of a healthy food "active" education and accessible program.

Getting Involved

Thank you for taking time to read this proposed plan to end youth homelessness. This will be a community effort, in fact, that is the only way that it is possible. Your feedback and endorsement is critical. The ownership needs to be broad. This plan is modelled on the plan that was successful in Medicine Hat, Alberta and then adapted for the Annapolis Valley and youth. There are details that need to be worked out. Each town or village can participate by identifying their part in the overall strategy. Various departments and organizations plan a role. It will need to be adjusted given the reality of differences in each area of the Valley and the strengths of each organization and business. The information was compiled from various sources and many conversations. There are many contributors, already. Please read it and find a way to contribute to the action plan. For your response, see the links and contact points below.

Online version
Phone: Contact Russ Sanche @ 902-691-6556 or email @ russ@portalyouth.ca
Participate by responding to our online form or endorse the plan

Appendix A- Host Secure

HOME SECURE

If you asked a youth, "what would you want more than anything for their family? Many would say, "love, less fighting, time together and security". This proposal outlines the strategy that identifies community based initiatives to prevent and provide early intervention to avoid the painful experience of youth homelessness. With steps taken, at the earliest possible opportunity, the community can move closer to a family that is struggling. By being closer, keeping youth at the centre of the intervention, the community can help to reduce the factors that lead to homelessness. If things have begun to fall apart, the community can intervene early to strengthen and provide alternatives to: foster care, group homes, couch surfing, and the use of an emergency shelter. When a youth is homeless, the community can respond with a well-informed approach that keeps the youth in the centre, making choices for family re-connection, an alternative home environment, or a plan towards independent supported living. Home Secure outlines this strategy. It the more detailed outline of the recommendations for Homeless, No More: A Plan to End Youth Homelessness in the Annapolis Valley.

Overall outcome

All youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.

Objectives of this pilot:

- Establish a community strategy that responds to the early warning and signs to prevent youth homelessness
- Put youth in the centre of the solution oriented strategy to reduce the stress and conflict that can result in family breakdown and homelessness
- Facilitate the community standing with the family and the youth at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent youth homelessness. See a Community Mobilization segment that encouraging mentoring of youth.
- Establish a community involved strategy that would see local families and individuals support youth in the community through "host homes", family re-connection and healthy transition to adulthood
- Evaluate an early intervention strategy that can be utilized in other communities for a holistic approach to youth homelessness prevention and intervention
- Measure the effects of a sustainable community solution to youth homelessness that increases the community capacity to be a caring, safe and secure community

The Case for A Comprehensive Strategy

What % were actually homeless?

There were 82 youth 16- 19 years of age that were at risk of being homeless in 2016

36 youth-
At Risk
38%

46 youth-
Homeless
62%
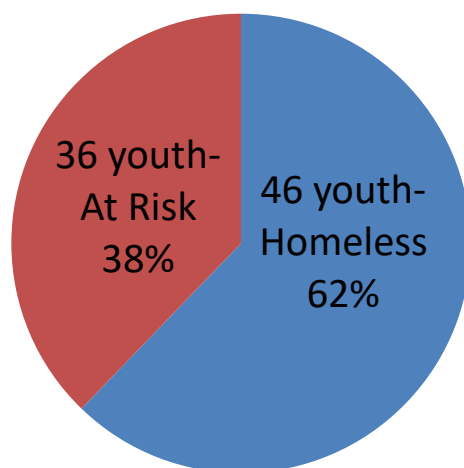
Of the 46 that were homeless- all experienced couch surfing and 5-7 were unsheltered for some period of time; and 10 might have accessed emergency shelter.

King's- 62 (76%)
Annapolis – 16
West Hants- 4

The Portal has worked in King's County for 5 years; Annapolis and West Hants for 2 years. These numbers do not represent those that are not identified or known.

Interventions

22 youth fell through the cracks due to lack of engagement or inability to stabilize. Connection was not broken but youth did not receive the service or support that was needed.

fell through cracks
27%

Home
Secured
24%

Needed
Intervention
49%
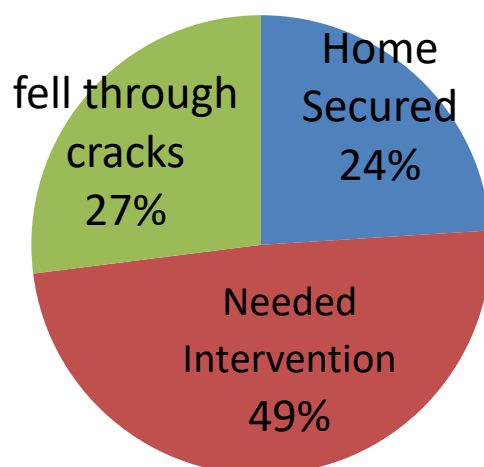
Home Secured through Home Host Program. Of the 20 (15 in King's) that were supported through Host Homes, 4 did not stay past 3 months due to lack of support for Host Homes.

60 Youth continued to need home based intervention and/or a referral to CPS. 34 youth could have received support through family intervention and 12 could have been served with a Host Home Intervention.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Strengths-Based: We will engage young people's diverse talents, skills, and interests; building on their strengths and involving them in planning, decision-making, and implementing of initiatives.
- Safe and Supportive Environment: All initiatives, discussions, programs and services take place in an environment that is physically/emotionally safe and supportive.
- Youth & Family Centered: Youth and families are entitled to have their basic needs met in a manner that guarantees maximum opportunity for personal fulfillment and achievement. Their strengthening, development and well-being is central.
- Harm Reduction Approach: Approaches will focus on the reduction of negative consequences of high-risk activities without judgmental or coercive strategies. It recognizes that incremental changes can lead to healthier lifestyle practices.
- Experiential Learning: Opportunities are provided to practice new skills through hands-on experiences which incorporate opportunities for reflection and discussion. More doing and less talking!
- Relationship-based: central to the work is building trust and developing life-giving relationships with youth. Mentoring, peer support and transparency will be evident in all relationships.
- Leadership Development: Opportunities will exist for the development of leadership skills and opportunities. Failure and success will be embraced, enabling all to practise skills and knowledge.
- Culturally Competent: Initiatives will demonstrate an awareness of the culture and diversity of Youth and strive to ensure the delivery of culturally competent programs, services, and opportunities.
- Holistic Approach: Supports and services take into account the "whole" person, including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, and creative development; recognizing the importance of context such as familial relationships, peer relationships, history, culture, and race.
- Community-development: programs and services are relevant to the community being served; partnering and collaborating with existing community resources to build on programming and promote community capacity. The approach will provide a replicable model for use in other communities.

BEST PRACTISES

This pilot will employ best practises in:

- Assessing of needs and making a plan that is youth centred
- Trauma informed assessment and family and personal planning
- Family Re-connection
- Youth Choices for Housing
- Integrated Service Delivery for youth complex cases
- Family Intervention and support
- Training and support for Host Homes, transitional housing, supported living
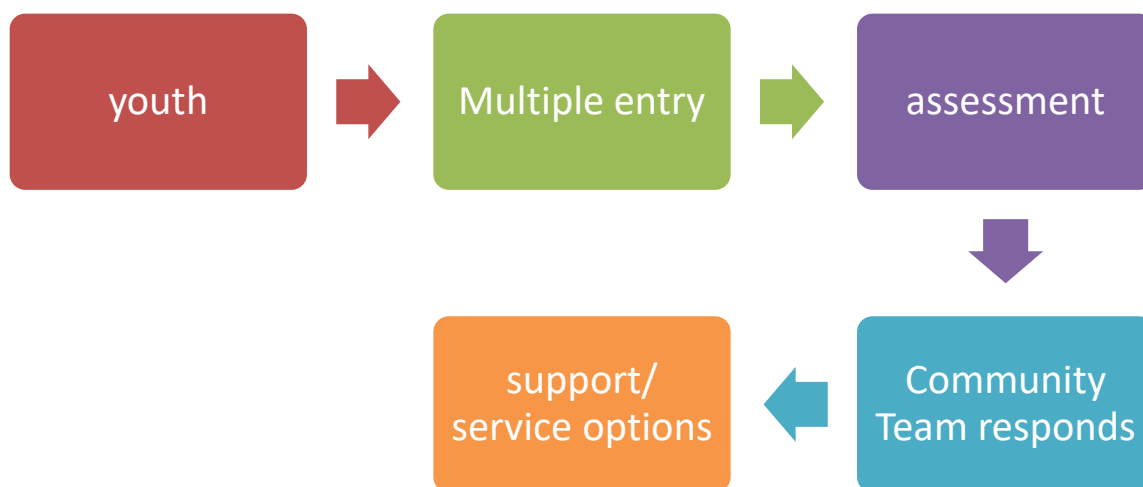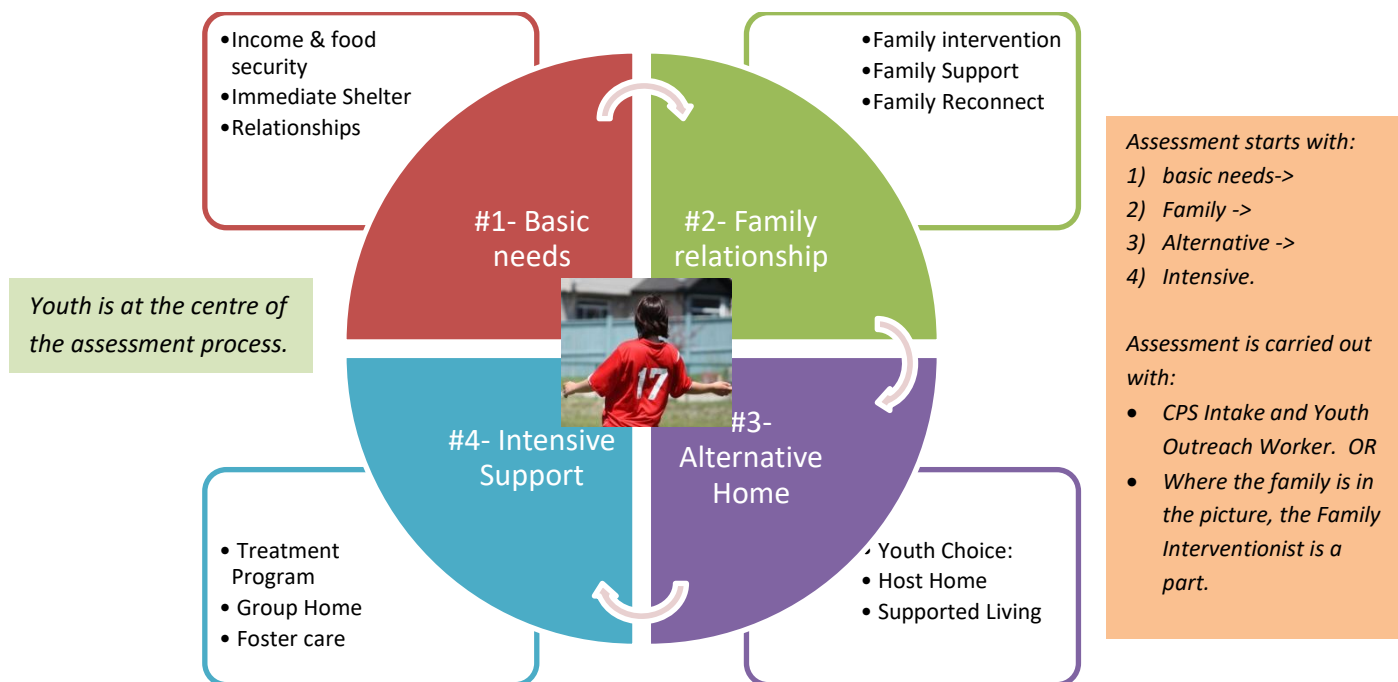- Youth/adult partnership – mentoring in all stages of development

Outcomes

- A community strategy that responds to the early warning and signs to prevent youth homelessness
- Youth and families (where applicable) would identify that they are experiencing less stress and conflict in the home
- Youth and families (where applicable) would identify that they are experiencing less family breakdown and episodic homelessness
- 40 Local families and individuals supporting youth in the community through "host homes", family re-connection and healthy transition to adulthood
- A set of best practises for an early intervention strategy that can be utilized in other communities for a holistic approach to youth homelessness prevention and intervention
- The number of community members could identify their involvement in a sustainable community solution to youth homelessness and that the community is a more caring, safe and secure community
- An effective voluntary assessment process is identified that leverages the government and community resources to prevent and intervene to reduce youth homelessness by 50% by 2022 and 100% by 2027.
- Other

Home Secure: Assessing and making a plan

Entry point can be through a variety of connections:

- Youth comes into the Portal/ DCS/ Family Resource Centre
- Family contacts Portal/ DCS/ Family Resource Centre
- Youth identifies through other Youth Support/ Service or School/ Schools Plus
- Youth is leaving or aging out of existing service/program/ housing situation

- Income & food security
- Immediate Shelter
- Relationships

#1- Basic needs

- Family intervention
- Family Support
- Family Reconnect

#2- Family relationship

Youth is at the centre of the assessment process.

#4- Intensive Support

#3- Alternative Home

- Treatment Program
- Group Home
- Foster care

- Youth Choice:
- Host Home
- Supported Living

Assessment starts with:
1) *basic needs->*
2) *Family ->*
3) *Alternative ->*
4) *Intensive.*

Assessment is carried out with:
- *CPS Intake and Youth Outreach Worker. OR*
- *Where the family is in the picture, the Family Interventionist is a part.*

youth → Multiple entry → assessment

↓

support/ service options ← Community Team responds

60 youth 16-19 years of age were supported through the Portal Youth Centre- Youth Outreach Program; 58 of those 60 were connected to other services in the community; and 22 were not connected but were known.

Previous to 2017, Child Welfare were not involved with over 90% of the cases involving 16- 19 year olds.
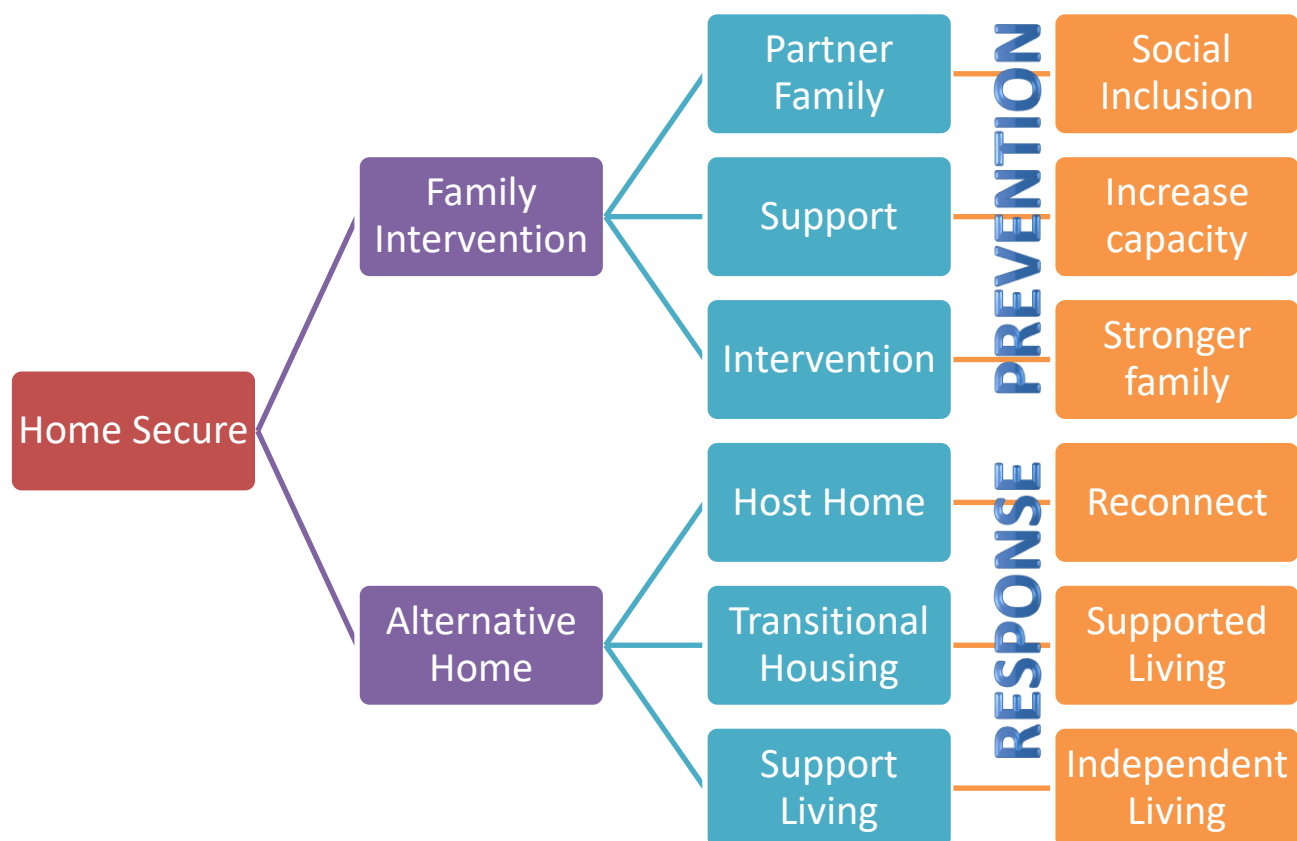
Homeless NO More, The Portal 2017

Resources Needed

Organization Leadership	Time for the Exec Director to establish the plan to end Homelessness and pilot program 25% FTE	$12,000
Family Interventionist	On level with needed education and experience	$60,000
Host Home Coordinator	Recruiting, training, and supporting Host Homes	$40,000
Overhead	Space, office expense, etc	$10,000
Program	Volunteer Training and Implementation of program	$ 5,000
		$127,000

Roles

<u>**Host Family or Host Individual:**</u>
An alternative housing option for youth at risk, who are willing to provide a safe, supervised & supportive home under conditions agreed to by both parties. The host family receives initial training from the Portal staff with special attention regarding prevalent issues facing this segment of the population. Issues including homelessness, trauma informed care, adolescent development, privilege, conflict resolution, communication & values and positive youth development are topics that should be addressed and expanded on. Relevant factors particular to the youth in question should be noted, without breach of confidentiality and only when necessary. Regular support from the Youth Outreach worker will be maintained to review living conditions, and the situation in general as it goes through a period of transition. As rules and boundaries are explored and enforced there may be times to clarify expectations & responsibilities of both parties and when necessary renegotiate any issues on the contract between the parties. Any conflicts, issues or challenges are resolved in a timely and effective manner. There will be agreed on conditions, responsibilities & expectations between all parties and will include both negotiable and nonnegotiable conditions. When possible every effort will be made to provide a subsidy to the host family to offset costs incurred.

<u>**Host Home Coordinator**</u>
- Confirmation of inability to live with parents
- Expectations from Host Home (periods of quiet, curfews, chores, homework)
- Expectations from Youth
- Conflict resolution plan
- Sleeping arrangements
- Regular check ins & updates with support worker
- HOST family criminal record check, DCS/Children's Services
- Training of HOST family participants
- Review of HOST home for safety and environment
- Education/Training programs
- existing special conditions (children with special needs, etc)
- Subsidies to HOST family (Proposed additional $600 month- Reg 45)
- Other-

<u>**Youth Outreach Worker:**</u>
The Youth Outreach Worker or designated acts as a mediator and person of support for both the youth & host family during the selection, assessment, transition & maintenance of the partnership process. The Youth Outreach Worker or Family Support Worker can provide the following:

- Connection time- "intentional hanging out"
- Helping youth & families deal with a crisis
- Someone to talk to: supportive counseling
- Programs/workshops for resiliency
- Mentoring: youth/ adult partnership
- Advocacy: Someone to help you speak up
- Supporting families in transition
- Access to options in education, work training, income assistance, justice issues, mental Health and addictions support, recreation and active living options

<u>Family Interventionist</u>
Identify

Appendix C- Host Homes

Host Homes have been provided through the Portal Youth Centre since 2012. The limitations have been the resources to recruit, train, support, and network the Host Homes.

Main Objectives:
To provide host families for young people 16-19 years of age that would be safe, supervised & support driven. Adhering to the theory of what is necessary to promote and support change for youth, it is essential that three key dynamics are met by the partnership of the Host Home and the youth:

- the youth feels a sense of **belonging**, a sense of family & community
- help and assisting the youth to **overcome** both past and present challenges (pain and past trauma) and for them to know there is help ready for them when they feel powerless
- a consistent supportive atmosphere and personal commitment to **maturity**, growing up and taking responsibility for oneself
- A place where the possibility of family reconnection can occur

Youth that might need an alternative home:
Youth 16-19 years of age, who are deemed no longer able to live with their families because of safety issues and/or a lack of capacity for healthy development and home security. Youth less than 19 years of age are considered children according to child protection guidelines, and are therefore eligible for voluntary support and service by DCS and its partner agencies. The primary objective remains matching youth with suitable alternative housing options that will provide stability and support while the youth attends to personal growth and development. Youth develop and pursue their own goal plans with support of the Host Home Coordinator and the Host Home. Goals are not dictated to the youth. Continuing educational pursuits and/or training for entry into the work force supported. Negotiable & Non-negotiable aspects of the proposed partnership with a Host Home will be discussed and determined such as:

For the Host Home Program, the non-negotiables are:
- ✓ school attendance or participation in school adaptation
- ✓ abstinence from substance use in host family home
- ✓ support & continued contact with Youth Outreach worker or designated
- ✓ respect of host family home and family members
- ✓ respect of rules and curfews in host family home
- ✓ monthly income statement declarations completed (if applicable)

The negotiables are:
- ✓ Personal Goals
- ✓ Activities
- ✓ communication plan with family in assisting conflict resolution/reconnection
- ✓ conflict management
- ✓ harm reduction and treatment of substance use
- ✓ mental wellness plan

Process:
1. A screening and assessment of the existing housing situation of the youth is required to determine eligibility in securing alternative housing.
2. Department of Community Services will not assess the current or proposed alternative living situation but will accept the assessment from the Youth Outreach Worker as well as collateral recommendations provided by other agencies when available, including but not limited to teachers, police & child welfare services.
3. The Youth Outreach Worker helps assess possible eligibility for IA. This is to ensure that the criteria for eligibility for Income Assistance through Department of Community Services is met
4. Once eligibility is approved, the youth will be provided a housing allowance and other benefits where applicable, client specific, case by case.
5. Prioritizing potential host families should follow a standard guideline to minimize the level of stress already impacting the youth and increase the likelihood of a successful transition for all involved.
6. When possible, the following scenarios for HOST family eligibility should be pursued in the noted order as given:
- another family member of the youth
- a friend of the youth whose family is known and a good relationship already exists
- Portal source recruited families who are willing to offer support
- independent living, a responsible roommate over 19 years of age

Department of Community Services Programs:
The Department of Community Services provides provision for housing and other incidentals incurred by the youth who transitions from the parental home to a host family partnership. There are key formal documents required by the agency to access program benefits.

1. **Confirmation of Occupancy** - formally outlines the new approved housing arrangement, address, type of accommodation, details of boarding, costs and signature of individual responsible for the occupancy. The new landlord must sign this form to confirm what the youth will be responsible for in housing costs.

2. **Employment Support & Income Assistance Program Application** - provides the Department of Community Services personal information about the applicant, including dependents, sources of any income, assets, expenses, extraordinary expenses (childcare, special diet, drug costs or transportation) & accommodation details. This must be filled out to initiate assistance. List of possible items the youth may be eligible for:

- ✓ room & board
- ✓ groceries
- ✓ medical & dental
- ✓ dietary special needs
- ✓ child care subsidy or allowance
- ✓ transportation
- ✓ training allowance
- ✓ clothing allowance
- ✓ sports & recreation allowance
- ✓ prescriptions
- ✓ disability allowance
- ✓ treatment allowance

3. **Trustee Form** - authorizing an adult who acts in the capacity of trustee for youth 16-18 years of age while accessing program funding from the Department of Community Services.

4. **Confidentiality Release**

5. **Statement of Income -** each month the youth must fill out a statement of income pertaining to the prior month income. It must be filled out by the 17th, and the cheques are remitted by Department of Community Services usually by the 25th-30th of the month.

Once housing has been approved, the working contract between the parties will be collaborated on, ensuring that the expectations, goals, needs and responsibilities are clearly set out. This will formalize the partnership and clarify what the relationship will comprise. When necessary it will be re-evaluated and altered.

Home Assessment:
A comprehensive assessment of components within the HOST family home needs to be considered through the process of selection and include:

- ✓ Emotional safety
- ✓ Physical safety
- ✓ Boundaries
- ✓ Rules
- ✓ Who is present in the home
- ✓ Are there extraordinary components already present in the home that need to be considered
- ✓ Is there appropriate supervision and support afforded the youth
- ✓ What does current consumption of alcohol or any other substances look like within the home (access, amount & regular use)
- ✓ How are rules & boundaries enforced
- ✓ What are current methods of discipline or attitudes regarding appropriate behaviour within the home
- ✓ What is the "deal breaker" for both parties
- ✓ What level of privacy will be provided

Appendix C- S.A.F.E.

S.A.F.E. - *Participants and the community would embrace and the live the values of* **S.A.F.E.** *The values would be cultivated for people, friends, and places. The values are:*

S- *Secure: I am secure in who I am and knowing that I have value.*

A- *Acceptance of others in their differences and learning to value others.*

F- *Freedom from harm (sexual violence, exploitation, bullying and addictions) and help to ensure the freedom from harm for all.*

E- *Equal: I will not contribute to an unfair balance of control or power in relationships or social culture.*

S.A.F.E. PEOPLE

1. Each young person involved will identify the safe people in their community. Each student will know where to turn when they feel vulnerable (risk factors increasing, i.e. becoming homeless; practising unsafe use of substances; peer group changing). Names of S.A.F.E. team members will be visually identified at each location.
2. School/ Community teams will be comprised of both young men and women. They will be equally involved in the program- facilitating and participating. Men and boys will be highly committed to a change in mindset with the S.A.F.E. community as demonstrated by their involvement and joint leadership. Girls and women will be valued, encouraged to speak up, and supported in doing so, resulting in increased disclosures and increased safety from sexual violence.
3. With youth leadership in the school/community teams, youth engagement and leadership will be strengthened in sexual violence prevention and the hyper-sexualization of women and girls will be discouraged. School based teams will speak out against negative images, messages and cultural norms that allow unsafe behaviours.
4. Youth that are in unstable situations across various groups (cultural and identity groups) will access help early and not end up at risk of sexual violence.

S.A.F.E. PLACES

1. The community/school based teams will identify and establish the safe places in the community for disclosure, support and being safe. Police and Child Welfare would interview in these SAFE places.
2. Those **S.A.F.E.** places will have a seal of approval and signage that indicates it is a **S.A.F.E.** place.
3. **S.A.F.E.** spaces will be free from the hyper-sexualization of women and girls. Men and boys will feel empowered to be involved to help stop sexual violence.
4. The **S.A.F.E.** places will yearly review their understanding of best practices in sexual violence prevention.

S.A.F.E. TALK

1. The creative engagement sessions will draw out questions to better understanding of healthy relationships and norms that prevent and respond to sexual violence, bullying, stereotyping and marginalization of youth.
2. Through creative discussions, youth would have a clearer understanding of what consent is and why it is important be **S.A.F.E. people** *(increasing peer safety by looking out for one another and being good friends).*
3. Increase in positive, non-violent perceptions of masculinity through the role modeling and exploring of the impact of negative perceptions of masculinity.
4. This would create a counter-cultural environment that promotes being mindful of how we think, talk and act around one another.
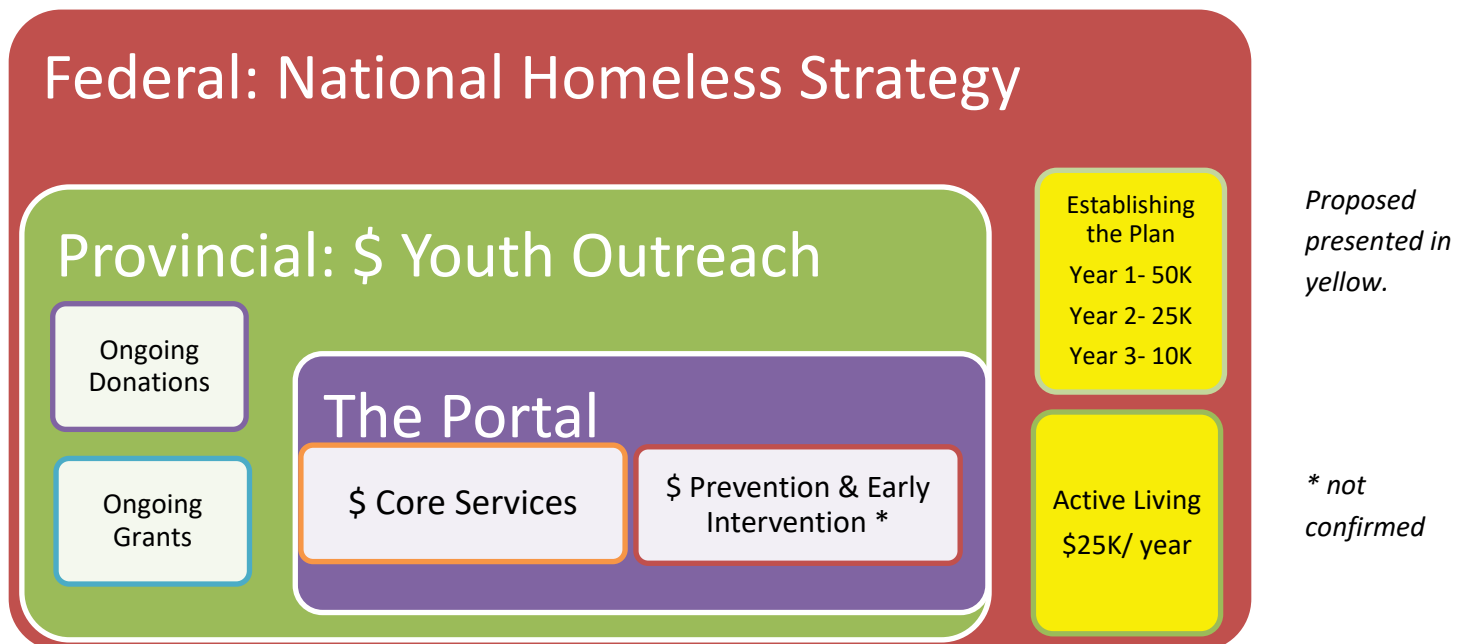
Plan to End Youth Homelessness in 10 years
Project Funding

Proposed: $10,000, seed funding for the establishment of the strategy, Homeless No More.

Current funding received from various sources is for youth outreach work with the 100 plus youth in King's and Annapolis Counties. This proposal is focused on the resources needed to move the plan forward, provide leadership and coordination.

The background information for the Homeless No More Strategy-

Current funding streams

Federal: National Homeless Strategy

Provincial: $ Youth Outreach

Ongoing Donations

Ongoing Grants

The Portal

$ Core Services

$ Prevention & Early Intervention *

Establishing the Plan
Year 1- 50K
Year 2- 25K
Year 3- 10K

Active Living
$25K/ year

Proposed presented in yellow.

* not confirmed

1. **Federal Government**- Provides the framework for The National Homeless Strategy; Funding is made available in November for larger projects that have key stakeholders on board. No funding currently received.
2. **Provincial** – provides funding for youth outreach worker for core services- advocacy, supportive counselling, crisis management, referral and workshops.
3. **Donations**- directed towards the overhead costs and programs for youth 16- 21 years of age.
4. **Grants-** directed towards summer staff, recreation programs for 12- 15 years, and internships or co-op.
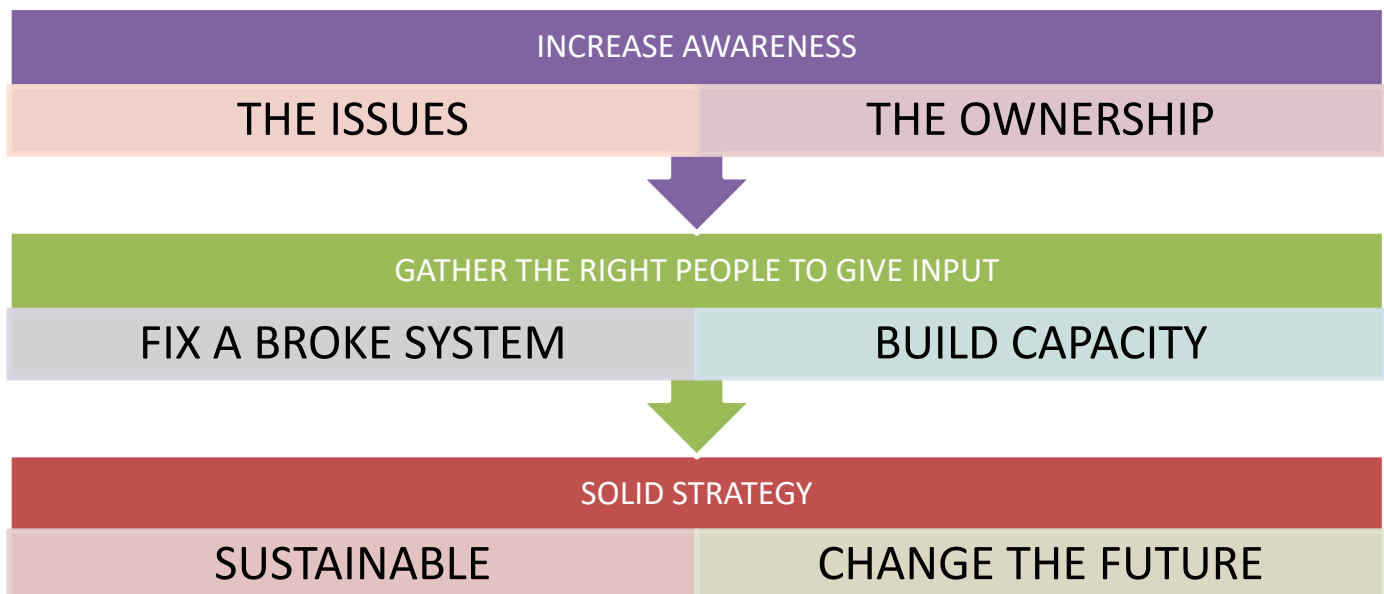
REQUEST

1. Establish the Plan: Seed funding to provide leadership and coordination for the Homeless No More Project.

This request has been made to five potential stakeholders: New Minas Rotary, Kentville Rotary, Mudcreek Rotary, Town of Kentville, and the County of King's. Annual Overall budget and 2016 financial statements can be provided upon request. The request is for a $10,000 investment in establishing the strategy, _Homeless No More._

COMPLEX PROBLEM, REQUIRES MANY PARTNERS

- Department of Community Services
- Department of Corrections, Annapolis & King`s
- The Annapolis Valley Regional School Board & eight local High Schools
- AVH- Child & Youth Mental Health and Addictions
- Canadian Mental Health King's County (Project Hope)
- The Village of New Minas
- The Town of Kentville
- The Town of Middleton
- Town of Wolfville
- King's County
- Annapolis County
- Kentville Police and RCMP
- The Rotary Club, Kentville
- Mudcreek Rotary
- New Minas Rotary
- Concerned individuals in the community
- Eastern King's Memorial Fund
- Local Businesses
- Open Arms
- Valley Gate Church, Kentville
- New Covenant Community Church, Coldbrook
- Christ Community Church, Wolfville

THE PROCESS

INCREASE AWARENESS	
THE ISSUES	THE OWNERSHIP

GATHER THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO GIVE INPUT	
FIX A BROKE SYSTEM	BUILD CAPACITY

SOLID STRATEGY	
SUSTAINABLE	CHANGE THE FUTURE

Homeless No More- Project Funding 2017

Navigation of support and services

1) **Partnerships-** *The partnering among frontline service providers and community agencies is very good. Managers can support the plan by granting time for their staff to continue to work together. To re-establish the Youth Connections Team (NS Health) is vital. A list of partner agencies would be maintained by the* <u>Homeless NO More</u> *Lead Team.*
   a) Secure funding/time needed for leadership of the plan.
   b) Identify the partner agencies and establish the work plan and time required.
   c) Meet to adjust the plan- 4 times per year.

2) **Easy access-** *Youth at risk need easy access to services like: Income Assistance, Counselling and Addiction Services, Crisis Response Service, Educational Support, Family Support, Early Childhood, Sexual Health, Recreation opportunities (including art & music), employment training, and Legal assistance. Currently all is available in the Valley.*
   a) The Re-established Youth Connections team to identify all the access points for youth.
   b) A simple survey to evaluate the ease of access and the "youth friendly level" of entry points
   c) Identify the access as related to transportation issues
   d) Improve the link between the community based recreation and frontline workers connected with youth

3) **Advocacy-** *Each youth that is at risk of homelessness needs advocacy. Human resources need to be freed up for this critical role. Access to a telephone and internet is vital for youth that are amongst the hidden homeless.*
   a) Identify phone and internet access points In each community
   b) Post the information for youth
   c) Increase the hours for access at places like The Portal through increased volunteer oversight.
   d) Increase volunteer involvement to ensure that each youth has a mentor (linked with the Rec Buddy Program)

4) **Integrated Service Delivery-** *A complex case protocol was researched and an example from New Brunswick could be established with ease in the Annapolis Valley. 95% of the cases with vulnerable youth are complex.   The ISD can be overseen and managed within the Youth Connections Team.*
   a) Introduce the Integrated Service Delivery model and identify the core members.
   b) Secure funding for the increased time for coordination
   c) Evaluate current youth cases for increased support through family intervention and implementation of the <u>Home Secure Program</u>
   d) Maintain the profile and role of the ISD team in the community of front line workers

5) **Youth Engagement-** *Are the services and supports youth friendly and meet the criteria of youth engagement? Youth need to be consulted and involved in all stages of the Plan,* <u>Homeless No More</u>*. The principle of youth engagement needs to be honoured in all aspects of the plan.*
   a) Work in partnership with the youth engagement committee for King's County.
   b) Assess the need and possible parallel action in Annapolis and West Hants.
   c) Establish the S.A.F.E. plan to increase youth engagement in establishing safe people, safe places and safe talk.

Homeless NO More- Youth Plan

1) **Housing First-** *A working strategy team representing all needed agencies be established that would oversee the implementation and adjusting of the plan, maintaining a Housing First Approach for Youth. The team would oversee all aspects of the plan. Members would have a succession perspective where there are changes of personnel.*
   a) Design, secure funding, and implement the Home Secure Program.
   b) Establish a family intervention coordinator and strategy to prevent further stress for youth at risk of homelessness
   c) Launch the Host Home Program as a response to youth homelessness. Hire a Host Home Coordinator.

2) **Emergency shelter-** *Youth under 19 years of age cannot be housed with adults. Host Homes that are supported could act as emergency response to homelessness.*
   a) Further develop a plan with Inn From The Cold for a partnership approach to youth that need emergency shelter.
   b) In conjunction with the S.A.F.E. program establish the SAFE Couch Surfing Network.
   c) Recruit, screen, train and network host homes in each community for both emergency and transitional housing for youth.

3) **Transitional Housing-** *The model used for the Refuge Transitional Housing Program needs to be supported through initiatives like Project Hope- Allen`s Motel. * Replication of the existing program is needed.*
   a) Establish a transitional housing solution for young women, 19- 24 years of age. Assess possible partnerships, VCLA
   b) Pursue the supports required to ensure a Zero tolerance for eviction for transitional housing and supported living.

4) **Supported living-** *There are multiple examples of supervised apartments through examples in other centres. **
   a) Research the possibilities of a supervised apartment program in partnership with Student Services at Acadia University.
   b) Evaluate and more effectively partner with existing resources through NS Housing Authority, Disability Support Program, Child Welfare (changes in the C&Y Act), Income Assistance, and Community Outreach Program (NS Health).

5) **Host Homes-** *in the last four years youth have been established in host homes. Host homes are provided by families or single adults that have the heart and ability to open their home to youth that are homeless. Host homes need to be recruited, screened, trained and networked. Resources currently do not exist.* *** Further detail of the strategy for strengthening the family and alternative "homing" of youth, see- _Home Secure: A proposal for prevention and early intervention (pilot Project proposal stage)_**

Education & Work

1) **Adaptations-** *the Annapolis Valley School Board is committed to re-engaging students that have been non-attenders due to the stresses of family breakdown and homelessness. All efforts to maintain the open and effective partnership needs to be given priority. Tutors, resource staff and behavioural specialists have made a large impact on the transitioning back into education for such students.*
   a) Maintain the partnership with AVRSB
   b) Continue the progression for non-attenders- community support, in-school support, and re-integration
   c) Establish youth community outreach workers at each school not served by Schools Plus.

2) **Work training-** *A working group to be established that ensures that current work training/employment prep programs are hands on and have more immediate application for youth that have not completed grade 12.*
   a) Initiate the discussion that each NS Works Office would have an employment practitioner that is a specialist for youth.
   b) Establish a youth-adult entrepreneur think tank to mobilize youth employment and small business.
   c) Increase the effectiveness of Employment training programs to be youth centred and experiential.

3) **Incentives-** The best incentive for youth on Income Assistance is that they can keep their wages while attending high school. This policy is very helpful. For youth not on income assistance, there needs to be more access to the incentives that exist. Most have no idea what is available to them.
   a) Businesses and educational institutions would partner to double Co-op possibilities for youth.
   b) Investment would be practical and effective for youth to gain employment in the Valley.
   c) Identification of a fund for the establishing of small business ventures and work training not covered by existing sources
4) **Transportation-** If you are outside of the King's Transit route and not in school, there is no viable means to access transportation for support, services or employment preparation.

Community

1) **Build belonging**- without the sense of social inclusion or belonging, youth who have been marginalized through homelessness, will not come forward to participate in any opportunity for recreation, education, work preparation, or support/ services. Every effort needs to be made to make youth feel welcomed, heard, and seen in our communities. A *Safe Places Strategy* would greatly aid the marginalized communities as defined by race, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and any other stigmatized label. Each Community could serve their members by hearing the voice for each of the marginalized groups and communicating back with action that, "*you matter*!"

   a) Assess and establish goals for increasing the community capacity to be a S.A.F.E. Community.

   b) Ensure that all actions

2) **Increase capacity-** Each community needs to establish a plan to increase the community capacity to understand, be involved in the prevention strategies, and support the response to youth homelessness.

3) **Recreation access-** Programs and subsidies exist but there are still barriers. Recreation and Health Boards can more effectively help people that are not participating by identifying strategies to increase social inclusion. The very popular S.M.I.L.E. program at Acadia University can be adapted for children, youth, and families that need the connection and accompaniment to go into a new place or attend a new program. Rec Buddies has recently been initiated where youth at risk are partnered with varsity team members and university students.

4) **Arts, music, food**- The writers of this plan would include Arts, music and food as a means to build community and pursue the outcomes of this proposed strategy. What many of us take for granted is not accessible or part of the "normal" experience for those that are marginalized through issues around homelessness. These activities are valuable to engage with and support youth as many will not attend many formal supports but rather connect with an arts or music community. Food insecurity is as great an issue as housing or income security. A Safe Spaces Strategy would serve youth with the inclusion of a healthy food "active" education and accessible program.