

# Street involved youth less likely to attend programs focused on HIV.

## What is this research about?

In North America there are an estimated 2 million street involved youth. Street involved youth have higher rates of infections such as HIV and other STIs. They are also exposed to a greater amount of respiratory illness and malnutrition. Outreach is the first step in service delivery for street involved youth. Organizations approach outreach in several ways, and have different methods for understanding successful outreach.

Outreach is done to attract youth to a number of intervention programs that focus mostly on nutrition, health and counseling. Outreach usually consists of: meeting youth in their environment; forming a relationship with youth; providing youth with services, or connecting youth to other services.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

It is important that organizations who are participating in outreach build trust, and treat youth respectfully for successful engagement. Youth prefer programs designed for them and staffed by younger people. Youth identified stigma as a major reason for avoiding STI & HIV related programs.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots on the topic of Youth Homelessness in Canada.

### KEYWORDS

*Youth Homelessness, Outreach, Health Programs, Literature review, Intervention, STI, HIV, Stigma*

### ARTICLE SOURCE

Connolly, J. A., & Joly, L. E. (2012). Outreach with Street-Involved Youth: A Quantitative and Qualitative Review of the Literature. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32, p.524-534.

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## WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

This study began with a literature review that looked at studies on outreach for street involved youth. The review focused on research with participants between the ages of 12-25, who do not have a permanent place of residence; therefore live between the street, shelters, the home of family/friends. The review focused on

11 quantitative, 27 qualitative studies and 4 mixed studies. The goal of the literature review was to understand the effectiveness and format of outreach programs for this age group.

## WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

Research highlighted a few trends with regards to youth service outreach. Young women are more likely to use healthcare services though a higher % of young men participate in outreach. Engagement rates ranged from 18.9% to 97%; however, the average rate for street involved youth engaged was 63%. Youth are approximately 8 times more likely to attend programs that are not related to HIV/STIs. Youth's levels of comfort with the relative program determined their

engagement. Youth value confidentiality, respect and trust. This can be achieved in simple ways such as calling youth by their name and listening to them. Youth reported disliking strict rules, such as curfews that entail loss of privileges. Youth found that outreach was most successful when:

- Programs are designed for youth and staffed by young workers.

- Workers are willing to meet in unconventional places (away from school).
- Workers intentionally meet in youth friendly and gang neutral areas.
- Workers have strong promotional materials including fliers, posters and handouts

## HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

When community agencies are designing programs, it is important to keep in mind the needs and preferences of youth. Youth who are involved in the street are in need of STI related resources and programs. However, the stigma is still enough to stop youth from using the services. Given the preference of youth to not attend STI or HIV specific services, it is important to make sure that information and resources are available through other programs.

Service providers and others who work with youth should be trained to be sensitive to their needs. This training may include antioppression training and workshop on barriers that street-involved youth face.

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