



Eviction Prevention For Youth

Stephen Gaetz, Kaitlin Schwan,
Melanie Redman, David French & Erin Dej



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This report also draws from the conceptual framing and scholarship of [A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention](#) and [Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness](#). This report also builds upon the evidence reviewed in [Youth Homelessness Prevention: An International Review of Evidence](#). The recommendations in this report build upon those within several policy briefs and reports published by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and A Way Home Canada. We wish to thank the authors of these documents for their insights, and hope this report will amplify the impact of their work.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Why Prevention?	2
Defining Youth Homelessness Prevention	4
A Typology of Youth Homelessness Prevention	5
Who is Responsible for Youth Homelessness Prevention?	6
A Human Rights Approach to Youth Homelessness	7
Eviction Prevention For Youth	8
Defining Eviction Prevention	8
What is Unique about Eviction Prevention for Youth?	10
Key Forms of Eviction Prevention.....	11
1. Strengthening Laws and Legislation Protecting Tenants	11
2. Provision of Information and Advice for Youth and Their Families	12
3. Provision of Financial Supports for Tenants.....	13
4. Access to Legal Supports, Advice, and Representation.....	14
5. Targeted and Timely Crisis Intervention.....	16
Conclusion	18
References	19

INTRODUCTION

It is time for a new approach to youth homelessness - one that is proactive, not reactive.

Our emergency-focused response has meant that we largely respond only after a young person is on the streets. As a consequence, young people experience profound avoidable suffering that shapes the rest of their lives. In [consultations across the country](#), young people were resolute: we are waiting too long to intervene when a young person is at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

This report is one of a six-part series on youth homelessness prevention, drawing from [The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness](#) (Gaetz et al., 2018). *The Roadmap* is designed to support a paradigm shift to prevention by providing a clear definition of youth homelessness prevention, offering a framework and common language for prevention policy and practice, reviewing the evidence for prevention, and highlighting practice examples from around the world. Each report in the series explores one element of youth homelessness prevention, providing a framework for targeted action and change in that area.

In this report we tackle the critical issue of **evictions prevention** – a key component of any comprehensive approach to youth homelessness prevention. This report outlines five key forms of evictions prevention:

- 1) Strengthening Laws and Legislation Protecting Tenants
- 2) Provision of Information and Advice for Youth and Their Families
- 3) Provision of Financial Supports for Tenants
- 4) Access to Legal Supports, Advice, and Representation
- 5) Targeted and Timely Crisis Intervention

The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness provides a comprehensive framework for youth homelessness prevention, and should be read in full to best understand how youth homelessness prevention can be implemented in Canada. The Roadmap also provides detailed recommendations for embedding prevention in policy and practice.

Why Prevention?

Prevention is generally accepted as more effective and desirable than waiting for complex problems to spiral out of control before intervening. Unfortunately, in North America the notion of preventing the problem of homelessness is not well understood and has not yet gained traction in policy, practice, or investment. For many years, crisis responses to homelessness have been relied upon to meet the immediate survival needs of young people who experience homelessness through emergency shelters, day programs, and law enforcement. ***This reliance on crisis responses, while well-meaning, has not produced the outcomes we want.*** There has been no demonstrable decrease in the number of young people that end up on the street, and young people who are homeless continue to suffer tremendously, experiencing violence, nutritional vulnerability, mental health crises, isolation, and discrimination. The pan-Canadian [Without a Home](#) study (Gaetz et al., 2016) brought to light an ongoing crisis, revealing that among youth experiencing homelessness:

- 40.1% were under the age of 16 when they first experienced homelessness;
- 76% had multiple experiences of homelessness, with 37% of these youth reporting more than five experiences of homelessness;
- 85.4% were experiencing a mental health crisis, with 42% reporting at least one suicide attempt;
- 38% of young women reported a sexual assault in the previous 12 months;
- 57.8% had involvement with child welfare involvement. Compared to national data (Statistics Canada, 2011), youth experiencing homelessness are 193 times more likely to have had involvement with child welfare (see also Nichols et al., 2017);
- 63.1% had experienced childhood trauma and abuse;
- 51% were not currently involved in either education, employment, or training; and
- Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, and LGBTQ2S+ youth are overrepresented in homeless youth populations across Canada.

A number of important conclusions can be drawn from these numbers:

First, we are waiting far too long to intervene when young people are at risk of homelessness, or experiencing homelessness.

Second, experiencing homelessness for any length of time can have a devastating impact on health, safety, mental health and well-being of young people.

Third, some young people – particularly Indigenous youth, LGBTQ2S+ youth, newcomer youth, and young women - experience the additional burden of ongoing discrimination and bias-based violence and exclusion.

Fourth, emergency responses on their own do not prevent homelessness, or necessarily help youth exit homelessness rapidly. Relying on such a crisis-based approach does not offer an effective or adequate solution to the problem of youth homelessness, and we therefore cannot and should not expect young people to “bootstrap” themselves out of homelessness.

Fifth, our public systems are failing to prevent young people from entering homelessness. It is clear that we are missing many opportunities to prevent youth homelessness within public systems.

Finally, people with lived experience of youth homelessness strongly profess the need to shift from the crisis response to a focus on prevention and sustainable exits from homelessness. In a recent national consultation conducted by the COH and AWHC, youth stated that “by building a response that is primarily reactive, we not only condemn youth to hardship and trauma, we actually ensure it” (Schwan et al., 2018a, p. 122).

The time has come to shift to a proactive, rather than reactive, response to the problem of youth homelessness.

Defining Youth Homelessness Prevention

Despite broad political and community-based interest in youth homelessness prevention, there has been lack of clarity about what it entails. We offer the following definition of youth homelessness prevention:

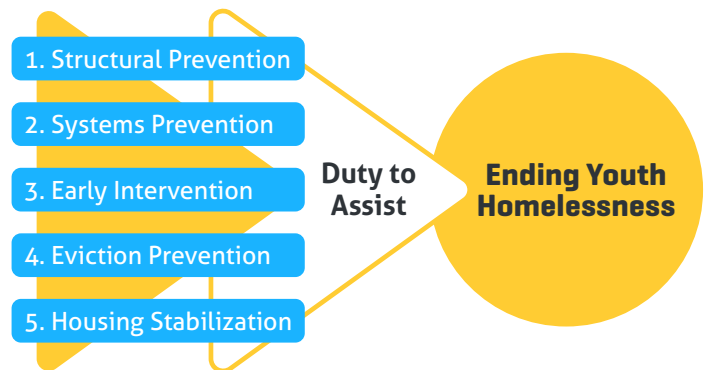
Youth homelessness prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that either (1) reduce the likelihood that a young person will experience homelessness, or (2) provide youth experiencing homelessness with the necessary supports to stabilize their housing, improve their wellbeing, connect with community, and avoid re-entry into homelessness. Youth homelessness prevention thus necessitates the immediate provision of housing and supports for youth experiencing homelessness, or the immediate protection of housing, with supports, for youth at risk of homelessness. Youth homelessness prevention must be applied using a rights-based approach and address the unique needs of developing adolescents and young adults.

This definition is adapted from Gaetz and Dej's (2017) broader [definition of homelessness prevention](#), drawing into focus policies and practices that are responsive to the distinct challenges that young people face. In implementing youth homelessness prevention, governments and communities should seek out evidence-based and promising interventions and policies that are both developmentally and individually tailored.

A Typology of Youth Homelessness Prevention

To conceptualize types of homelessness prevention for youth, [The Roadmap for Youth Homelessness Prevention](#) builds on the typology within [A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention](#).

This typology articulates a range of preventative activities that aim to stabilize housing, improve health and wellbeing, promote social inclusion, and contribute to better long-term outcomes for youth and their families.



Homelessness Prevention Typology

1) Structural Prevention

Legislation, policy, and investment to address risks of homelessness and increase social equality. Examples include: legislating housing as a human right, adhering to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#), poverty reduction strategies, and income supports.

2) Systems Prevention

Breaking barriers and enhancing access to services, supports, & benefits. This includes transition supports for those leaving public institutions, such as correctional facilities, hospitals, and child protection systems.

3) Early Intervention

Strategies designed to act early and address the risk of homelessness, as well as provide crisis intervention to those who have recently

experienced homelessness. Examples include: effective outreach, coordinated intake and assessment, client-centered case management, and shelter diversion.

4) Eviction Prevention

A type of early intervention, programs designed to keep people stably housed and help them avoid eviction. Examples include: landlord/tenant mediation, rental assistance, emergency financial assistance, and legal advice and representation.

5) Housing Stabilization

Supporting people who have experienced homelessness to find and maintain housing. This includes Housing First and supports to enhance health and well-being, education and employment, and social inclusion.

In consideration of the needs of young people, the *Roadmap* adds an additional legislative strategy: **Duty to Assist**. Duty to Assist means that there is a *legal duty* to ensure that young people are provided with information, advice, and housing-led supports to avoid an experience of homelessness, or to make that experience as brief as possible. Duty to Assist is a rights-based approach to youth homelessness.

These six elements work in concert to prevent youth homelessness. These approaches span upstream efforts focused on structural prevention, to systems approaches that improve experiences in public institutions, to early interventions and

housing stabilization efforts that reduce the risk of homelessness and prevent young people from cycling back into homelessness.

To bring prevention to life, each sector, order of government, community, practitioner, and caring individual must make the commitment to wholeheartedly and relentlessly pursue this new vision for young people in Canada, aligning their collective strengths, knowledge, and resources to move from vision to reality. For a comprehensive youth homelessness prevention framework, see [The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness](#).

Who is Responsible for Youth Homelessness Prevention?

It is critical to delineate responsibility when articulating the range of programs, policies, and approaches that can support the prevention of youth homelessness. We must clarify when the homelessness sector should play a leading role, and when other institutions and orders of government carry the main responsibility. Youth homelessness prevention cannot solely rely on the homelessness system's funding and services. Rather, cross-systems and whole government approaches are required to achieve lasting change for young people.

Young people across the country articulated that youth homelessness prevention requires changes in multiple public systems (Schwan et al., 2018a), including housing, criminal justice, child welfare, healthcare, and education. Prevention work requires improved collaboration and coordination between and within ministries, departments, and communities, along with investment, policy development and alignment, and leadership from all orders of government.

Most importantly, this shift requires that we redefine who is viewed as responsible for youth homelessness prevention. It is time to collaborate with the systems and sectors that youth are engaged with *prior* to becoming homeless, leveraging each system interaction to improve a young person's housing stability, wellness, and other positive outcomes. To do so, we must implement structures that support mutual engagement in—and accountability to—one another's work and the changes we all want to see: better outcomes for youth.

A Human-Rights Approach to Youth Homelessness

Youth homelessness prevention work must be grounded in the fundamental human rights of young people in Canada. Canada is a signatory to a number of international human rights agreements that define rights relevant to homeless youth, including the following rights:

- Right to adequate standard of living
- Right to adequate housing
- Right to adequate food
- Right to work
- Right to health
- Right to education
- Right to personal security & privacy
- Right of equal access to justice
- Right to assembly
- Right to freedom of expression
- Right to life

(Canada Without Poverty & A Way Home Canada, 2016)

That youth homelessness exists in Canada, and that we allow young people to remain trapped in homelessness, represents a *denial* of basic human rights. As a human rights violation, youth homelessness must be remedied. Practically, this means that policies, laws, and strategies aimed at youth homelessness prevention must be grounded in human rights at all stages of development, implementation, and evaluation.

Eviction Prevention For Youth



Eviction remains a key driver of homelessness for young people in Canada and around the world. Eviction involves landlord-initiated efforts or action to forcibly remove a tenant from a rental property, either formally or informally (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015).

In Canada, youth under 30 are twice as likely to be evicted, particularly when they are on social assistance, and/or are newcomers, single women, or lead single-parent families (Acacia, 2006). While not every young person who experiences an eviction will become homeless, these experiences increase a young person's risk of becoming homeless (Holl, van den Dries, & Wolf, 2016).

Eviction is not simply an event, but the outcome of a process defined by provincial or territorial landlord/tenant legislation. There are various points along the eviction pathway where intervention could help a young person avoid losing their home. Unfortunately, because young people often do not know their rights, understand the process, may be intimidated, or are unaware that there are supports available, they may wait too long into the process to seek help. Some may simply cut short the process by leaving their housing prior to getting assistance or receiving a formal eviction order.

Preventing unnecessary housing loss is essential to ensuring better outcomes for young people and preventing homelessness. This is the work of eviction prevention, and is one of six elements of prevention outlined in [The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness](#).

Defining Eviction Prevention

Eviction prevention refers to any program, policy, intervention, or strategy aimed at keeping young people or their families in their home with security and tenure, thereby preventing them from entering into homelessness (Gaetz & Dej, 2016; Poppe & Gale, 2018). Eviction prevention is thus a form of both early intervention and housing stabilisation for young people.

“Places are expensive, so you need a job, of course, when you’re young, cause anything with a one bedroom is 6, 7, 800 dollars. It’s ridiculous. So you need roommates. And I lived with some people who weren’t necessarily the best people ever. And we got evicted. A LOT. I’d go and find someone else to live with, and we got evicted. So I ended up trying to find a place to live, and no one would rent to me because I have three evictions in the past, for things - they don’t know what happened - but they look down at me and say ‘no thanks’. So I didn’t live anywhere, because, no matter what, nobody would rent to me at all.”

Calgary Youth

While we often imagine that a youth’s pathway into homelessness begins with leaving or being forced out of an adult-led household, research shows that many youth live independently and experience eviction before becoming homeless (Zivanovix et al., 2016). In fact, the [Without a Home](#) study found that among Canadian youth experiencing homelessness, the most recent housing situation for a number of youth included: “living in their own place” (14.5%); “living with a romantic partner” (8.7%); and “someone else’s place (not parents)” (15.1%) (Gaetz et al., 2016).

Many young people face profound difficulties accessing and maintaining rental housing. In a 2002 Canadian study, over half of the sample of youth experiencing homelessness reported serious problems with landlords, and 41% reported at least one eviction. The most commonly cited reasons included: parties and noise complaints (38.7%); rent arrears (24.5%); abusive landlord (16%); and property damage (10%) (Gaetz et al., 2002). When youth are financially or otherwise dependent upon living with a partner or friends, their vulnerability to eviction can increase, especially if they are not listed on the lease. Youth who engage in survival sex, or are being trafficked, experience profound housing precarity and are vulnerable to being kicked out, moved, or evicted with little warning, few alternatives, and limited legal recourse. Eviction is also an equity issue, meaning that youth from particular communities or with particular backgrounds (e.g., newcomer youth, LGBTQ2S+ youth) are more likely to be evicted, and as a result are more likely to experience profoundly negative consequences.

While some young people with strong family connections and natural supports may be able to return home or find other accommodations when things go wrong, this is not the case for everyone. Without proper supports and services, some young people will experience homelessness, an outcome that can often be avoided with proper and timely supports, as well as supportive policy and legislation.

What is Unique About Eviction Prevention for Youth?

The relationship between age, housing precarity, and risk of eviction is important to consider when developing youth-specific eviction prevention efforts. Research indicates that young people face unique challenges to accessing rental housing, maintaining rental housing, and avoiding eviction.

“I know years ago when I was looking for, like, market housing... As soon as I said I had income assistance they were like, ‘No.’ There’s such a stigma around it.”

Vancouver Youth

Once young people are on their own, many face profound difficulties accessing rental housing. Their youthful age means that most lack experience in obtaining rental housing (e.g., including signing leases), and many lack certain prerequisites (a good credit rating, references) to obtain housing in the first place.

Young people often find it difficult to obtain the funds needed to pay for first and last months’ rent up front, in addition to the damage deposits that some landlords require (Schwan et al., 2018a). These difficulties are compounded by the considerable age-based barriers¹ and discrimination youth face in the rental housing market.

Youth often lack the earning power to obtain and sustain housing, and because of the precarity of their work, may be vulnerable to losing their housing. While some youth may scrape by on minimum wage, illegal rent increases, cuts to social assistance, or unexpected health or mental healthcare costs can mean rent becomes unaffordable and youth are evicted. These experiences of eviction in turn make it difficult for youth to find alternative rental housing, given that many landlords may screen for histories of eviction.

Additional challenges to maintaining rental housing for youth include navigating the complexities of living with multiple roommates, roommates’ behaviour or refusal to pay rent, rental unit takeovers, and a lack of necessary life skills. The [What Would it Take?](#) study (Schwan et al., 2018a) indicated that many Canadian youth who become homeless felt that they were inadequately prepared to maintain their rental unit and lacked the life skills (e.g., budgeting, cooking) they needed to thrive on their own.

Youth-specific approaches to eviction prevention are needed, *in addition to broader interventions that aim to prevent eviction and foreclosure for families with children and youth (including youth-led families).*

¹ In some jurisdictions, landlords cannot get insurance for a property where none of the tenants are over the age of 18.

Key Forms of Eviction Prevention

Multiple forms of eviction prevention should be available, accessible, affordable, and appropriate for all young people and their families. Communities also need to be particularly attentive to the challenges faced by youth with particular identities, backgrounds, and experiences when implementing eviction prevention initiatives. For example, youth who are undocumented are more likely to face illegal evictions and may struggle to access legal supports due to language barriers or fear of deportation. An intersectional approach should be used to ensure these and other youth groups are provided with supports and services they deserve.

There are five forms of eviction prevention that should be part of any youth homelessness prevention strategy:

- 1) Strengthening Laws and Legislation Protecting Tenants**
- 2) Provision of Information and Advice for Youth and Their Families**
- 3) Provision of Financial Supports for Tenants**
- 4) Access to Legal Supports, Advice, and Representation**
- 5) Targeted and Timely Crisis Intervention**

1) Strengthening Laws and Legislation Protecting Tenants

Evictions are primarily governed through provincial and territorial legislation. Landlord/tenant legislation outlines the legal circumstances under which a tenant may be evicted and a lease may be terminated. When effectively enforced, strong laws and legislation protecting renters can function as a form of homelessness prevention for youth and their families.

“I know I’ve been rejected by multiple places just because of my age.”

Vancouver Youth

Any eviction prevention strategy should include the strengthening of laws and legislation that protect the rights of tenants, in addition to strengthening the mechanisms that hold landlords accountable when they are discriminatory, abusive, or behave unlawfully towards their tenants. Given that many Canadian youth who are homeless report experiencing landlord discrimination on the basis of age and other factors (Schwan et al., 2018a), there is a clear need to strengthen policy and legislation that tackles age-based discrimination in the rental housing market. Rent control legislation – which protects tenants from excessive rent increases by limiting the amount landlords can raise rents per year – is another legislative tool to reduce the likelihood of evictions and financially-driven housing loss universally.

Housing advice involves an assessment that may then help individuals identify sources of financial support, access landlord mediation, and learn their rights and options.

(Gaetz & DeJ, 2017, p.75)

2) Provision of Information and Advice for Young People and Their Families

It is critical that young people are able to access timely, accurate advice and information about rental housing issues and tenancy rights. Most young people will not be knowledgeable about their rights as tenants, and in the case of eviction proceedings, may not understand the process well enough to protect their own interests.

Information and advice for young people and their families can take two key forms: a) Universal Educational Programs and Resources, and b) Targeted Information and Professional Advice in Times of Crisis.

a) Universal Educational Programs & Resources

Broad educational campaigns, programs, and resources on rental housing issues are needed not just for young people, but for families, social service providers, healthcare providers, educators, and landlords. Many young people go to teachers, coaches, doctors, or other trusted adults when they or their families are struggling with tenancy issues (Schwan et al., 2018a). This means that while broad educational programs and resources should target young people, regardless of circumstance, they should also target:

- Private market landlords and social housing landlords, who have a legal obligation to respect and must be familiar with the rights of youth tenants;
- Teachers and staff at schools, who can support students to learn about their tenant rights;
- Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, who can help direct youth to organizations and agencies who can provide housing and legal advice, and;
- Staff and professionals in youth-serving social service settings, who can support youth to identify and respond to tenancy issues.

Resources should be youth-focused and highly accessible. In other words, young people need to know the information is there, and be able to access and understand it when needed. This requires making information available in plain language, multiple languages, as well as ensuring youth with disabilities or youth who have more limited literacy are able to access the same quality of information.

Universal, school-based education can be a mechanism for ensuring all youth have foundational knowledge on youths' tenancy rights, legal rights, and human rights. Youth-friendly general educational resources, such as web or app-based information platforms, may also help increase access to this critical knowledge. Broad public awareness campaigns (e.g., signs in bus stops) may also be a pathway for all members of the public to learn about their rights and responsibilities.

b) Targeted Information & Professional Advice for Youth and Their Families

Young people whose tenancy is at imminent risk need often need immediate access to information and advice. This may include counselling, case management, and/or legal advice, in order to remain in the unit or quickly transition to a safe and appropriate alternative.

As part of a system of care approach, this advice should identify "the root problems jeopardizing one's tenancy. Individuals may need support with budgeting, accessing benefits, managing debt, or other challenges" (Gaetz & Dej, 2017, p. 75). Young people may need targeted advice or support on how to find appropriate housing, how to maintain a unit (e.g., cleaning), financial management (e.g., budgeting, banking), managing conflict with partners or roommates, and developing relationships with neighbours and community who can provide support if things go wrong. Particular youth (e.g., young people fleeing violence) will need additional targeted advice and information in times of crisis.

3) Provision of Financial Supports for Tenants

Many young people and their families are evicted or lose their homes simply because they cannot afford their rent or mortgage payments. This can happen for many reasons: an unexpected job loss, change in family composition (e.g., having to caretake an ill parent or grandparent), or a roommate being unable to pay rent. There is a strong evidence base for the efficacy of financial supports in preventing evictions (Poppe & Gale, 2018), though very little of this research has investigated youth's experiences of these supports.

There are two key financial support programs that can reduce the risk of eviction for youth and families: Rental Assistance or Supplements, and Emergency Financial Assistance (Gaetz & Dej, 2017).

RENTAL ASSISTANCE OR SUPPLEMENTS

Rent supplements or rental assistance includes cash or housing vouchers that are provided to individuals or families struggling to afford their rent. These supports may be portable or may be tied to a particular housing program, and may be provided for months or years, depending on the program.

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Emergency financial assistance is offered to tenants who are behind on their rent and are facing eviction. This can take the form of "emergency grants or loans, such as those provided by Rent Banks" (Gaetz & Dej, 2017, p. 77).

In targeting these programs to youth, it is essential that supports are *highly accessible* (e.g., are well advertised and have few bureaucratic barriers), *timely* (e.g., youth can access them quickly when unexpected crises emerge), *equity-based* (e.g., do not discriminate on the basis of age), *portable* (e.g., allow youth to move between houses and communities), *sufficient* (e.g., allow youth to pay for rent and meet other needs), and *grounded in youth choice* (e.g., allow for youth to change their minds about their housing circumstance). In particular, it is important that we do not require youth to experience homelessness before gaining access to these supports.

4) Access to Legal Supports, Advice, and Representation

Defined by landlord/tenant legislation, the evictions process is somewhat linear, with points along the way where legal support could be of great assistance to a young person facing eviction. Legal supports can include provision of legal information and advice, representation for tenants at tribunal hearings, as well as support for tenants in the case of civil suits or other legal challenges resulting from their tenancy (Gaetz & DeJ, 2017, p. 76).

Evictions prevention requires ensuring youth and their families access legal supports and representation quickly and effectively.

In some jurisdictions, tenants can access free legal support, advice, and representation through legal aid or Community Legal Clinics. There may also be Tenant Duty Counsel in courts, landlord and tenant boards, or other administrative tribunals, which are composed of “lawyers and community legal workers who can give basic advice, help work out settlements with landlords, review and fill out some forms and documents and help tenants at hearings, especially related to eviction” ([City of Toronto](#), 2016, p. 8).

Eviction prevention requires ensuring youth and their families access legal supports and representation quickly and effectively. Broad public awareness campaigns on the availability of legal supports are needed, and it is critical that social service providers, teachers, doctors, and other adults in youths’ lives are able to refer youth to available legal supports in their community. The legal needs of youth are further explored in the following conversation with Poverty and Tenant Rights Lawyer, Jonathan Robart.

Youth Eviction Prevention in Practice: A Conversation with Lawyer Jonathan Robart

Jonathan Robart is a lawyer who provides legal advice, support, and representation to people facing evictions in Toronto, including young people under the age of 25. He supports tenants who qualify for legal aid services based on a financial threshold guideline in Ontario, and represents them at evictions proceedings. Robart suggests that many young people are particularly vulnerable because many do not understand the process, and as a result may wait too long before they access support. He explains, "If someone falls behind on rent, there are legal and non-legal tools available for tenants, but the ultimate effectiveness of these tools depends on how soon they come to my door" (Robart, J., 2018, personal communication). "Many youth do not know about/are unable to access these supports before it's too late," Robart reports.

Robart explains that evictions may also be compounded by mental health challenges and other difficulties. Providing an example, Robart explains, "I worked with a young individual, who was under the age of twenty who had been raised by their grandmother. When she died, the individual sank into a deep depression and eventually, everything unravelled. The individual eventually lost their rent subsidy because of the physical problems associated with their depression and an inability to navigate very complex reporting requirements for rent subsidies in social housing. This resulted in this individual being served with an eviction notice and an imminent eviction hearing. When this individual was at imminent risk of eviction, they sought assistance from me at the last minute. We managed to preserve the tenancy and avoid eviction, but just barely."

*"The mental health piece is central to this predicament, and it is very hard to recover from that without support, not to mention to navigate a burdensome rental subsidy process while in the depths of a depression. A young person in that situation may not be able to access services quickly enough, nor are they necessarily aware of available services. Without access to legal services and representation, there is a very good chance this individual would have been homeless."
(Robart, J., 2018, personal communication)*



5) Targeted and Timely Crisis Intervention

Forms of crisis intervention that are critical for youth and families facing immediate housing crises include:

- Assessment of risk
- Provision of information on rights and process
- Counselling
- System navigation
- Case management
- Landlord liaison, conflict resolution, and mediation
- Help accessing income and employment

A number of eviction prevention programs combine many of these elements, providing financial, housing, and case management supports to individuals and families in need. Emerging research has demonstrated the efficacy of these models for families with children and youth (Goodman, Messeri, & O'Flaherty's, 2016; Hill et al., 2002; Rolston et al., 2013). For example, Goodman, Messeri, and O'Flaherty's (2016) conducted an evaluation of [Homebase](#), a US-based multi-method intervention for families facing evictions, and found that the intervention independently contributed to an estimated 5% - 11% reduction in New York City shelter stays.

The screening and referral of young people and families at risk of eviction or foreclosure is an important preventative measure. Research has shown that evictions can be reduced when housing systems of care implement 'alarm systems' or 'trip wires' that flag families or individuals in need of immediate support (Allen, 2006; Crane & Warnes, 2000; Phinney et al., 2007; Salize et al., 2006). Landlord liaison, conflict resolution, and mediation may also be particularly important for young people, most of whom face a considerable power differential with their landlord based on their age.

The screening and referral of young people and families at risk of eviction or foreclosure is an important preventative measure. Research has shown that evictions can be reduced when housing systems of care implement 'alarm systems' or 'trip wires' that flag families or individuals in need of immediate support.



Burt and colleagues (2007) argue that an intervention must be *effective* at stopping people from becoming homeless, and also *efficient* by targeting help to people who would otherwise become homeless without it. The more complex of the two is efficiency, or getting the right services to the right people at the right time.

Effective and Efficient Eviction Prevention

Research has identified that the most effective early intervention strategies, including eviction prevention, should be targeted (Burt et al., 2007; Culhane et al., 2011; Parsell & Martson, 2012; Shinn et al., 2013; 2017). Burt and colleagues (2007) argue that an intervention must be *effective* at stopping people from becoming homeless, and also *efficient* by targeting help to people who would otherwise become homeless without it. The more complex of the two is efficiency, or getting the right services to the right people at the right time. One of the challenges identified by Shinn and colleagues (2013) is that families who obtained support were those who self-identified and sought support. This suggests that a key challenge in delivering effective and efficient eviction prevention interventions is: (a) identifying families and youth in greatest need, and (b) implementing mechanisms so that these families and young people in crisis are made aware of supports and provided with reasonable access to these supports.

Working with [HomeBase Prevention](#) in New York City, Shinn and colleagues (2013) developed and tested an effective screening tool to identify and support households facing eviction. Their results demonstrated that the most effective outcomes were interventions for households that were in the highest risk category. Unfortunately, no body of research to date has identified how such interventions might work with youth, or how they might be adapted for youth.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

A NY-based, randomized control trial study (Seron et al., 2001) evaluated the effect of legal assistance, advice, and representation on eviction. While low-income tenants were standing in line at New York City's Housing Court to respond to a court order regarding non-payment of rent, participants were recruited into the study. Participants were randomly assigned to the treatment group (which received legal advice or representation) or control group (no legal supports). The treatment group received either legal assistance from a paralegal, advice from an attorney, or full representation. The results were dramatic:

- Tenants who received legal advice and supports were significantly less likely to receive an eviction warrant (24% compared to 44% in the control group).
- Legal representation in court significantly lowered eviction warrants for represented tenants (10% compared to 44% in the control group).


While the study did not explore the specific benefit of these supports for youth, these findings suggest legal advice and representation is a critical component of eviction prevention.

Conclusion


Eviction prevention is a critical piece of early intervention efforts. Young people face profound challenges in private housing markets, and many youth experiencing homelessness across Canada report histories of evictions (Gaetz et al., 2002; 2016). Fortunately, there is a growing evidence base supporting eviction prevention.

According to an [international review of evidence](#), “the immediate provision of concrete resources (i.e., housing, financial support) is most effective at preventing evictions for individuals and families, including youth-led families and families with children and youth” (Schwan et al., 2018b, p. 45). Research has demonstrated the particular efficacy of “(1) financial supports for tenants; (2) legal supports, advice, and representation; and (3) comprehensive financial, housing, health, mediation, and case management supports” (Schwan et al., 2018, p. 45).

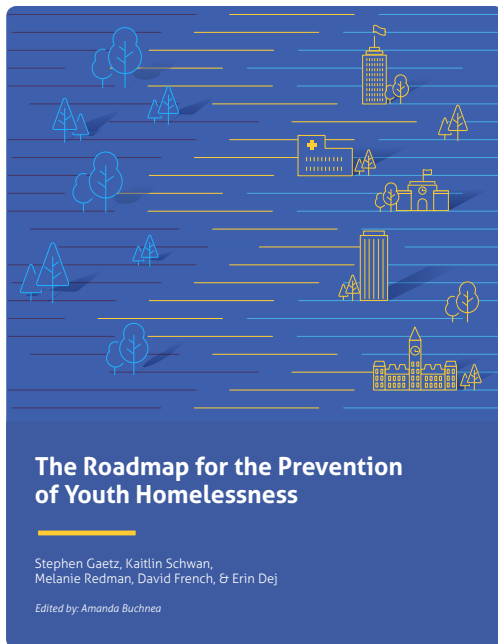
Unfortunately, there is limited analysis of eviction prevention interventions for young people. What we know is that a relentlessness approach is needed to support youth that have been housed, employing every method possible to ensure they do not lose that housing. Critical to this is ensuring young people have the supports they need, including legal supports, healthcare and employment supports, as well as family mediation and counselling supports. The accessibility, affordability, availability, and appropriateness of these supports is crucial to making eviction prevention interventions effective for young people. With these supports in place, young people have a much greater chance of maintaining their housing, or relocating to safe, appropriate, and stable housing.



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Eviction prevention is only one part of youth homelessness prevention, and should be combined with other preventative interventions and policies in order to be maximally effective. A comprehensive framework for youth homelessness prevention can be found in [*The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness*](#).



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