

**Assessing Gaps and Barriers to
Housing Homeless Youth and
Youth-at-Risk in Brandon,
Manitoba, and
Recommendations on How to
Move Forward**

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Background

- o The community of Brandon was selected to take part in a national project with the goal of developing a plan to mobilize the local community in order to end youth homelessness.
- o The Brandon Neighborhood Renewal Corporation facilitated this project in Brandon. Naomi Leadbeater, Community Development Coordinator at the Brandon Neighborhood Renewal Corporation, invited many local professionals to the Steering Committee, garnering a diverse group of representatives from a wide-range of local agencies.

Introduction



- o The Mobilizing Local Capacity to End Youth Homelessness Project is a national effort launched by Eva's Initiatives, a non-profit organization based in Toronto. The goal of the project is to create community partnerships that will lead to the prevention of youth homelessness across the country.

Youth Homelessness

- o It is estimated that 20% of people experiencing homelessness in Canada are under the age of 30.
- o The experience for youth can be significantly different, when compared to adults, for a variety of reasons. Such as:
 - o Lack of life skills and experience
 - o Lack of education
 - o Increased predatory relationships

Youth Homelessness

- Because the experience and risks are different, it is necessary to develop youth specific plans in order to prevent and end youth homelessness in Canada.

Youth Homelessness

- In addition to the unique risks associated with youth homelessness, research and prevention programs must also consider the unique conditions that differ between many Canadian provinces.

Youth Homelessness

- Because of the unique conditions, it is fundamental that local initiatives are developed, provincial programs are encouraged, and funding from all levels of government as well as community partners is sought and utilized.

Research Questions and Methods

- o Through this study, interviews with 22 service providers were held. Including corrections, shelter staff, employment organizations, school organizations, women's resource centres, among others.



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RENEWAL corporation

Thank you for agreeing to share your knowledge about the population you serve. The information you provide will help us to better understand the experiences of youth experiencing homelessness in Brandon, and how to support these youth in our community. Based on your knowledge of the people your agency serves:

- What can you tell us about the population you serve? Ex. Are homeless youth accompanied by children? What portion of your clients have Aboriginal ancestry? Do these elements influence people's needs?
- What pathways do you believe are leading youth into homelessness in Brandon?
- What resources and/or services would be helpful in preventing youth homelessness in Brandon?
- What challenges do youth face when attempting to secure housing in Brandon?
- What barriers to resources and/or services exist for youth attempting to secure housing in Brandon?
- Is the experience different for youth that are new to Brandon?
- What resources and/or services does Brandon need that would assist youth in securing housing?

Are there other experiences based on factors such as housing, resources & services that are unique to the population you serve to provide opportunities or pose challenges when working with youth?

Is there anything else we should know?

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your knowledge with us.

Results

Question	Common Themes and Responses
What pathways do you believe are leading youth into homelessness in Brandon?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of jobs<li>• Lack of skills or education<li>• Addictions<li>• Mental health concerns<li>• Family breakdown<li>• Low income / no income

Results

What resources and/or services would be helpful in preventing youth homelessness in Brandon?

- An agency that is dedicated to providing housing and health resources that is specifically for youth
- More youth appropriate housing units
- Programming that will assist youth with their transition to adulthood and independence
- Someone that will advocate for them
- Accessible counseling services
- More coordination and collaboration amongst service providers
- Serving families better when the children are younger (under 6)
- More promotion of awareness and education about homelessness in schools

Results

What challenges do youth face when attempting to secure housing in Brandon?

- Low income / not being able to come up with a damage deposit
- Discrimination
- Negative / Anti-social peer groups
- Mental health concerns
- Addictions
- Lack of references / co-signers
- Affording rent as well as child care costs
- Lack of affordable housing units
- Having a criminal record
- Not knowing how to present themselves to potential landlords
- Not know how to articulate their strengths when meeting with potential landlords
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of appropriate life skills

Results

What barriers to resources and/or services exist for youth attempting to secure housing in Brandon?

- Being too young to access certain resources, specifically those offered through CMHA
- Not knowing where to go for help
- **Mental health concerns - I.e. fear and anxiety around entering agencies to seek help or supports**
- Having already “burnt their bridges” with certain agencies
- Not having an advocate to go with them
- **There just aren’t enough youth specific resources**
- The perception that once they seek help they are admitting defeat
- Some agency hours are not conducive to the people the agency is intended to serve
- Competing needs of youth place barriers on certain resources (NHSOC/CEYS)
- We need younger people that are more approachable in front-line positions

Results

Is the experience different for youth that are new to Brandon?

- Maybe if they don't know of the resources that are available
- Maybe if there is a language barrier
- I don't think there's a difference
- People that are new to the community may have less of a support network (family, friends, etc.)

Results

What resources and/or services does Brandon need that would assist youth in securing housing?

- A place that is specific for youth that will advocate for them, provide access to resources, and offer programming and services
- More of what YFC is doing
- More youth specific affordable housing
- More funding
- A permanent youth housing coordinator
- A coordinator to promote available youth programming
- Something dedicated to youth housing
- A 7th street Health Access Centre for youth
- Transitional supportive housing units that is geared to the specific needs of youth
- Mentorship programs
- Leadership programs
- Bringing education around housing and homelessness into schools
- A resource centre that is easy to access, and is store front / not inside the provincial building
- Youth appropriate programming and promotion

Research Questions and Methods

- Along with the key informant interviews, 4 focus groups were held in an attempt to understand the phenomena from the youth's perspective.



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Thank you for agreeing to share your experiences with us. The information you provide will help us to better understand the experiences of youth experiencing homelessness in Brandon, and how to support these youth in our community. Please do not share the identity or comments of other participants with others. Most people will not be distressed by the discussion today, but some might. If you experience distress due to today's discussion, please contact either the **Klinik** Crisis Line @ 1-888-322-3019, Kids Help Phone @ 1-800-668-6868, or visit one of the locations on the **Counselling** Services list provided to you. Also, please remember in accordance with the legal requirement to report child abuse, any disclosure of child abuse must be reported. Based on your experience:

- Can you tell us a little about yourself and **background**?
- What pathways do you believe are leading youth into homelessness in Brandon?
- What resources and/or services would be helpful in preventing youth homelessness in Brandon?
- What challenges do youth face when attempting to secure housing in Brandon?
- What barriers to resources and/or services exist for youth attempting to secure housing in Brandon?
- Is the experience different for youth that are new to Brandon?
- What resources and/or services does Brandon need that would assist you in securing housing?

Are there other experiences based on factors such as housing, resources & services that are unique to you that would provide opportunities or pose challenges when seeking permanent/stable housing?

Is there anything else we should know?

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your experience with us.

Results

Question	Common Themes and Responses
What pathways do you believe are leading youth into homelessness in Brandon?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drug and alcohol abuse• Not following CFS rules• Self-abuse• Gang involvement• “Thinking you have it all figured out when you don’t”• Taking the wrong path• Getting mixed up in the wrong crowd• Lack of family support• Lack of a job

Results

What resources and/or services would be helpful in preventing youth homelessness in Brandon?

- More services with less restrictions
- More accessible job fairs, etc.
- Resource centre with emergency shelter and addictions counseling
- A place to go when they feel comfortable
- Somewhere to get clean clothes

Results

What challenges do youth face when attempting to secure housing in Brandon?

- Low income
- Discrimination
- No references
- Lack of financial management skills
- Lack of available and affordable housing
- Need someone to take a chance on them
- Lack of trust from landlords
- Negative stigma of youth culture

Results

What barriers to resources and/or services exist for youth attempting to secure housing in Brandon?

- Being unaware of the resources available
- Not knowing what U-turn is
- Not knowing general information like location, hours, services, etc.
- Lack of transportation
- "If you don't have any money, usually they don't let you on the bus"
- Anxiety about going there
- Feeling like they don't fit the criteria (or actually not fitting it)

Results

Is the experience different for youth that are new to Brandon?

- Yes, because they don't know anyone
- Yes, because they don't know where any of the resources are
- Yes, because they don't know the city, or how to get around
- Yes, because "it's all about who you know"
- Yes, because even if you were from Brandon, it changes a lot, so each time you come back it feels like you're starting over again
- Yes, because you don't know who you can trust

Results

What resources and/or services does Brandon need that would assist you in securing housing?

- A place to go that can help me find what I need
- Someone to take me to look at / for housing
- Someone that will advocate for them
- A place like 7th Street that is more accessible for youth
- More community building events for youth

Conclusions

- o Many agreed that mental health and addictions issues lead to homelessness and are a barrier to obtaining housing once homelessness.
- o Youth struggle getting housing because of a lack of skills, education, references, and income.
- o There are not enough affordable or supportive housing options for youth.

Recommendations

- o Brandon needs to:
 - o Investigate the possibility of a youth specific resource centre
 - o Offer mental health and addictions services for youth with less restrictions
 - o Encourage more education about youth homelessness and housing issues in schools
 - o Consider creating a youth housing and resource coordinator position.

Acknowledgements

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