

# STAFFING

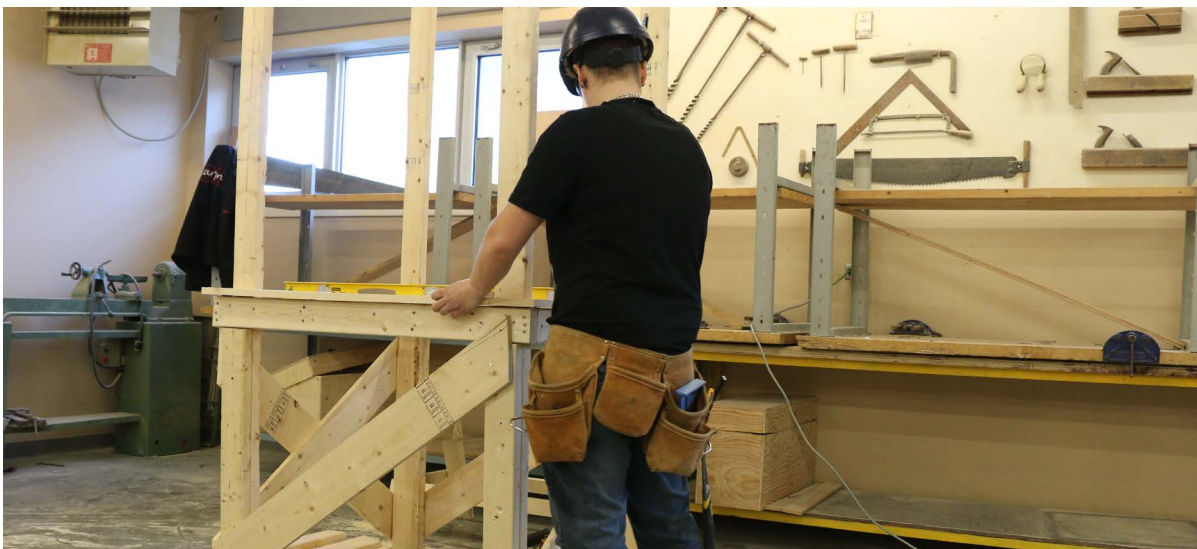
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Choices for Youth has a unique perspective on its staff and their roles. They operate a variety of programs to support youth in different ways including education, housing and employment. While each staff member has unique skills in a specific area, the skill set they have in common is the ability to deal with addictions, mental health, childhood trauma etc. Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director of Choices for Youth says, “So what we say to our staff is, ‘You guys are all completely interchangeable,’ tomorrow Sally can work in Train for Trades and Shelly from Train for Trades can work in Rallyhaven, you know Cindy from Rallyhaven can work at the Lilly, plus or minus a few skills. Because the main issue is around those true barriers for young people...”

## *Staff Training*

Train for Trades staff complete several training courses that are required for their COR™ certification. These include Standard First Aid, Fall Protection, WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System), Power-line Hazard, Ramset, Asbestos Abatement and Fire Extinguisher training. These courses are taught at the Carpenters Millwrights College and are the same courses the youth take when beginning work.

T4T staff also complete training required by Choices for Youth including: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), which is taught by staff at C4Y and Non-Violent Crisis Intervention and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community (LGBTQ) training, which are taught by community members. Other training is completed based on the interests of the staff.



Samantha, a past participant of T4T, doing some carpentry work in the workshop.



## HOMELESS HUB THOUGHTS:

While most staff employed at Train for Trades and other youth-serving agencies are usually graduates of a college or university program for Child and Youth Workers (or a similar field of study) it is important that certain training is provided centrally for all staff. This helps create a unified perspective and can explain how a specific issue or area is dealt with by the agency. While colleges and universities cover the topics generally, the agency can drill down on a specific topic and explain its relevance to staff.

We recommend that agencies working with homeless or at-risk youth offer training on as many of the following topics as possible with a specific focus on youth:

- » Homelessness 101 (with a specific focus on homeless youth)
- » Standard First Aid and CPR
- » Harm Reduction
- » Working with People with Mental Health Issues/Addictions/Concurrent Disorders
- » Motivational Interviewing
- » Trauma Informed Care/Service Provision
- » Working with Victims of Violence
- » Self-Care for People in Helping Professions/Stress Management
- » Case Management (and specific training on any case management software or tools)
- » Training on any theories or approaches used by the agency
- » Communication and Active Listening
- » Conflict Resolution
- » LGBTQ and Gender Non-Conformity
- » Crisis Response and Management
- » Non-Violent Crisis Intervention
- » Understanding and Managing Aggressive Behaviour
- » Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression
- » Suicide Risk Assessment/Intervention or ASIST
- » Foundations to Criminal Justice
- » Measuring Success/Evaluation Strategies
- » Sex Workers and Victims of Human Trafficking

Job-specific training (such as the safety training T4T has their staff complete) is also important. Other trainings may be relevant as well depending on an individual's role within the staff team (i.e. leadership, supervision, team-building). The Toronto Hostels Training Centre provides a very [in-depth list of courses available](#).

## Staff Roles

The intermeshing of Train for Trades as a program within the larger Choices for Youth agency means that some staff serve multiple functions or programs in addition to Train for Trades, while others work only for T4T. At the same time, some positions that are CFY staff, support the work of T4T, such as communications, development, and financial administration.

It is also important to remember that all youth are paid and in Tier 3 are actual employees of CFY.

In the Train for Trades program there are 8 positions that work directly with youth on a day-to-day basis – the Program Coordinator, the two Youth Supports Coordinators, the four Youth Support Workers and the Site Manager. This is a ratio of 2.5 youth per staff member.

## Train for Trades Staff Job Descriptions

The **Program Coordinator** is responsible for the overall administration and delivery of the Train for Trades Program to ensure that the philosophy, goals and objectives are met. This individual works closely with all partners and funders and is responsible for developing and writing budgets and reports to provide program accountability. They have responsibility for staff support and coordination, including recruitment, hiring, orientation, supervision and evaluation. They manage the Human Resource requirements for youth participants, including recruitment, screening, training, evaluation, retention and termination.

The **Administration Support Worker** provides support to the Program Coordinator. This person is responsible for the procedural administration of the program, including maintaining documentation for Certificate of Recognition™ and Occupational Health and Safety regulations, scheduling meetings, maintaining a filing system, inventory control, petty cash and expense claims, database maintenance and maintaining youth support documentation.

There are two **Youth Supports Coordinators**, one who works with Tier 1 youth and one who works with Tier 2 and 3 youth. This reflects the decreased need for support as the youth move through the Tier process. The Youth Supports Coordinators work in conjunction with the Youth Support Workers to determine if youth have additional program or service needs. While they have some administrative and program responsibilities that overlap with the Program Coordinator and Administration Support Worker, their roles differ in terms of the level of support that they provide to the youth themselves. They serve as the primary youth advocate and youth representative for mandatory services. They develop letters for youth (income support, justice system) as needed and assist youth with medical appointments, EI claims, post-secondary applications and skills development funding. They are available to support youth outside of work hours and to provide therapeutic interventions in times of crisis.

There are four **Youth Support Workers** split between the youth involved in basement retrofits (primarily Tier 1 youth) and the youth in the Modernisation and Improvement (M&I) program (primarily Tier 2 and 3 youth). They assist the Coordinator and Project Manager in developing an individual case plan for each youth. They work directly with youth using an intensive support model. They provide supervision to youth on the job and ensure personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn at all times and safety standards are followed.

The **Site Manager** has overall responsibility for the construction schedule and on-site work including Retrofits, M&I and private construction contracts. They coordinate inspections and the work of subcontractors, and order materials, ensure Occupational Health and Safety standards and Certificate of Recognition™ requirements are met. The site manager mentors the Youth Support Workers in appropriate site-specific skills.

**GED Instructor:** Provides instruction and support to youth seeking to obtain their GED. This individual is a retired teacher who is hired on contract to support youth. Lessons are provided onsite during the workday and youth are paid for their time.

**Manager of Social Enterprise:** This individual helps Choices for Youth develop a range of social enterprise initiatives, including that of Train for Trades.



A staff member talks with youth participants on a job site.

## SUB-CONTRACTORS

Train for Trades also has its own sub-contractors (previously provided by Newfoundland Labrador Housing Corporation). One of the unique features of the sub-contracting partnership is that if a youth is interested in a particular field (i.e. plumbing or electrical) they can shadow the sub-contractor when they are on site to learn more about it. This can help a youth make an informed decision about whether to pursue that as a career option.

*“They’ve got their own sub-contractors, their own electricians and their own plumbers. The stage that the electricians and plumbers come into play is after you do the framing and an inspector comes in and inspects it. Then an electrician or a plumber will come in and move the pipes and do up the boxes and all that stuff. So, when they come in to do that, if you want to go in for electrical or plumbing, they’ll set you up with the electrician for the day. He’ll bring you down into the basement and show you what he does and he’ll get you to do it. He’ll get you the hands-on training and get you the feel of it to see if you actually like that trade and if you want to go in for it. I was thinking about carpentry. Then when I got here, I actually got hands-on with carpentry. They were able to set me up [with an] electrician as well. So I was able to get hands on with both and that helped me decide over the two, which one I wanted to go with.”*

*—Brad, age 22, Tier 2 participant, Train for Trades*



## HOMELESS HUB THOUGHTS:

Train for Trades has an incredibly low staff to client ratio (about 1 staff to every 2.5 youth roughly). This means that the cost per participant is high compared to many other programs. The level of staffing provided however, matches the level of support required in the Intensive Case Management process. It does make it difficult to sustain in the long run unless the project brings in enough revenue.

Programs may seek opportunities to partner with existing agencies to increase the level of support they can provide to participants. Alternatively, they may need to adjust their support goals to match their staffing ratio.

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