

EVALUATION OF THE ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF STREET-INVOLVED AND HOMELESS YOUTH IN HAMILTON PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an evaluation of the three year project led by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative and based on the 27 recommendations in the Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton report.

BACKGROUND

In 2004, managers from the street youth serving agencies in Hamilton partnered with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to work on a needs assessment for street-involved youth in the community. Released in 2005, the Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton report was met with community support and a substantial resource commitment from the government of Canada. Over the next three years, the Street Youth Planning Collaborative worked with the SPRC to implement the 27 recommendations outlined in the report.

PROJECT'S COMMITTEE SYSTEM

The organizational structure of the project was a three-pronged committee system that ensured the representation of youth, front-line workers and management. The three committees are:

- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) is a group of five directors from Hamilton organizations who are mandated to work directly with homeless youth.
- The Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) is the frontline arm of the SYPC. The SIYN boasts a membership of 35 individuals from 20 community agencies.
- The Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC) is the youth engagement arm of the SYPC. Five currently or formerly homeless youth meet once per month to provide advice and direction to the SPRC support staff around youth friendliness and the lived experience of homelessness.

EVALUATIVE METHODS

- Analysis of the progress made on the 27 recommendations in the Addressing the Needs report
- Profiles of the ten pilot projects initiated during the project
- Analysis of data from the Notre Dame House shelter and adult shelter usage by youth
- Service system mapping of the service continuum available to street-involved youth in Hamilton
- Analysis of community service system gaps
- A focus group and key informant interviews with members of the SYPC, the SIYN and the SYIC and the project coordinator.



KEY FINDINGS

The evaluative process revealed the following key findings:

- The project successfully fulfilled 22 out of 27 recommendations.
- The recommendations that showed less progress had three characteristics: a lack of resources, a reliance on other systems or an attempt to address broader structures.
- The project successfully initiated ten pilot projects to address needs that were outlined in the recommendations.
- Key indicators of youth street-involvement and homelessness identify a continued need for services, tracking systems and funding sources.
- The SYIC, the SIYN and the SYPC were an effective means of engaging youth, front-line workers and management in the project but coordination of the three groups could be enhanced.
- The project's collaborative model was an effective means for addressing youth street-involvement in Hamilton.
- The project has had a significant impact on Hamilton's response to youth street-involvement.

NEXT STEPS

Four next steps emerged from the evaluative process:

- Build increased collaboration between the SYIC, the SIYN and the SYPC.
- Continue to build a community profile both locally and outside the community.
- Continue to engage in strategic planning around street-involved youth issues in Hamilton.
- Continue to seek out community development support and resources for street-involved youth service system planning.



Funding for this project provided by the Government of Canada

