



CHOICES FOR YOUTH

Rewriting the future.

Changing the landscape of support services for at-risk youth in NL

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MESSAGE: FROM THE
DIRECTOR OF THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

SARAH BROWN



The members of the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) continue to utilize their own lived experience to make a difference in the lives of others. Our program prides itself on expressing the realities facing young people and acting as a representative voice within Choices for Youth (CFY). This youth voice is essential in the work we do in order to help shape the services to best meet the needs of our young people. We are youth-driven and youth-run, focusing on breaking down barriers through education and awareness.

This year, the YLC has undergone an evolution; we have grown to be more independent as a program, but more connected as a council. Our members have had multiple travel opportunities that have taken them across Canada to participate in events such as the Young Decision Makers Conference, The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference, as well as the Atlantic Institutes Symposium on Child and Youth Mental Health. These experiences ensure that we are connecting with the realities of youth on a national level while simultaneously working together as a council to achieve a common vision: to end youth homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To help further our mandate of breaking down barriers for youth, the YLC also created and facilitated our own Youth Survey which was conducted with over forty clients at CFY. The goal of this survey was to help re-focus our work on the specific barriers that youth felt were most prevalent to them. Through a peer-to-peer approach we received in-depth, genuine and powerful feedback, showing that the youth we serve are their own experts on what they need to live healthier, more stable lives. The data from this survey will help our council to determine which issues we tackle moving forward.

As we look forward to the future of the YLC, we are confident that we will have the continued, unwavering support of CFY. We will continue to grow, evolve, and help better the quality of life for the young people of our province. Stay tuned for another exciting year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Brown".

SARAH BROWN, DIRECTOR

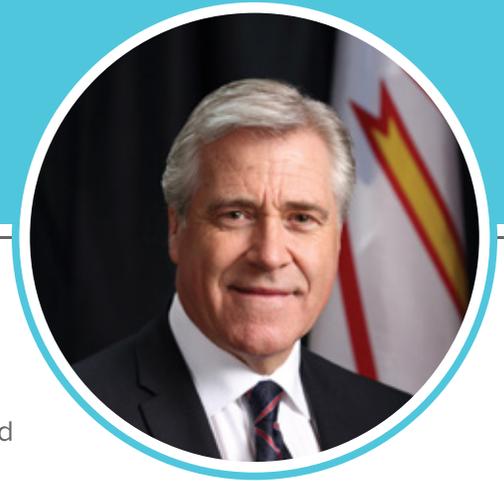
Youth Leadership Council





MESSAGE: FROM THE PREMIER

HON. DWIGHT BALL



Choices for Youth plays an important role in communities across our province. On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I want to applaud and thank Choices for Youth for the incredible work and positive impacts this organization has on the lives of at-risk youth.

Homelessness, mental health issues and addiction issues are challenges faced by many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Your organization is devoted to helping our at-risk youth overcome these challenges and this is vital, in the delivery of support services and training programs to help them on the path to a healthy and positive future.

Furthermore, Choices for Youth has developed strong community partnerships over the years, that have helped the organization continue to grow and support our at-risk youth. These relationships contribute so much to the work being done and I encourage people and organizations to continue to partner with Choices for Youth as they help ensure a brighter future for our province.

I encourage Choices for Youth to continue to help our at-risk youth build happier and healthier futures – you are making an incredible difference in many lives and that is to be commended. Congratulations on a successful year and I wish Choices for Youth much success in the future.

Sincerely,

HON. DWIGHT BALL, PREMIER
Newfoundland and Labrador





MESSAGE: FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

JONATHAN DUKE



Since it first opened its doors, Choices for Youth has adapted and evolved to meet the needs of at-risk and homeless youth in our community. Choices has focused on the core needs of youth: housing, education, and employment. Through wrap around supports to deliver on these core needs, we enable youth in every stage of life to reach their potential.

Just as we wrap supports around our youth, the community has wrapped supports around us. Our advancements in programming would not have been possible without the continued support of the provincial and federal governments, corporate partners who share our vision and national youth-serving organizations that allowed us to leverage their knowledge and successes. Choices has made it a priority to share our learnings and programming successes with our peers across the sector, and in turn, the organization has been recognized as a national leader and innovator.

The programming achievements and growth at Choices for Youth this year have been tremendous. The Momma Moments program has had an amazing year, providing valuable supports to 42 young mothers and their children so they may thrive. The Choices team delivered an in-house counselling program so that youth at risk could access this service immediately when needed. Our outreach, shelter and supportive housing teams continue to work with youth each day to overcome the very real challenges and barriers they face, and realize their own unique potential.

In recent months, Impact Construction (formerly Train for Trades) has realized its dream of operating on a full social enterprise model. Following quickly on its heels, Project SucSeed which is a social enterprise partnership with Enactus Memorial that has been recognized for innovation on the national stage, is poised for rapid growth. Choices for Youth is committed to continuing to explore the many opportunities of social enterprise.

With incredible success also come challenges. Our province is facing a difficult economic period, and the changes happening in our communities will greatly impact those who are most vulnerable. We currently serve over 1,000 youth each year, and that need is sure to grow. There is no doubt however, that in the coming year Choices for Youth will continue to introduce new and relevant programming to meet the needs of youth.

During the past year the Choices management team completed our new strategic plan to guide us through the next three years. The plan is focused both on meeting the needs of youth and ensuring the sustainability of the organization. We look forward to implementing the plan and delivering on clear and measurable outcomes.

I invite you to review this annual report, share our optimism for the young people in our province, and learn more about the incredible youth we serve each day along with the programs and staff that help them set and achieve their goals. Thank you for supporting Choices for Youth.

JONATHAN DUKE

Chair of the Board of Directors, Choices for Youth





MESSAGE: FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SHELDON POLLETT



Our organization embarked on some ambitious journeys this year, and has taken steps towards creating a more stable future for many at-risk youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am inspired each day by the dedication of staff, board members and volunteers at Choices for Youth, and the examples of resiliency and potential that I see from young people who come to us for support. It's these young people and the struggles that they have faced time and time again that have inspired us to be innovative, resourceful, and to continue to determine best practices for serving at-risk and homeless youth in our community.

The past twelve months at Choices for Youth have been incredibly busy. We created a new strategic plan that will guide the next three years within our organization, and the process of compiling content, organizing priorities and focusing direction was not without challenges. There has never been a more critical time to focus on the needs of youth in our community, and I am confident that our new strategic plan will guide the processes and programs that will best respond to those existing and emergent needs.

In conjunction with the creation of a new strategic plan, Choices for Youth has also invested time, energy and resources into a call for action for a Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the 2014-2015 year, with the support of our national partners, A Way Home and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, we continued to consult with our community and youth to create a vision for a stronger future. On June 1, 2015, that vision was announced and the work to make it a reality began. It is going to take all of our efforts – federal, provincial, municipal, and community – to create and coordinate a response to end youth homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. The youth of our province deserve nothing less.

At Choices for Youth, we see first-hand the obvious results that occur when you give youth the supports, tools, and resources to reach their full potential. We have built partnerships, stewarded innovation, and have continued to learn from and add to the provincial and national conversation for youth serving organizations. The needs of young people continue to evolve and we are right beside them as we adapt to meet these needs.

Thank you for believing in Choices for Youth and the young people that we serve every day.

SHELDON POLLETT

Executive Director, Choices for Youth



WHO WE ARE



On average, CFY work with more than 1000 at-risk and homeless youth every year, helping them set and achieve goals for a healthy transition into adulthood.

As we continue to grow and evolve, our reach has extended to identifying and alleviating a range of barriers that youth face in attaining healthy and stable living conditions. We are actively involved in voicing the concerns of youth in a broader provincial and national dialogue, applying our influence wherever possible to reduce youth homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our work focuses on helping at-risk and homeless youth secure stable housing, education and employment. This is achieved through a suite of programs and opportunities informed by organization-wide experiences, lived experiences of youth, our local context, and respected national programming and research. Each program offers unique support services, resources and opportunities to participants.

Together, they span four areas of focus:

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE



Vision

Choices for Youth (CFY) is a dynamic, progressive, youth-focused organization that strives to improve quality of service, so as to enhance young people's lives and enable them to meet their goals.

Mission

A community-based, not-for-profit organization which provides youth with a range of supportive housing options, access to a variety of services that promote healthy personal development, and a sense of belonging within an environment of respect, tolerance, peace, and equality.

Values

- Act with empathy and kindness
- Choose to see the potential
- Cultivate safe, inclusive spaces, and promote diversity
- Work hard, with boundless ambition and strategic excellence
- Inspire hope, and create opportunities that empower

Cultural Commitments

1. Start with Why: Putting young people first
 Being champions for social justice
 Connecting to our individual sense of purpose

2. Care for One Another: Feeling like family
 Building relationships based on trust and respect
 Understanding one another through conversations

3. Be Agile: Responding to changing needs
 Striving to learn continuously
 Fostering innovation

Executive Staff

Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director
spollett@choicesforyouth.ca

Colin Corcoran, Director of Finance & Administration
ccorcoran@choicesforyouth.ca

Jane Henderson, Director of Programs
jhenderson@choicesforyouth.ca

Linda Warford, Director of Programs
lwarford@choicesforyouth.ca

Ayon Shahed, Director of Strategic Development
ashahed@choicesforyouth.ca

Board Members

April 1st 2015 – March 31st 2016

Jonathan Duke, Chair
Group M5

Steve Power, Vice-Chair
Partner, Grant Thornton

Andrew Woodland, Secretary
Legal Counsel, City of St. John's

Lynn Zurel, Treasurer
Chartered Accountant,
Stonebridge Capital Inc.

Ross Reid
Consultant

Jim Murray
President, JSM Electrical

Chris King
Partner, McInnes Cooper

Lynne Henley
Community Organizer

Kathy LeGrow
President & CEO, Pratt Representatives

Chris Peddigrew
Partner, Wadden Peddigrew Hogan

Paula Walsh
Officer, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary

EVENTS

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

February



The 3rd Annual Coldest Night of the Year walk was held on February 20th to support our vision of ending youth homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. This great community building event brought together individuals from across the province, along with local businesses, workplaces, student groups, and supporters of all ages to take part in a walk through downtown St. John's, ending with a hearty meal served at our Outreach and Youth Engagement Centre. Over 200 people walked the route and raised close to \$35,000 for Choices for Youth!

MCHAPPY DAY

May



One of the most fun days of the year is this first Wednesday in May – McHappy Day! This is a day where the community shows support for local businesses and local charities by visiting their neighborhood McDonalds. For McHappy Day 2015, McDonald's franchises in St. John's raised money for Choices for Youth. This was an incredible opportunity to not only raise funds, but to spread awareness about the realities facing at-risk youth in our community, city and province. We were so happy to be a part of the day, and were able to have Big Mac meals for the young people at Outreach's community supper that evening! A yummy treat to end a very happy day!

CHRISTMAS DAY AT OUTREACH

December



This past holiday season Choices for Youth opened the doors at the Outreach and Youth Engagement Centre on Christmas Day for the first time. Young people were able to get a delicious holiday meal thanks to the generosity of Pat's Place Mount Pearl and accompanying volunteers, and staff was on hand to spread the joy of the season and provide any necessary support. We hope to provide this same experience and service to young people every December 25th as part of our mission to provide young people with continuous support, resources, and opportunities.

YOUTH AND STAFF SOFTBALL GAME

August



The annual youth and staff softball game was held at the end of August to celebrate another successful summer of recreational activities throughout Choices for Youth. The game saw young people and staff team up to play a friendly game of softball, culminating in an organization-wide BBQ. This yearly event is organized by Outreach staff and is always an afternoon full of laughter, sunshine, and teamwork amongst young people and staff!



FEATURED CLIENT
JEREMY



Jeremy is twenty-one years old and is originally from Nova Scotia. Growing up he faced many challenges and setbacks, and eventually found himself taking some wrong turns and making poor decisions. Involvement with the criminal justice system led him to a two year stint in prison.

During his incarceration, Jeremy had a lot of time to reflect on his life and he realized that he wanted more for himself and a better life when his prison time was over. He spent time thinking about his future and completed a four week framing and drywall certification course during his sentence.

After he was released from custody, Jeremy's search for a fresh start brought him to St. John's. Though he had limited construction experience, he was eager to become employed and get his life back on track. A contact at the parole board connected him

with Impact Construction (IC) and he started working with the social enterprise program in October of 2015. Jeremy caught on to new skills and training very quickly, and is now a tier 3 participant – the highest level a youth can reach in IC.

Jeremy credits the IC staff, the friendly atmosphere, and the supportive setting for bolstering his success. "The staff will bend over backwards to help you out. They'll help you with food and finding a place to live... anything that you need, they'll help you get it," Jeremy says. He's learned a lot since he started with IC only seven months ago, and has no intentions of resorting to his old ways.

He now looks ahead to a brighter future, and would like to attend the Carpenters Millwright College. Maybe, he says, he could even one day be a part of IC and mentor young men like himself who are facing some big life challenges.

"I've been through a lot, but I've learned a lot. If you need help, ask for it. Don't be afraid to ask for help, because there's always someone willing to help you move forward."



"I believe that it is important to measure success in the small things and to realize that success is different for everyone. Seeing youth achieve their goals – from making it to an appointment to seeking treatment for their substance use – is what I love about my job."

Erica Norman
Team Lead, Outreach and Youth Engagement



OUR PROGRAMS OUTREACH & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE



KEY STATS:

7700+ meals

2100+ engagements with youth

884 different youth served

401 requests for mental health support*

307 requests for education support*

255 requests for employment support*

446 requests for housing support*

**These statistics are for November 2015-March 2016*

The CFY Outreach and Youth Engagement Centre (“Outreach”) is best described as a one-stop shop for youth. It is a place where young people can get many of their needs met, from food to support to programming.

Outreach works with youth from a global harm reduction lens to reduce risk in all aspects of their lives. It is a space where youth can be themselves. Youth can laugh together or cry if they need to; they can learn and play music; they can tell jokes and have a hand to hold when they need one. It’s a safe space and for some young people Outreach support staff becomes their family.

Over the last year we have started multiple new programs to empower youth at Outreach, including Artful and Partners in Rhyme. Artful is an arts-based empowerment group for young women. The group sessions can be very cathartic for participants, and also focus on respect, trust, and positivity. Partners in Rhyme is an initiative that engages male youth to openly discuss challenges they face such as addictions, mental health struggles and homelessness. We have found that by focusing on aspects of relevant pop-culture and current issues, young people feel more invested and interact and engage in more programming.

There have also been some exciting collaborations that have greatly impact Outreach this year. In partnership with Enactus Memorial we started Project Sucseed, a social enterprise that manufactures personal-use hydroponic units to increase food security while simultaneously offering young people an opportunity to learn transferable, employable skills. In partnership with the Downtown Healthcare Collaborative we also created a medical clinic and we now have two physicians that will be working out of Outreach. This initiative will play a vital role in allowing the youth we serve to access health care services.

The Outreach team continues to go above and beyond in order to be innovative in meeting the needs of young people. This year we opened our Outreach doors on Christmas Day for the first time. To see young people come to our location, who otherwise would not have had anywhere to enjoy a Christmas day meal, was so meaningful. One of the young men showed up and his peer said, “Hey, didn’t know I’d see you here today,” and the young man responded, “Of course I’m here, where else would I be?” We are home, family, and a necessary fixture in so many young people’s lives, and we will continue to offer quality services and support to every young person who comes to us for help.



JUMPSTART



The Jumpstart pre-employment program expanded this year to include an extra five youth in the program, bringing the program to fifteen participants and three youth mentors per session.

Youth in the program were exposed to various elements of cooking, household maintenance, and art creation to help them develop transferable, employable skills. Jumpstart also partnered with Epic Engagement during this Jumpstart session to empower young people through personal development opportunities and experiences. Youth were able to partner with other service groups to volunteer within the community and gain valuable teamwork and communication skills.

KEY STATS:

- 15 participants and 3 youth mentors
- 5 currently employed
- 5 participating in other CFY programs
- 3 completing GED/highschool equivalency

MOMMA MOMENTS



Momma Moments continues to offer support to young parenting and expecting mothers in our community.

The St. John's and Conception Bay South groups participated in countless personal development and family outings that helped moms and kids develop new skills and new bonds with each other and with the community. Momma

Moments prides itself on providing wrap-around supports to families, including help with finding affordable housing, accessing education and employment, navigating family law and legal aid, and overcoming countless other challenges and barriers that young mothers face. This year, Momma Moments offered many different activities to program participants such as wellness retreats with a focus on nutrition, summer recreation outings, Christmas parties and gift support, an Easter celebration with the Northeast Avalon Rotary Club, and support in accessing everyday care items for moms and children thanks to community partner McInnes Cooper. The Momma Moments program is a true indication of the amazing things that can occur when a young mom receives community support to succeed as an individual and as a mother.

KEY STATS:

- 63% currently employed
- 73% pursuing educational opportunities
- 18% secured affordable housing through a partnership with NLHC
- 2800+ meals served
- 864 volunteer hours to support the program

YOUTH IN TRANSITIONS



Youth in Transitions is a program in partnership with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services that operates out of Outreach to support young people aged 16-18 to develop life skills while receiving specialized support. With help from a support worker, youth create individualized support plans which include elements of daily living, self-care, relationships and communications building, housing and money management, work and study life, and career and education

planning. The program continues to provide the supports for young people to reinforce and empower their strengths, skills and their potential as young adults.

KEY STATS:

- 86 participants
- 20 young people successfully transitioned out of the program
- 76% of participants completed formalized support plans to work towards greater independence



OUR PROGRAMS

SHELTER FOR YOUNG MEN

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE



The CFY Shelter for Young Men provides emergency housing for 16-29 year old homeless male-identified individuals. It is a low-barrier shelter operating from a harm-reduction approach to support youth at all stages of change.

Staff work with young people to connect them to funding and additional community services to help them meet their goals. Young people staying at the Shelter make huge changes in their lives with the support of staff, like taking steps towards sobriety, improving their mental health, and securing housing.

The Shelter was a source of consistent support for the many young men who needed emergency housing over the past year. Though we continue to be challenged by a lack of affordable, adequate housing for young people leaving the shelter, particularly youth looking for supportive housing, we continue to work closely with systems and other service providers to help cobble together supports from as many sources as necessary.

Working each day in the shelter with individuals who are encountering some of life's toughest challenges can be impactful, to say the very least. However all the struggles melt away for a moment when you hear from a former resident who has turned their life around. For example, we had a visit from one young man who was in a very bad place when he was in our shelter a year ago, and now he is in Alberta working, staying sober and clean, and driving a brand new truck. This is the epitome of why we do the work we do.

KEY STATS:

90% occupancy rate

158 shelter stays
(100 individuals)

Average length of stay
18.84 days

Average age of shelter user
21 years

63% of admissions had at
least 1 stay

42% of admissions had at least
2 previous stays in shelter



“Not only do I work alongside some pretty awesome co-workers, but I get to meet and work with the most resilient young people there are. I aid in their learning and growing process, but they help me to grow as well. “

Candice Collins
Residential Counsellor, Shelter for Young Men



OUR PROGRAMS MOVING FORWARD

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

The Moving Forward program provides intensive, individualized support and group services for young people with complex mental health challenges. The goal of Moving Forward is to help young people develop a sense of empowerment, learn new skills, increase medication and treatment compliance, find and maintain appropriate housing, increase community connectedness and ultimately live independently in the community.

Moving Forward continues to adhere to the three step tier system to better serve the young people in the program. The clients who provided feedback were very satisfied with the program, noting the importance of the emotional support and skill development opportunities provided by staff. Although limited outside services and long wait lists have impacted youth transitioning from Moving Forward, program staff have continued to offer support to young people to the best of their ability while youth wait to access other community services.

During the past twelve months, we have witnessed many successes among the young people in the Moving Forward program. For example, two young people successfully transitioned into the community and have maintained independent living after residing in residential care for six years. In addition to maintaining their housing, one of these young people is currently enrolled in post-secondary studies while the other is exploring various employment opportunities and has participated in pre-employment programs offered through both Murphy Centre and Stella's Circle. This is just one of many instances of young people creating healthier, more stable lives with support from CFY and Moving Forward.



KEY STATS:

2234 youth visits offered

1837 youth visits attended

220 appointments attended

34 requests for other services

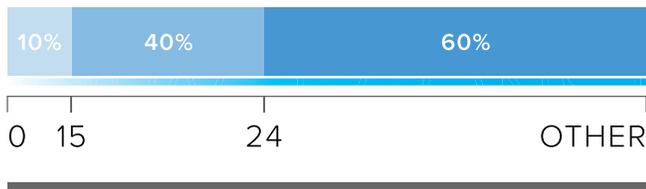


“I believe every youth can be reached, and everyone deserves to be reached out to. In reaching out, I hope to support them in breaking down their barriers to help build confidence and a feeling of self-worth so they can reach their full potential.”

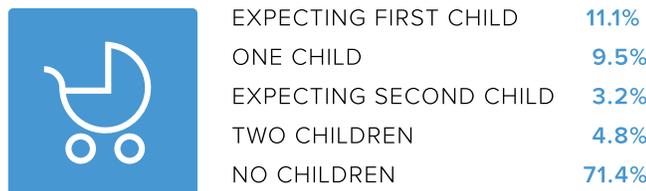
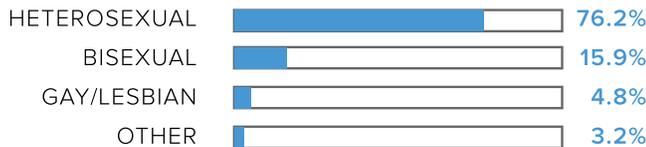
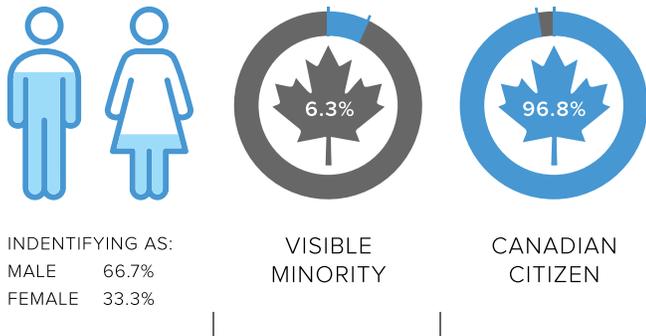
*Ronnie O'Neil
Community Support Worker, Moving Forward*

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

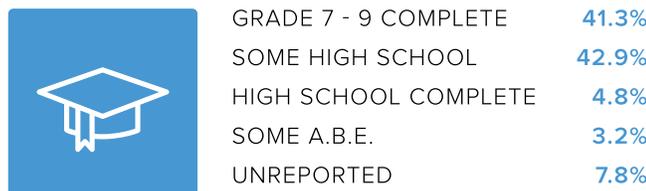
AGE BREAKDOWN



IDENTIFIERS



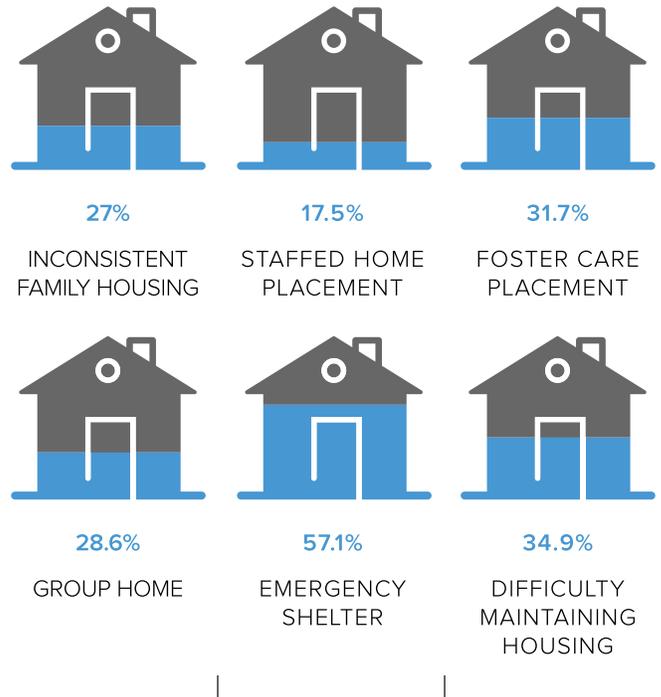
EDUCATION LEVELS



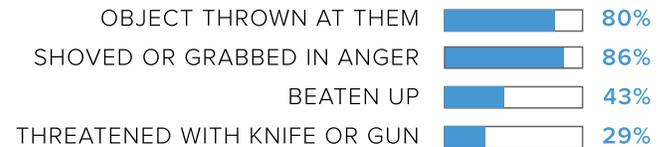
EMPLOYMENT STATUS



HOUSING HISTORY



EXPIERENCE AT HOME SEPARATE STUDY



LIVING ARRANGEMENT



SOURCES:

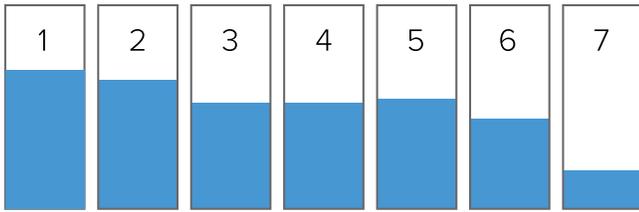
Whitbeck, L. B., Hoyt, D. R. & Ackley, K. A. (1997) – Abusive family backgrounds and later victimization among runaway and homeless adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescents*

Pearce Bruce, End Homelessness St. John's, "Growing Homes – Ending Homelessness in St. John's: Our Five Year Plan", HFIS Data, 2014

Patterson Heather M., Memorial University, "Attachment Styles, Psychological Functioning, and Resilience Factors among Street-Involved Youth: Describing Youth who Access Community Agency Support", 2016

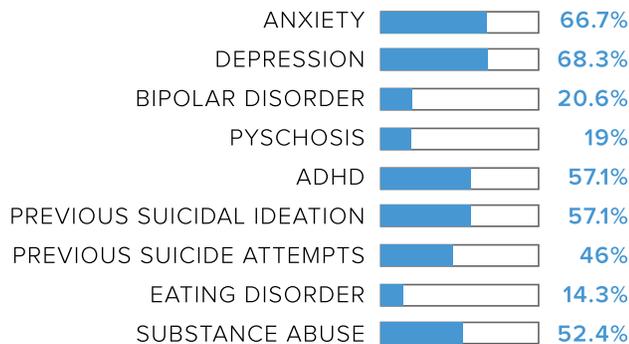


DAY TO DAY



1. DISRUPTED CONNECTION WITH FAMILY 66.7%
2. CHAOTIC HOME ENVIRONMENT 63.5%
3. SUBSTANCE ABUSE OR ADDICTION 52.4%
4. EARLY FAMILY BREAKUP 52.4%
5. FAMILY VIOLENCE 54%
6. SINGLE PARENT FAMILY 44.4%
7. SIGNIFICANT DEATH IN FAMILY 19%

MENTAL HEALTH



TRAUMA



PTSD	36.5%
TRAUMA	39.7%
PHYSICAL ABUSE	47.6%
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	61.9%
SEXUAL ABUSE	25.4%
SEXUAL ASSAULT	27.9%

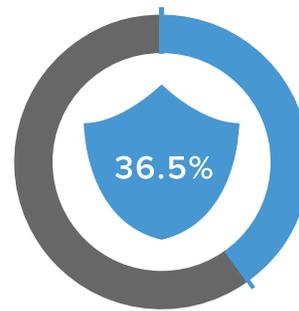
COUNSELING



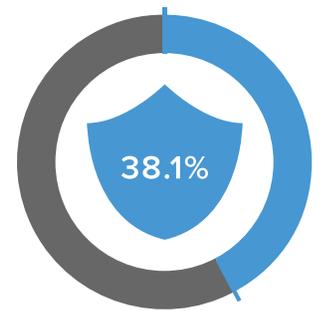
IN COUNSELING NOT IN COUNSELING

*OF THE 75% NOT IN COUNSELING, 46% WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN COUNSELING

STREET CULTURE



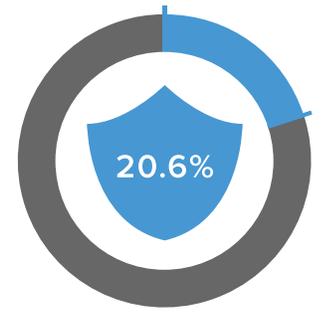
PREVIOUSLY
INCARCERATED



CURRENTLY INVOLVED
WITH POLICE



PREVIOUS PAROLE /
PROBATION



CURRENT PAROLE /
PROBATION

CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN STREET CULTURE?



YES

NO

HOW LONG?



LESS THAN 3 MONTHS	9.5%
LESS THAN 6 MONTHS	9.5%
6-12 MONTHS	11.9%
1-2 YEARS	7.1%
2-3 YEARS	9.5%
3-5 YEARS	16.7%
5+ YEARS	35.7%



OUR PROGRAMS IMPACT CONSTRUCTION

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE



Impact Construction is a non-profit construction company that trains and employs at-risk young people between the ages of 16-29.

We put a hammer in their hand teach them to use it, a pay cheque in their pockets and teach them to live off it, and training certifications on their resumes and teach them to transition onto sustainable employment. The entire program-centric model was transformed via the social enterprise business plan which launched on April 1st, 2015. Since then, Impact Construction has evolved into a high-producing, high-outcomes enterprise.

The biggest challenge for Impact Construction over the past year has been finding the balance between achieving performance targets alongside program outcomes. We constantly monitor our productivity on projects to ensure we are completing work on time and on budget, however we never lose sight of why the enterprise exists to begin with: to train, employ and transition young people into post-secondary education programs or the work force. We are now incorporating learning from the past year into other social enterprise initiatives within CFY.

As young people in this program learn new skills and gain confidence, they also become eager to help other young people who are struggling. Every holiday season we provide a small Christmas gift to the youth in our program. Some Impact Construction youth, knowing there was need elsewhere, decided to give their gifts back to CFY to be distributed to other young people who needed it more. This sense of community and selflessness is something that can't be taught, but that young people in Impact Construction have inherently learned from their lived experience and newfound accomplishments.

KEY STATS:

35 participants

70% program completion rate

9 obtained or are working towards obtaining their GED

7 pursuing post-secondary education

6 secured full-time employment in the construction industry

2 successfully completed post-secondary programs (abatement)



“I never have a morning where I am not excited about going into work and seeing what accomplishments our young people and organization will achieve.”

*Colin Corcoran
Director of Finance and Administration*



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

Innovation and impact are at the heart of our emerging social enterprise strategy.

We see social enterprise as a powerful mechanism through which at-risk and homeless youth can be empowered, access meaningful employment and integrate into the broader community by providing valuable services to the public. By design, these social enterprise initiatives aim to be self-sufficient and direct any profits into creating new opportunities to support youth.

This past year, Choices for Youth (CFY) has taken great strides with social enterprise initiatives. Impact Construction (IC) has successfully transitioned from a program model (Train for Trades) into a sustainable social enterprise construction company that trains and employs young people in our community. We are extremely proud of the team at IC and the young people who continue to show us the potential that the right supports can unlock.

Building on the success of IC and the demonstrated impact on youth, CFY has also been exploring how a social enterprise portfolio can be applied to create a diverse set of low-barrier, high-support employment options for at-risk and homeless youth. In the Fall of 2015, CFY established a partnership with Enactus Memorial to do just that.



Project Sucseed

To address the need for fresh, affordable produce in our province, the Enactus Memorial team partnered with the Engineering Faculty at Memorial University. Together they developed a hydroponic system made of recycled materials that could grow fresh produce at an extremely low cost and with minimal environmental impact.

Manufacturing each unit is a streamlined, multi-step project. For CFY, this represented an employment opportunity for at-risk and homeless youth for whom traditional employment or educational opportunities are currently not viable options. By partnering with Enactus Memorial, we've been able to hire six young people for the pilot phase of this project and establish a manufacturing hub for Project Sucseed. Youth are supported through their work and in addressing their personal challenges, while working towards broader goals related to stable housing, employment and education.



Your Turn Boutique

The Your Turn Boutique has been in a development phase this past year, and we're excited to be opening our store front this summer. This will be a stylish social boutique located on Duckworth Street in downtown St. John's. This social enterprise will offer at-risk youth in the Moving Forward program the opportunity to gain employment experience and develop transferable employment skills by assisting with all stages of business operations from accepting donations, sorting inventory, washing clothes, managing money, and working in the storefront.

Each youth involved with the program will receive appropriate training and during each shift three youth will work with a supervisor who will support them and help them successfully transition into the workforce. During these shifts, youth will gain work skills and experience that will build their confidence easing their transition into the workforce.





OUR PROGRAMS RALLY HAVEN

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

RallyHaven is a supportive housing program that helps young people learn that they are not alone in the world, and that needing others and letting others help is often the first step to realizing our potential. As human beings, we all need a place to call home, encouragement when we are not at our best, and people who accept and celebrate us for who and how we are. This is RallyHaven, and for so many young people this is home.

Over the past year, RallyHaven has been restructuring its staffing model to accommodate the program growth. Although there were no additional resources available for operations of the RallyHaven program this year, the team was creative in reorganizing its existing resources to provide support and housing to 5 additional young people. With the incorporation of the new Southside Road property into the fold, RallyHaven will soon provide housing and support to a total of 16 youth clients. RallyHaven has also begun utilizing Outcome Star as a support plan tool (using the stages of change/motivational interviewing) to assist young people in determining their own unique path that feels right for them.

The best part of the RallyHaven program is experiencing the joy when young people graduate from their other CFY programming or simply do something that makes them proud of themselves. It is incredible to see young people begin to believe in themselves and to see their own strengths and abilities. When someone else believes in a young person, it helps that person learn to believe in themselves, and what a wonderful gift it is to witness a young person growing and developing into the amazing young people they were meant to become.

KEY STATS:

3 youth have recently become employed part-time

2 youth successfully completed post-secondary programs

1 young person is pursuing university programs/courses

1 young person has gone back to high school

1 young person is currently working on obtaining GED

1 young person has recently begun a pre-employment program at Stella's Circle



“There’s always a fear of failure -- of not being good enough. When I’m working with young people, my motto with them is ‘You can’t hit the ball if you don’t swing the bat’. The key is supporting them in taking that step forward.”

*Rob Cahill
Community Support Worker, RallyHaven*



OUR PROGRAMS THE LILLY

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE



KEY STATS:

The Lilly has been home to a total of 103 youth since opening in 2011

In 2015, Lilly was home to 25 youth. Of those 25 youth ...

9 youth attend high school

1 attended high school and worked

2 attended post-secondary, 2 attended post-secondary and worked

2 attended an employment program

7 moved out into an apartment or bedsitter

5 moved back with their family

1 transitioned into another supportive housing program

2 attended a treatment program.

The Lilly is an affordable housing model for youth that works. Both the programming and the physical layout of the building promote a sense of community, while at the same time honoring individuality in a youth-friendly environment. Young people work with staff to develop an individual support plan which identifies lifestyle barriers that have impacted their ability to achieve their goals.

The Lilly has grown and evolved over the past twelve months to better meet the needs of young people. We were fortunate to have the ability to increase our staffing hours which has enabled us to better support our youth and to implement an in-house programming model. The added staffing hours also allowed us to focus on gaps in programming and develop new tools and programs to bridge those gaps. We now have a newly implemented Strummin' Strong music group, as well as Transformational Thursdays where we focus on self-care, a Formers Night where past resident can drop by just to chat, and a Livin' Healthy at the Lilly program that promotes overall wellness.

Like most programs, finding ways to best support youth with mental health needs is an ongoing challenge that we encountered this year at the Lilly. There are barriers to accessing the proper mental health supports due to systemic gaps and waitlists, so we try to be innovative in the wrap-around supports that we offer. At the Lilly we strive to engage youth in discussion and educate them as to what it means to live a healthier lifestyle, including the benefits to their mental and physical health, how they can incorporate physical fitness in their daily activities, and how to make healthier food choices.



OUR PROGRAMS

YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORT

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE



KEY STATS:

3 youth attended the Young Decision Makers Conference in Nobleton, Ontario

2 youth attended the Atlantic Summer Institute, Symposium on Child and Youth Mental Health in Charlottetown, PEI

1 youth attended Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference in Montreal

6 youth attended the National Child and Youth Advocates Conference in St. Johns

2 youth sat on the panel for the release of Towards a Solution

2 youth presented a lunch and learn at Push for Change

42 youth at CFY participated in the first YLC-created survey on realities of barriers youth face

The Youth Leadership Council is a volunteer-based, lived-experience council that aims to break down barriers for youth while also serving as a peer-to-peer support group. The council uses their own realities, passion, and skills to create positive change through education and awareness in hopes of preventing other young people from experiencing the barriers they have faced.

The council members became much more independent this year. They now rely less on staff support and govern their council in confidence. The YLC created and conducted their own Youth Survey on the realities young people in the province face. This data will be used to help shape the future work and direction of the YLC.

The YLC is made up of individuals with insurmountable ambition, dreams, and lived experience to offer to the community. They often encounter challenges in making every worthwhile idea become a reality, as they have so many goals that they want to achieve. However, together they've been able to do great work by investing all of their efforts into their projects, relying on existing resources within Choices for Youth, and calling on volunteers within the community.

As a council made up of volunteers facing a variety of individual barriers and challenges, the YLC can't always operate like other volunteer groups. However, despite the struggles that individual members face, the council remains committed to the work of the group and they are each resilient leaders -- picking up projects, checking in on each other, and always meeting a challenge with empathy and understanding. Their hard work and commitment to breaking down barriers for other youth has culminated in exciting opportunities, such as attending the Young Decision Makers conference in Ontario, where they were able to see the immense value in the social-emotional learning and the leadership skills that YLC members brought to their relevant learning groups.





FEATURED CLIENT NICOLE



Nicole is a single mother to a beautiful five year old boy. At twenty-one she found herself in a situation that she never imagined was possible: she had no job, no money, and no home for herself and her child.

She struggled for some time, but knew that she was a strong, resilient young woman who needed to provide for her family. Though times were tough, Nicole was able to access income support and eventually find an apartment to live in, however her struggles were not over yet.

During this challenging time in her life, Nicole was also diagnosed with depression and bipolar disorder. The day-to-day struggles of being a young, single mom along with her own mental health challenges were overwhelming and eventually Nicole also developed an eating disorder. Through her own perseverance and with medical support Nicole found ways to balance her ongoing

mental health struggles, but it wasn't until she heard about Momma Moments in 2013 that she found the support she needed.

The young women and children in Momma Moments have become like a second family to Nicole. She calls the moms her sisters and their children are like her nieces and nephews. The group supports one another through thick and thin, and for Nicole the result has been life changing. While being a member of Momma Moments Nicole has completed training to become a certified esthetician, found stable housing, got a car and a job, and secured suitable daycare for her son.

The weekly sessions with Momma Moments are now a chance for her to get a warm, hearty meal, interact with other moms, and take part in fun activities while her son gets to socialize in a safe environment. Nicole is so appreciative to have the support of the Momma Moments group and its staff.

“It’s so important, especially as a young, single mom, to know you have an army behind you that has your back. There is nothing in this world I can’t take on thanks to the love and support from our group.”



“To me, Outreach is the glue of Choices for Youth. It’s the doorstep of the organization, providing a safe place for a meal or a conversation. Providing these basic needs opens up endless opportunities for young people.”

Joe Mitchell
Outreach Worker, Outreach and Youth Engagement



WORKING TOGETHER

When we think about our work, it comes down to two things: the young people we serve, and community around us that makes the work possible. At Choices for Youth, we are incredibly grateful for the partnerships we have in the city, throughout province and across Canada.

We are humbled by their support and their expertise, and proud to contribute to the success of other organizations that do great work. The following are four brief examples of how working together is a core component in our approach to being a leader in the community.

National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness

The National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness (NLCYH) is a pan-Canadian network of leading youth serving organizations across the country who work collaboratively on key issues, sharing promising practices and developing strategies and tools to strengthen the sector and broaden its impact. Choices for Youth has been a member of the NLCYH since 2006.

In the Fall of 2015, Choices for Youth helped host the NLCYH Annual Meeting. 38 individuals, representing over 25 organizations from across Canada, attended the event. In addition to creating a structured opportunity to propel research, share new ideas, and implement new tools - the meetings also served as a platform to update and report national working plans. We are proud to have brought the NLCYH to St. John's and are grateful to The Home Depot Canada Foundation for their continued support for the NLCYH and efforts to end youth homelessness across the country.

Family Fun Day

Every day at CFY, we're working with young people who incredible resiliency and hope in the face of unimaginable circumstances. Alongside the individualized support and range of programs we offer at-risk and homeless youth - we know it is also important to keep everyone's spirits high. Family Fun Day is a chance to celebrate successes, support young mothers, and appreciate community around us that makes our work possible.



In July 2015, Family Fun Day brought together over 165 youth, children and volunteers. The day was made special because of countless local businesses who believe in building an inclusive and vibrant community. With their help we were able to offer burgers, pizza, chips, candy, pop, donuts, bottled water and ice cream. From a DJ to dancers, from kid's games to free prizes and event support with transportation - the event was a major success.



Front Step

For many of the young people in our community, chronic or episodic homelessness is an on-going challenge. This type of homelessness can create a dependency on emergency systems (shelters) or leave them in unstable or unsafe situations (long-term couch surfing or living in a places unfit for human habitation). These individuals are particularly vulnerable and require extremely low-barrier and long term housing and support option.

In early 2016, under the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), the Front Step program was launched in partnership Stella's Circle, Iris Kirby House and End Homelessness St. John's. The program utilizes a Housing First approach. In this approach, once housing is established, program participants receive individualized, client centered supports. The supports are provided from a hard reduction and recovery-oriented model for six months to a year to help them build stability and maintain their housing.

This program recognizes that community partnerships around system coordination, integrated information systems and research, shared leadership and resources, and a collective focus on housing and supports can create truly positive outcomes for the most vulnerable youth in our community.



A WAY HOME

Working Together to End Youth Homelessness in Canada

In October 2015, we saw the arrival of a new voice in accelerating efforts to end youth homelessness in Canada: A Way Home.

This newly formed coalition aims to inspire and facilitate change by promoting effective strategies that shift the focus our capacity, funding and energies away from an Emergency Response to youth homelessness, towards one of focuses on Prevention (stopping young people from being homeless in the first place) and on Housing and Supports (rapidly and safely moving those who do become homeless into stable housing).

A Way Home represents more than 35 organizations across Canada and focuses on implementation of coordination of efforts to end youth homelessness. Choices for Youth is a proud member of A Way Home and our Executive Director, Sheldon Pollett is an active member of the board.

FROM OUR YOUTH



Kolten, Dan and James

Kolten, Dan and James are all a part of Impact Construction. Beyond the support they get from the program and its staff, they are most excited about the meaningful experience they receive from learning real skills on a real job site.

“Working here is great. It’s steady employment, steady work, and steady hours. This is a tough economy, and being a part of Impact means a chance to get ahead with work and with life.”

Matt

Matt has been living at the Lilly for almost two years and is now preparing to move out into his own apartment. Like any young person he is a little nervous, but mostly excited and optimistic.

“The Lilly has given me everything I need to live on my own. It would have taken me a lot longer to get to this point if it wasn’t for the Lilly teaching me the skills that I’ve learned like providing for myself, being independent, cooking, cleaning... there’s just so much that the Lilly has given me that I would not have found anywhere else.



Justin

Justin has been a part of the Moving Forward program for over two years. Since joining he has made incredible changes in his life and has taken on new challenges head-on and with a positive outlook. Moving Forward staff member, Will Lummis, is quick to point out the changes he has seen in Justin;

“He is the epitome of what it means to be a part of the Moving Forward program. He has made amazing progress during his time here, and as he reaches his potential he has been helping other youth in our program to meet their goals and potential as well.”



Maranda

For the past three years Maranda, or Panda as she is fondly called, has found great support in the Moving Forward program.

She has gained many new skills, has developed a passion for cooking, and has been connected with employment opportunities in the food service industry.

“What I like most about Moving Forward is the staff. They always make me happy and cheer me up when I am sad, and are always there when I need them.”

Siv

Through Choices for Youth, Siv was able to access the RallyHaven program and avail of affordable, supportive housing.

You can often find her at Outreach enjoying some of Chef Lois’s delicious meals, participating in programming or attending community events.

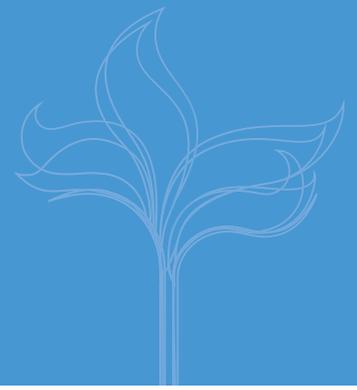
“[CFY is] a very welcoming place for people who need a little lift up and to get their life sorted out.”



Zach

Zach originally came to Choices for Youth to connect with other young people and resources. Since he first walked through the doors at Outreach he has enjoyed being a part of the supportive community.

“People [at Outreach] are easy to get along with. The people here will do anything for you, and it makes the bad days a little bit better.”

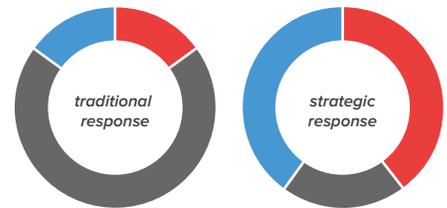


AN END TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Youth homelessness is born out of a series of complex factors that contribute to the tragedy of young people not having a roof over their heads. Although we may never eliminate every risk that youth are exposed to, we do have control over our responses and the systems that we put in place to support youth long before they become entrenched in such a crisis driven life. Ultimately, coming to this realization also brings with it an understanding that we do not have to accept youth homelessness as an unsolvable reality.

In June 2015, CFY launch the report: Towards a Solution | Creating a Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. The launch featured a panel of youth with lived experiences, sharing their perspectives and calling for action on the creation of a provincial plan to tackle the issue head on. The response to this has been incredibly positive and inspiring. Community groups, national partners and government champions have all come forward expressing their support for this work.

Over the past year, CFY has continued to act as leader in bringing this plan fruition. Working closely with A Way Home, Stella's Circle and End Homelessness St. John's we've made incredible strides in mobilizing our collective capacity towards implementing coordination solutions. At the same time, we've been progressing conversations with key leaders in our provincial government to demonstrate how a Plan to End Youth Homelessness can not only deliver critical societal outcomes, but can do so with greater economic efficiency while also achieving numerous governmental mandate commitments. Our hope is to secure a government counter-part



- Prevention
- Emergency Response
- Housing & Supports

While we know that the creation and implementation of this plan will take time, we also know we must believe that it is possible. The young people in our province deserve this. In the face of mental illness, childhood trauma, poverty, disrupted educations and discrimination we cannot, as a province, continue to take a disjointed approach. To end youth homelessness we must work together as a collaborative community invested in a better future for our province.



“I enjoy being a part of an awesome team that is committed to providing positive, empowering, engaging activities for youth facing various barriers develop the skills and knowledge necessary to live independent and productive lives. Every person has a story and is a person of worth. I count it a privilege to do what I do every day and I’m so grateful for the incredibly rewarding role I am blessed to play.”

*Sherry Whittle
Residential Counsellor/Housing Support Mentor, The Lilly*



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR MAKING THIS POSSIBLE

We especially acknowledge those who have supported us financially.
Your generous contributions have a direct impact on the lives of young people.



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Working Together to End Youth Homelessness in Canada



National Learning Community
on Youth Homelessness



COH
Canadian Observatory on Homelessness
the homeless hub

MAIN OFFICE

261 Duckworth Street
St. John's, NL
A1C 1G9
Phone: **709.754.0446**
Fax: **709.726.3125**

OUTREACH & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CENTRE

12-16 Carter's Hill Place
St. John's, NL
A1C 6N5
Phone: **709.754.3047**
Fax: **709.754.6102**

SHELTER FOR YOUNG MEN

Phone: **709.757.3050**
Fax: **709.757.3051**

THE LILLY

52-58 Bond Street
St. John's, NL
A1C 1S8
Phone: **709.739.1019**
Fax: **709.739.1091**

INFO@CHOICESFORYOUTH.CA

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