

SCOPE OF PROBLEM

- Lack of support for youth in rural communities
- Support Services concentrated in the urban centers
- Youth are most vulnerable to addictions, sexual exploitation, violence, and justice involvement in transition
- No regional system for the prevention of youth homelessness
- No research

RESPONSE

- Town of Fort Erie's Community Health and Wellness Initiative was approached regarding the closing of the Holy Family Boys Home
- Local stakeholders and service providers met and determined that youth homelessness study was necessary to assess and address the issue.
- At the time, the St. Catharines Transitional Youth Housing Committee was addressing similar concerns and objectives so both groups decided to amalgamate. This took place in December 2007 creating the Youth Without Secure Housing
- Vision statement developed Youth in Niagara Region will be able to access services and supports within their community
- Commissioned two studies Fort Erie Youth Living Without Secure Housing (2006) and Sofas, Shelters, and Strangers (2010)

Youth Without Secure Housing Program Contributors

Youth Without Secure Housing

A regional roundtable of social services, government, academics, and business mandated to provide a coordinated response to youth homelessness

Niagara Resource Service for Youth (The RAFT)

Coordinator of Youth Reconnect and provides regional transitional housing, shelter services

The FORT

Provides homeless and at risk youth in west Niagara with critical support services in a safe and supportive environment

Nightlight Emergency Youth Shelter

Provides emergency youth shelter and transitional service for youth from around Niagara Falls

Grimsby Affordable Housing Program

Assists low to moderate income families and individuals, homeless and those at risk of homelessness, find supportive transitional housing, subsidized rent and program support

The YWCA of Niagara

Provides support and housing both crisis and transitional for women and families

Port Cares

A community organization that provides leadership, support and resources to improve the quality of life for those in the community

Hope House

An emergency hostel of men, women and families located in Welland

District School Board of Niagara

Niagara Catholic District School Board

Niagara Regional Housing

An independent corporation that provides affordable housing solutions for people in need

Region of Niagara - Community Services Department

Provides financial and staffing support

Family and Children Services

RESEARCH AND OBSERVATION

- 80% of Niagara youth identified "conflict at home" as the cause of homelessness of which 69% of the cases were the result of parental behavior
- Homeless youth do not identify themselves as homeless;
- Median age of becoming homeless is 16;
- Youth homelessness is a consequence of multiple stressors in a young person's life;
- Nearly 100% of youth in shelter had/were attending high school immediately before becoming homeless;
- Approximately 50% of youth staying at the RAFT shelter in 2007 were form rural communities

Youth Reconnect Design

- Community based prevention
- Builds off of available research
- Allows youth to stay in school while stabilizing housing
- Connects youth and when appropriate their families to support services
- Referrals are primarily from high schools
- ► Target population: youth 16–19, at risk of homelessness, living in rural or under serviced communities

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Target Outcomes 2011	Projected	Actual
Respond to your instances of homelessness within 48hours	100	100
Assist youth in accessing adequate income support within first 14 days of first contact	90	85
Assist clients to remain in school or start an education/training program	80	76
Youth Remained Housed for 3 months	80	94
Youth Remained Housed for 6 months	65	70
Find regular or supportive housing for youth in emergency hostels within 21 days	100	95

Since Youth Reconnect began in 2008 the RAFT shelter has seen a decline in usage by 20 % and a 10 % decline in 2011

System wide the Region reports that shelter use by youth is down 15 %