HOST HOMES DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION: REPORT III

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March 31, 2021

Acknowledgements

Hub Solutions is a social enterprise embedded within the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH). Income generated from Hub Solutions fee-for-service work, is reinvested into the COH to support research, innovation, policy recommendations and knowledge mobilization.

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1. Background

This is the third report for the Host Homes Developmental Evaluation. The first report provided a literature review on Host Homes programs and results from a national online survey on Host Homes programs. The second report focused on adaptations to the Host Homes model across Canada, key partnerships required of Host Homes programs, and how Raising the Roof can support communities in implementing Host Homes programs.

This final report focuses on how the Host Homes model fits within the Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) framework, how the Host Homes model fits within the broader youth homelessness sector, and the training and technical assistance needs required for scaling up the Host Homes model in Canada.

2. Scope of Work

The three main evaluation questions to be answered were:

1. How does the Host Homes model fit within the HF4Y framework?

2. How do Host Homes programs fit within the broader system response to youth homelessness?

3. What are the training and technical assistance needs required to scale up the Host Homes program across Canada?

The fit between the Host Homes model and the HF4Y framework was completed by comparing the five principles of HF4Y with the key program components outlined in the Host Homes Toolkit (Raising the Roof, 2019). It builds upon previous work completed by Raising the Roof.

How Host Homes programs fit within the broader youth homelessness sector was assessed based upon two consultations with the Host Homes working group, as well as directives from Reaching Home's Coordinated Access Guide (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019).

The training and technical assistance needs were determined based upon key informant interviews with eight American and Canadian experts in training and technical assistance models in the youth homelessness sector.

3. Results

QUESTION 1: HOW DOES THE HOST HOMES MODEL FIT WITHIN THE HF4Y FRAMEWORK?

HF4Y is a rights-based intervention for young people (aged13-24) who experience homelessness, or who are at risk (Gaetz, 2017). This model is adapted from the well-established Housing First approach to addressing homelessness. The goal is to provide housing and supports for young people in order to create a healthy transition to adulthood. HF4Y addresses the needs of young people by providing them with:

- Immediate access to housing that is safe, affordable and appropriate.

- Age-appropriate supports that focus on health, well-being, life skills, engagement in education and employment, and social inclusion.

Host Homes programs, as a shelter-diversion program, can apply a HF4Y philosophy into program directives, but do not fully align with a HF4Y program model. A comparison of the Host Homes model and the HF4Y model, using the five core HF4Y principles (Gaetz, 2017), is presented below. This comparison is informed by previous work of Raising the Roof.

Principle 1. Right to Housing with No Preconditions

HF4Y. Young people do not have to be "ready for housing" and housing is not contingent on a young person's participation in support services (Gaetz, 2017).

Host Homes. Host Homes programs have preconditions, as programs target young people with low service needs. It is unclear if participation in services is always a mandatory feature of the program. Host Homes providers often have rules that young

people are to follow. If these rules are not followed, then a young person may be required to move from the home.

> *Analysis*. The Host Homes model does not necessarily meet the right to housing with no preconditions, as the model targets a specific population (i.e., young people with lower service needs) and often require young people to abide by a set of rules that may extend beyond a typical tenancy. However, young people are given choice in the Host Homes that they would like to live in. So, the Host Homes model partially meets this principle.

Principle 2. Youth Choice, Youth Voice, and Self-Determination.

HF4Y. Young people should be supported in making choices and have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes safely. Young people must agree to weekly visits or contact with a case worker. If young people have an income source, they are expected to contribute up to 30 percent to the cost of rent.

Case workers work with young people in a supportive and strengths-based way to identify assets and challenges, and to develop and actualize clients' identified goals.

Host Homes. Young people in Host Homes programs meet with a case worker regularly (once a week or more when the young person asks for support). Host Homes programs vary in expectations of the young person's financial contributions. In some cases, young people in Host Homes programs are expected to pay rent and in other cases, community organizations provide a per diem as housing compensation to the host provider. Young people are also expected to contribute in non-financial ways such as maintaining a clean and tidy shared space.

Goal development is a key piece of the work with young people. Case workers support young people with their goals in a strength-based way to help young people identify their strengths and support with the development of skills. Hosts may also help support young people in learning life skills like cooking, laundry, or demonstrating healthy family dynamics.

> *Analysis*. Generally, HF4Y and the Host Homes model both follow principles that place the needs of young people first. The programs are built around supporting the goals of young people. Rent costs are kept low, as both programs try to ensure that young people only contribute up to 30 percent of their income.

Principle 3. Positive Youth Development and Wellness Orientation

HF4Y. A positive youth development approach identified the young person's personal strengths in order to build self-esteem and a positive sense of self, works to improve the young person's communication and problem-solving skills, enhances and builds natural supports, assists the young person in personal goal setting, and helps the young person to access educational opportunities and identify personal interests.

HF4Y programs also apply a trauma-informed care approach to the work. This involves the organizational implementation of principles, policies, and procedures to prevent retraumatizing service users when working with them.

The focus of HF4Y is to help young people with a healthy transition into adulthood in addition to independent living.

Host Homes. Host Homes programs do not explicitly adopt a positive youth development or trauma-informed approach, but case workers and hosts are provided training on trauma-informed care. Case workers assist young people with their educational, employment, health, and independent living goals. In some cases, programs require young people to engage in some form of community-based activity (e.g., part-time employment, education) but this type of activity is determined by the young person).

> *Analysis*. Host Homes programs generally follow a positive youth development and wellness approach. They support young people with their goals to independent living. Host Homes programs are less explicit in the application of trauma-informed approaches in the work.

Principle 4. Individualized, Client-Driven Supports with No Time Limit

HF4Y. The model includes active engagement without coercion, provides flexible program time frames that are appropriate to the young person, and offers adaptable supports to meet the needs of young people. There is an acknowledgment that trust building with young people can take time.

Host Homes. Many Host Homes programs provide a given length of stay; however, they do take the specific needs of each young person into consideration. Exits from Host Homes programs generally happen when the young person is ready to leave and when

there is a next step in place. As the case management aspect of Host Homes model is person-centered, the programs and services provided are adapted as the needs of the young person change.

> *Analysis.* Host Homes programs are able to provide young people with person-centered services, but due to the program time limits that are often imposed, this work can be limited. Thus, given the short-term nature of Host Homes programs, it does not fully meet this standard.

Principle 5. Social Inclusion and Community Integration

HF4Y. Key areas of inclusion are housing models that do not stigmatize or isolate clients, opportunities for social and cultural engagement in order to develop positive social relationships and enhance social inclusion, building natural supports, engaging in meaningful activities, and connecting to relevant professional supports.

Host Homes. Opportunities for social and cultural engagement vary based on the Host Homes program. Some programs are geared toward 2SLGBTQ+ young people and have staff and hosts that are part of this community. A key component of the program is family reunification. As a young person stays in a program, they work with their case worker to see if reunifying with family is a safe option.

> *Analysis.* Host Homes programs do provide an opportunity for young people to develop social inclusion and community integration. In some programs, there is a recognition that placing young people with a member that reflects their own identity is important. Programs also work to connect young people with their families when appropriate.

Overall Summary. The Host Homes programs fits within some core elements of the HF4Y model. Host Homes programs offer youth-centered supports and promote positive youth development. Given the time-limited nature of most Host Homes programs, they are unable to offer services that may be required of young people with higher needs. Therefore, Host Homes programs are not fully aligned with the HF4Y model but do operate using several HF4Y principles.

QUESTION 2: HOW DO HOST HOMES PROGRAMS FIT WITHIN THE BROADER SYSTEM RESPONSE TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS?

In identifying how Host Homes programs fit within the broader youth homelessness system, findings from the literature review and consultations with the Host Homes Advisory Group were used.

The Host Homes Model as an Early Intervention

The Host Homes model is a type of early intervention that can be labelled as a housing-led support. The underlying goal of housing-led supports, such as the Host Homes program, is to provide an alternative to emergency shelters. Housing-led supports are important since emergency shelters for youth do not exist in every community, especially those that are smaller or located in rural areas. Even when a shelter is available, it is often located in downtown areas far away from a young person's community. Research has shown that when young people are forced to leave their communities and natural supports, their health and mental health worsens, and they face increased challenges and problems (Gaetz, 2014). Thus, Host Homes programs can fill an important service gap that can keep young people in their community.

Fit of the Host Homes Model within a Coordinated Access System

A coordinated access system is used in the housing and homelessness sector to streamline the process for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and support services. By sharing client information with other organizations, adopting uniform prioritization policies, and coordinating referral processes, all involved organizations can efficiently connect individuals with appropriate housing and supports (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2020). It moves from a "first come, first served" system to one focused on the needs of clients. Communities are required to develop prioritization methods, which commonly focus on frequent service use, level of need, and/or a combination of both factors and local priorities. To determine level of need, a system of triage and assessment is used. Triage is used to identify ways to help people at imminent risk of homelessness to stay housed (prevention) or to help people to connect with other services and informal and/or natural supports to avoid a shelter (shelter diversion). If prevention or diversion cannot happen, a more detailed assessment takes place that gathers more in-depth information related to service use

and level of need. From this assessment, a household is prioritized for housing and support.

As an early intervention, Host Homes programs could be situated as an intervention option during the triage phase. As Host Homes programs are meant for young people with low support needs, they could be presented as an option for these young people who are being triaged in the coordinated access system. As an intervention for young people who are not able to have their homelessness prevented or diverted from an emergency shelter, Host Homes could be offered to young people assessed as having lower support needs. If a prioritization list is based upon level of support need, this would mean communities would look to the lower ends of their lists. Regardless of if young people are offered Host Homes during the triage or prioritization phases, the decision to enter a Host Homes program should always be the informed choice of the young person.

In practice, a Host Homes provider in the working group stated that they offer Host Homes as a first option for young people who are on their community's coordinated access list. For clients who need more support, they offer more intensive housing, and for clients who could benefit from more independent living, they offer independent housing.

For Host Homes programs that are not part of the coordinated access system, the aforementioned partnerships are important to reach young people. These programs try to connect with schools to refer young people at risk of homelessness to the program.

Host Homes programs that act as short-term or respite housing alternatives, such as the Nightstop Program, may serve an important function within coordinated access systems. In these programs young people stay with a host provider for a time-limited stay, typically one night or two. These programs may be beneficial in the triage stage, as they can provide a space for young people to be diverted from the shelter system.

The Host Homes Model Requires Collaborations and Partnerships Outside of the Youth Homelessness System

The Host Homes model requires a collaborative approach to be successfully implemented within the youth homelessness system. A key partner for the successful implementation of an early intervention program is the education system. This includes the secondary school system, as well the post-secondary school system. A second key

partner is the child welfare sector. Foster parent applicants who are either uncomfortable with the foster system's screening process or unsuccessful in their application are sometimes interested in becoming host providers instead given the similarities in roles and responsibilities.

Other systems identified for early intervention include employment agencies and child and family services. These systems were thought of spaces where young people at-risk of homelessness could be identified.

The Host Homes Model Within Rural Contexts

In rural areas, Host Homes programs were important as there may not be any other form of emergency accommodation available. Alternatives to Host Homes programs included young people couch surfing, staying outside, or being provided transportation to the closest city with a shelter. Moving from one's community can pose several challenges and there are often limited transportation options available to return to one's community.

Dispersion of Host Homes Programs Across the System

Depending on the size of the community, one Host Homes program may not be able to handle the demand of being part of a coordinated access system. During our consultations with organizations providing Host Homes programs, it became clear that these programs were tied to specific organizations and not necessarily embedded within the broader homeless service system in their communities. In other words, Host Homes programs were not initiated or mandated by Community Entities. This provides a challenge, as one organization may not have the resources nor the capacity to offer a system-wide intervention. Therefore, advocacy may be required to further embed Host Homes programs within community responses to youth homelessness.

Host Homes Programs as One Component of a System Response

There was acknowledgment from participants in the Host Homes working group that Host Homes programs are only one component of the youth homelessness sector. Along with Host Homes programs, there must be other options for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. This includes transitional housing, supportive housing, and independent housing with varying level of supports.

QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS REQUIRED TO SCALE UP THE HOST HOMES PROGRAM ACROSS CANADA?

One of the last remaining components of the Host Homes developmental evaluation was the preparation of guidelines for Host Homes training and technical assistance (TTA). To do so, hour-long interviews were conducted with eight key informants. The informants were contacted due to their positions of direction or management of Host Homes programs, youth homelessness, systems planning, and/or TTA. The informants' programs were based in either Canada or the United States.

As part of the discussion of scaling Host Homes programs, the key informants identified multiple challenges that do not necessarily involve TTA but are nevertheless barriers to its scaling or national delivery. They are also important additions to the insights described in the *Host Homes Developmental Evaluation: Interim Report II*. The following sections will expand on the potential barriers to national TTA, discuss considerations for TTA development, and finally, offer suggestions for training of Host Homes provider households.

Barriers to National Host Homes TTA

Variation in Program Models

To set the context for discussions of TTA needs, the key informants were asked to discuss the support of communities in overcoming both the immediate and long-term barriers to successful Host Homes programs. What became apparent was that it was difficult for the key informants to discuss national Host Homes TTA because there currently exists so much variability in program models.

For example, one key informant was most familiar with a "stranger match" model of Host Homes, where: 1) the young person is not provided choice in the selection of their host provider, and 2) provider households tend to be strangers who volunteer rather than being identified from the family or natural supports of the young person. This key informant felt that this tends to result in problematic power dynamics between the host and young person due to differences in social position (e.g., class) and identity (e.g., race).

In another interview, a key informant described how the Host Homes program with which they were familiar was struggling with sustainability challenges due to many host

providers opting to adopt the youth they were hosting, thus reducing the stock of providers available to host new youth. These two examples represent the differences in the operation of programs all considered to be "Host Homes programs".

Based upon the above examples and the experiences of the other key informants, the elements of the Host Homes model most frequently identified as requiring consistency of definition were:

- Youth choice of host and the possibility to select from family and natural supports
- Policy delineations between Host Homes and related host programs like foster care
- Integration with other related youth homelessness services
- Policies regarding successful host outcomes, length of stays, and discharge from program
- Provision of supportive social services and case management to the young person being hosted
- Provision of supports for the households from which hosted youth originate

From the interviews conducted, it seemed clear that national scaling and TTA delivery would be impacted without first establishing the model's core elements and principles. This finding echoes the identified opportunity for Raising the Roof to support the development of a clear understanding of Host Homes programs, as discussed in the *Host Homes Developmental Evaluation: Interim Report II*.

Scaling Up Host Homes Programs

A few key informants spoke extensively on the challenges of scaling up Host Homes interventions. Scaling up can occur at the organization level, increasing capacity of a Host Homes operator, or it can occur at the systems level, implementing new Host Homes programs in more communities. For a program model as intricate as Host Homes, the informants advised that any scaling be paced and closely supported.

Programs must "land softly" in communities, taking into consideration the context of relationships, cultures, and social services that already exist. A national Host Homes framework, along with its TTA programming, must be able to blend essential components of the intervention and on-the-ground realities. Throughout the interviews, the key informants emphasized the need for balance between the themes of portability, adaptability, fidelity, and flexibility, where:

- *Portability:* Describes implementation of new Host Homes programs using a consistent core set of principles
- *Adaptability*: Describes the application of the core principles to the organization's community context
- *Fidelity*: Describes the extent to which the Host Homes program maintains the core principles over time
- *Flexibility*: Describes the ability of the Host Homes program and all those involved to be responsive to the unique, individual needs of its service users

One key informant offered the following analogy to illustrate the balance of these themes:

> *I'm a baker, so I do a lot of analogies that come from the kitchen. My favorite one that I've been able to use for a number of years is sugar cookies. Sugar cookies are actually just a dough. They have the exact same ingredients no matter how you look at it and how you want to bake it. The sugar cookie dough, though, is actually really cool because you can cut it different shapes, paint it in different colours, add sprinkles, add flavouring if you want to. So, it can look completely different, but when you take all the sprinkles and icing and flavouring out of it, everybody only has the exact same sugar cookie dough and recipe. I see the [scaling of interventions] very much like that... As long as we're all using the same recipe, then I think we will be able to hold true to what I believe is the right work, and what I believe are the core pieces to get young people out of homelessness and into adult self-sufficiency.*

Portability & Fidelity: Multiple informants described the development of a toolkit that could be shared with any organizations looking to implement Host Homes programs. The toolkit would comprise a set of core principles that could be adapted for each locale. Although toolkits for Host Homes operators have been developed, for example by Point Source Youth (2018) and Raising the Roof (Raising the Roof, 2018), the key informants involved in the interviews did not seem to suggest that there had yet been widescale adoption of any particular approach.

Notably, one key informant spoke to the intentional decision of their organization to *not* scale up their Host Homes program - "small by design". Recognizing the need to have a flexible funding stream, their team realized that they were better able to offer a program achieving the desired quality and fidelity while staying small, rather than attempting to provide services to a larger number of service users.

Adaptability & Flexibility: As part of the need to adapt a Host Homes toolkit to community context, the key informants provided a variety of suggestions for how to approach community relationship-building. A Host Homes operator should have strong relationships with municipal councils, youth, persons with lived experience, other service providers, and Indigenous community groups, among others. Environmental scans, or system mapping, are useful to gain awareness of these stakeholders, but cannot replace genuine rapport-building at a grassroots level. One informant encouraged service providers to question: "*What roles are being filled by Host Homes? Which are being replaced?*"

In essence, Host Homes programs should be shaped by and in consultation with their community. Finally, three key informants spoke to the value of proactively engaging community members who might oppose the program, describing how, "*naysayers might be some of our greatest sources of supports and champions*." To illustrate, they offered suggestions such as developing frequently-asked-question handouts for community members who are skeptical. The key informants held similar perspectives that community opposition comes from lack of awareness, misunderstanding, and unexamined values regarding topics like homelessness prevention.

Funding and Outcome Measures

Seven out of eight key informants highlighted funding models as posing major challenges to the implementation and sustainability of Host Homes programs. In particular, the objectives, outcome measures, and funding cycles of funding organizations were described as being incompatible with the on-the-ground needs of Host Homes programs. A capacity for innovation and adaptability were recognized to be essential qualities of organizations operating Host Homes programs, yet funder requirements pose constraints to program flexibility.

Funding constraints were identified as creating organizational risk aversion. Year-to-year funding cycles compromise robust program implementation, diverting service provider resources away from program design, data measurement, and community relationship-building, and towards repetitive funding competitions. Moreover, the key informants described "target/outcome drift": a situation where the objectives and application requirements of funders change over successive funding cycles. Such a practice forces Host Homes operators to adapt their model to suit the changing requirements, preventing refinement or consistent delivery of programming. Especially for an intervention model such as Host Homes, which requires considerable upfront

investment of time and resources, program managers struggle to convince funders to recognize the long-term positive outcomes in lieu of immediate short-term investment costs. It is more difficult to demonstrate the true value created by prevention programs as compared to crisis intervention programs.

Further, the key informants explained that it is difficult to communicate the needs of the young people they serve to funders. Consequently, the programs that must cut corners, maintaining their budgets by reducing investment in staff training, program comprehensiveness, or Host Homes provider supports, are at risk of damaging their community relationships and thus jeopardizing their long-term success. Overall, Host Homes operators stand to benefit from funding models that favor multi-year funding cycles, innovative program design, and flexible funding streams.

National Host Homes Training and Technical Assistance

> *So many people in social services have this mentality: create a role, and if a person doesn't fit, they don't fit. We can't be gate keepers. We need to hold the gates open.*

When it came to models of TTA, the key informants provided a broad range of suggestions for ways to structure content and support delivery. The majority of key informants described how the main components of a Host Homes training program could be delivered in a core modular toolkit where content is most useful when it is concrete and can be applied in a "plug-and-play" fashion. However, what seemed essential was that training organizations do not rely solely on a toolkit, and include the development of a layered, systems approach to TTA, including initial readiness assessments, recorded training webinars, workshops, and ongoing supports. One key informant identified the story-telling model as an effective means of structuring workshops, while another suggested basing trainings on the Train-the-Trainer model.

The following sections will further explore suggestions related to training content, systems approach, ongoing technical assistance, and training refresh.

Training Content

Due to the format of the interviews and variability of program models, there were less discussions focused on the actual content to be included in Host Homes training.

However, some common recommendations for the types of knowledge to be shared in training were:

- Understanding of HF4Y principles and the right to housing paradigm

- Awareness of the impacts of adultism, racism, power, and privilege

- Understanding of the needs of LGBTQ2S+ youth

Some providers identified knowledge of adultism as being crucial for a Host Homes program. Adultism, a term that was more commonly used by key informants from the United States, refers to the power dynamics that arise from the age differences between adults and young people. Host Homes operators should be aware of the ways that adults might constrain youth in their rights to self-definition and self-determination.

On the other hand, some common recommendations for the types of skills to be developed through training were:

- Co-tenancy agreements and conflict mediation

- Family social work practice

- Motivational interviewing

- Non-violent crisis intervention

- Training elements that are shared by foster care programs

One interview key informant summarized their philosophy of training by stating: "*Training isn't just about specific activities but understanding the why.*"

Systems Approach

> *This isn't about one person doing Host Homes, or assigning more responsibility to one person, it's about creating more relationships. it's about making sure that everybody at the organization is able to pitch Host Homes, all the way down to the volunteer level.*

Organizations delivering training should aim to "nestle a service within a space;" they are encouraged to approach national training initiatives through a systems lens. Many key informants described the necessity of using a readiness or needs assessment to understand community context. An organization delivering training should spend time with a target community prior to training to understand who they are, what roles are held, and what programs are available. TTA should be designed to span the operating organization, the immediate community, and any associated programs.

As for the operating organization, key informants spoke to the need to prepare the entire organization, from frontline to management. However, capacity-building should not be constrained to just the operating agency; a key informant provided the example of how they also conducted dedicated training with the local child intervention services regarding the importance of Host Homes programs. By doing so, they shifted Host Homes from being an organizational response to a systems response. Finally, another informant explained how they built a relationship with the funder of the local Host Homes operator in order to increase the funder's awareness of the organizational requirements of Host Homes programs.

Ongoing Technical Assistance

All the key informants identified the need for ongoing support to be a component of TTA. Speaking of a similar youth housing intervention, one informant described how they used to conduct two-day workshops when delivering a program toolkit, doing no preparatory relationship-building in the lead-up to the workshop and offering no follow-up supports. In their words:

> *It didn't feel kind, and could not build any momentum... Two days isn't enough time to motivate, build understanding, and implement.*

The key informants spoke to the responsibility of a national training provider to maintain open lines of communication, continuously push useful content, and to organize dedicated, ongoing coaching. Host Homes operators need to have someone available for case consultations and for problem solving. Such supports can be complemented by an active community of practice (CoP) which encourages the sharing of innovations. Training providers are most effective when they recognize, respect, and work with differences.

Staff Retainment and Training Refresh

The issue of staff turnover was highlighted during interviews as a challenge to training and overall organizational integrity. With increased staff turnover, the need for training also increases. Beyond the aforementioned issues with funding, the key informants struggled to suggest other alternatives to addressing staff turnover. The primary solution offered for this problem was the fostering of the organization as part of the community, in extension fostering a sense of fulfillment among staff. Secondly, if organizations are unable to improve the pay and benefits offered to employees, organizations might explore methods of increasing the opportunities for staff to grow in their work.

In terms of training refreshers, the key informants cited potential timelines such as every two to three months, every six months, and once a year. It may be useful for the training organization to coach service providers on how to integrate regular training practice into pre-existing staff meetings. However, during the interviews it became apparent that training refresh was a much more nuanced topic.

Organizations are recommended to implement some form of performance measurement metrics in order to isolate which aspects of the Host Homes program model and staff skills are maintained, and which are in need of incremental improvement. Training refresh should include not only the review of practical skills, but "*work around healing*": one key informant advised that organization staff, as a team, must engage in reflection on equity and justice. By doing so, teams can address oppressive practices and respond to compassion fatigue.

Host Homes Provider Training

Finally, the key informants were asked what they thought the essential elements of training for Host Homes provider households might be. The key informants proposed a wide range of possibilities, and it was not clear during interviews how best to prioritize content. These suggestions were similar to those for staff training content, and included topics such as:

- Awareness of local social services

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) model

- Equity and diversity training

- Family and natural supports models

- First aid training

- Harm reduction principles

- Housing First for Youth principles

- Non-violent crisis intervention

- Life skills

- Trauma-informed practice

A few key informants commented on the importance of not overwhelming Host Homes providers, while others spoke to the need for clear role boundaries between the providers and the case managers for the hosted youth.

One key informant explained that a preferable approach might be to rely on screening of the hosts to inform training content, saying: "*It's values-based work, so what are the values? Do the providers' values align to the values of the program, i.e., equity and inclusion?*"

By doing so, the focus shifts from achieving lists of competencies to the deeper work of unlearning conditioning, prejudices, and biases. Ultimately, the objective is to minimize the power differentials between young people and their hosts.

4. Conclusions

The findings from this final report provide important considerations as to how the Host Homes model can be scaled up across Canada. First, the Host Homes model can be part of the array of housing options presented to young people in a HF4Y program and can offer services that align with HF4Y case management. That being said, Host Homes programs do not fully align with the HF4Y principles as they often provide time-limited housing and support. Providing choice in the selection of a Host Homes and in the supports that are received is imperative if Host Homes programs want to align their services with the HF4Y model. As more communities align their systems within a Housing First philosophy, it will be important for Host Homes programs to demonstrate how they align with and how they are separate from HF4Y programs.

Second, it will be important to situate how Host Homes programs can fit within the broader youth homelessness system. In particular, Host Homes programs should demonstrate the impact they can have on their community's coordinated access system as an early intervention program. There are two different places Host Homes programs can fit: 1) During triage as an alternative to emergency shelters; and 2) During prioritization as a housing option for young people who are defined as having low support needs. As always, young people should be given the choice of entering a Host Homes program as it may not fit their needs. Host Homes programs should also strengthen their partnerships within their communities, both within the homelessness system and outside the homelessness system.

Third, through the responses, stories, and guidance offered during the interviews focused on training and technical assistance, the key informants shared their perspectives on the steps necessary to scale Host Homes programs as a national intervention for youth homelessness. Although current variability in model definition does not seem to allow for scaling of programming and TTA, the interviews provide a guide for the next steps necessary to move towards readiness.

Readiness to nationally scale Host Homes TTA would entail work towards:

- **Definition of Host Homes program model**. Identification and consistency of the core elements, principles, and polices comprising a Host Homes program.

- **Preparation for Host Homes scaling.** Organizing for Host Homes interventions to have the qualities of portability, adaptability, flexibility, and fidelity; each Host Homes program to be grounded in community.

- **Addressing funding barriers**. Building relationships and mobilizing knowledge towards shifts in funding models that favor multi-year funding cycles, innovative program design, and flexible funding streams.

- **Design of a layered, systems approach to training.** In the same way that the Host Homes model must be adaptive to community context, TTA must be adaptive to organizational context; training should be delivered as layered content, holistically reaching across all levels of and around an organization.

- **Capacity for ongoing technical assistance**. TTA is to be delivered in an ongoing relationship with Host Homes operators, ensuring that organization, staff, or Host Homes providers do not feel abandoned after the initial implementation.

- **Thoughtful Host Homes provider training**. The same consideration taken for organizational training should be devoted to training and supporting the Host Homes providers.