

**The Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless
Youth in Hamilton Project**

Progress Report – The First Year and a Half

November 2007

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Celebrating more than 40 Years
of social development in Hamilton

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Government of Canada for providing the three years of funding that have made this project a possibility.

We would also like to thank the members of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative for your dedication to partnership and collaboration to better address the needs of youth in Hamilton. The members of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative are Good Shepherd Centres Youth Services, Wesley Urban Ministries, Living Rock Ministries, Alternatives for Youth, St. Martin's Manor, and Health Initiatives for Youth.

As well, the front-line staff of the Street Involved Youth Network continue to work every day to find better living situations with vulnerable youth in our community. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Finally, to the youth who have been involved in this project's first few years, a special thank you is in order. These are youth who have given some of their time to try and help other young people who are homeless or at risk. This time is a remarkable gift and has made this project much stronger as a result.



Canada 

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide community members and service agencies with a progress update on the implementation of the *Addressing the Needs of Street Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* report. This report was produced by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (formerly the Street Involved Youth Managers) in partnership with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton in 2005 with the help of a grant from the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre. That report consisted of reviewing best practices across Canada, examining service usage of street involved youth serving agencies, undertaking a service system mapping exercise, and extensive consultation with street involved and homeless youth. The report made 27 recommendations to a range of community and government stakeholders that would better equip Hamilton to address, prevent, and reduce street-involvement among youth.

This report formed the basis of a three year project initiative, once again led by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) in partnership with the SPRC, to implement the recommendations in the report. The Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre provided the base funding for the three year initiative. As the initiative began in June 2006, we are now nearly one-half of the way through the implementation phase of the project.

As we near this milestone, the Managers SYPC suggested that we convene the community stakeholders to provide an update on activities and progress. This Progress Report is the background document for that update.

This Progress Report includes several distinct kinds of information. In order to provide context for the project, the first two sections map out community assets and youth homelessness indicators.

- The first section is an updated picture of the Community Asset Analysis.
- The second section reviews a number of service usage indicators for street involved youth.
- The third section gives an update of each recommendation from the *Addressing the Needs* report.
- The fourth section provides qualitative feedback from three groups: the Street Youth Planning Collaborative, the frontline perspective of the Street Involved Youth Network, and the Street Involvement Committee – youth who have been homeless or street involved.
- The final section of the report provides some analysis and discussion around the key findings and themes of this Progress Report.

2.0 AN UPDATE OF THE COMMUNITY ASSET ANALYSIS

The Street Youth Planning Collaborative is committed to ensuring a continuum of support services for homeless youth. This Street-Involved and Homeless Youth Service Spectrum Map offers an opportunity to understand this continuum of services in two ways: which areas of the continuum have adequate services and who is providing the services. This reflects the services offered by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative agencies and is, therefore, not exhaustive.

2.1 Street-Involved And Homeless Youth Service Spectrum Map

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	DESCRIPTION
STREET OUTREACH		
Community Services, City of Hamilton and Wesley Urban Ministries	1 FTE Youth Outreach Worker, Community Mental Health Promotion Program	Case management and street outreach to youth in Hamilton.
Wesley Urban Ministries	Youth Opportunity Strategy – Youth Outreach Workers	4.5 FTE youth outreach workers providing referral information in three high-needs neighbourhoods
Good Shepherd Youth Services	Youth Homelessness Prevention Worker	.75 FTE youth outreach worker connecting with youth in the first 24-48 hours at a shelter to work on moving them into appropriate housing
EMERGENCY SHELTER		
Good Shepherd Centres	Notre Dame House	20 bed shelter for co-ed youth 16-21
HOT MEAL PROGRAMS		
Living Rock Ministries	It's a New Day Breakfast Program	Hot breakfast, with access to staff and resources. Served Monday to Friday 8:30 -
Good Shepherd Centres	Brunch Drop-In	Hot brunch served Saturday and Sunday 11:30 a.m.
Good Shepherd Centres	Lunch Drop-In	Hot lunch served Monday to Friday 11:30 a.m.
Good Shepherd Centres	Dinner Drop-In	Hot dinner served at Monday to Friday 4:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 4:30 p.m.
Living Rock Ministries	Oasis Evening Program	Hot meal Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
FOOD BANKS		
Living Rock Ministries	Under Ground Rock Shop	Canned good, toiletries, baby supplies open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	DESCRIPTION
OPEN ACCESS PROGRAMMING		
Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton	Street-Involved Youth Drop In	For youth 14-24, open Monday 12:00 – 8:00 p.m. with access to community partners, laundry and shower facilities.
Living Rock Ministries	Oasis Evening Program	Hot meal and recreation activities Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday
Living Rock Ministries	Weekend Open-Access Programming	Saturday and Sunday 12:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Good Shepherd	Notre Dame Drop In	Monday – Friday 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. access to laundry and staff support
PRIMARY HEALTH SERVICES		
Good Shepherd	Notre Dame House – Nurse Practitioner	
SERVICES FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENS		
Living Rock	Wellness Works	Basic needs (diapers, formula and food vouchers), referrals, resources and care for pregnant and parenting youth 13-25 years old
Catholic Family Services	St. Martin's Manor	Residential, open-access, outreach and educational programming for pregnant and parenting youth (under 21 years old)
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES		
Good Shepherd Centres	Mental Health Community Liaison Nurse	One nurse - referrals, assessments, community development around mental health
SUBSTANCE USE AND MISUSE SERVICES		
Alternatives for Youth	Street-Involved and Homeless Youth Support	2 FTE support people – education, counseling, group work, outreach to services
EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION SUPPORTS		
Living Rock Ministries	Tri-Rock Program	Housing, life skills training, employment support, community work placement
Good Shepherd Centres	Notre Dame House School	Section 20 school with two teachers
Living Rock Ministries	Educational Support	Partnership with Adult Basic Education Association to provide assessments and supports at the Breakfast Program
HOUSING HELP SERVICES		
Community Adolescent Network of Hamilton	Adolescent Community Care Program	1 FTE (with 1 more to return in the late winter) - help finding and securing housing, help with furniture
Living Rock Ministries	Housing Coach	Help finding and securing housing
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING		
Good Shepherd Centres	Brennan House	15 bed residence for co-ed youth 16-21
Wesley Urban Ministries	Wesley Youth Housing	19 room co-ed program. First stage is more supported, second stage more independent.
Good Shepherd Centres	Good Shepherd Youth Housing	12 beds for pregnant or parenting teens (NOT YET OPEN)

2.2 Gaps Analysis

The autumn 2006 Street Involved and Homeless Youth Service Spectrum Mapping Report indicated a number of gaps in the community services for youth in Hamilton. The following chart names those identified gaps, provides an update on the gap and identifies new gaps. A section on Emerging Risks follows - this outlines programs that are at risk of losing funding in the near future.

Gaps Identified In The Fall 2006 Report:	Fall 2007 Update On The Gaps:
<p>☞ Street Outreach</p>	<p>We have substantially increased the outreach capacity in our community. Although the Youth Opportunities Strategy and Youth Homelessness Prevention worker projects are new and it may take time to see the outcomes of these projects.</p>
<p>☞ Emergency shelter for young women</p>	<p>We continue to monitor the emergency shelter for young women gap. No new resources exist.</p>
<p>☞ Mental health services</p>	<p>The visiting psychiatrist at Good Shepherd provides much needed mental health support and will serve as a model for a Year 2 Clinical Support Project</p>
<p>☞ Substance use and misuse services</p>	<p>We continue to have one service for substance use and misuse services dedicated to young people. Year 2 begins a Peer Support project in this realm.</p>
<p>☞ Housing ‘aftercare’</p>	<p>Housing aftercare has been named as an essential need in our community. Specific attention will be devoted to this in Year 2.</p>
<p>New Gaps Identified In Fall 2007:</p>	
<p>☞</p>	<p>Open Access Programming - The Wesley Transitional Youth program closed its doors in May 2007. The Living Rock Ministries and Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton have recently increased their open-access programming to help fulfill this need. As open-access programming is an opportunity to keep young people safe and is often the first point of relationship building, this has been continually identified as a serious gap.</p>
<p>☞</p>	<p>Primary Health Care for Youth – Living Rock Ministries recently lost its on-site Nurse Practitioner. Additionally, the Teen Health Clinic run out of the North Hamilton Community Health Centre recently closed its doors.</p>

Potential Gaps/Services at Risk In Fall 2007	
☞	It's a New Day Breakfast Program (is currently funded until December 31 st 2007 by the United Way)
☞	Housing Support Worker (Is funded by SCPI – the Living Rock has been encouraged to submit an application for extension dollars)
☞	The Street-Involved Youth Drop In at Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton is currently not funded and will require financial resources to continue to provide service.

3.0 REVIEW OF KEY INDICATORS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

This section of the evaluation will examine some of the indicators of service usage for street involved youth in Hamilton. The Addressing the Needs report included service usage data from Living Rock, Notre Dame, Transitional Youth Drop In, the Wesley Youth Shelter, and Brennan House. Since that report, the Wesley Youth shelter and Transitional Youth Drop In are not providing service and so no updated data is included.

However, updated information for Living Rock and Notre Dame is available and is included here. In addition, there is new information included from the adult emergency shelter system about youth (under 21) who are using that system. In most cases, there has not been a great deal of change over the past two years, but this information should contribute to the community's ability to monitor longer term changes in street involvement in Hamilton.

3.1 Living Rock Intake Data

The following table (Table 1) provides updated information from the Living Rock Intake database. Living Rock performs an intake when a youth first presents to the service. The totals in the first column are an average of the 5 year period 2000-2005, as the data was not separable into individual years.

Table 1: Summary of Data, Living Rock Ministries, 2000-2006		
	2000-2005	2006
Number of different youth	287	414
Male	54%	47%
Female	46%	53%
Under 16 yrs old ¹	2%	6%
16-21	64%	54%
22-25+	36%	37%
Paying rent with family/friends ²	26%	22%
Paying rent, living alone	17%	24%
Living with family/friends, no rent	24%	20%
Living in shelters	20%	22%
Living on the streets	N/A	2%
<i>Source: Living Rock Database, 2007. Author's Calculations.</i>		

There are several trends worth noting in this table. The increase in number of youth accessing Living Rock from 287 to 414 requires some explanation. The number of 287 is an average of the prior five year period. We were unable to get data for individual

¹ In approximately 3% of the cases, the age was not recorded.

² Of the 414 youth in 2006, housing data was available for 197 of them.

years. It is possible that there has been a steady rise over the five year period, rather than a drastic jump to 414. The community will need to continue to monitor this trend.

The second noteworthy trend is that the number of females outnumbered the males in the intakes. This is a reversal of the trend from 2000-2005. The third trend is the increase in the number of people under 16 who came to Living Rock. The 6% presented in the table above represents 25 youth who are under 16. Not included in the table above, but an additional finding was that three female youth reported living in a foster family. These three young women were aged 14, 14, and 16. The final finding is that 2% (3 total) of the youth accessing this service reported living on the streets at the time of intake. The number of youth living on the streets was unavailable from 2000-2005.

3.2 Notre Dame Shelter Usage

Notre Dame provides a range of drop in meals and services for youth, as well as serving as the city's only youth emergency shelter. Table 2 provides information from the past several years.

Table 2: Summary of Emergency Shelter Use, Notre Dame			
Indicator	2004 ³	2005	2006
Number of different youth staying overnight	N/A	284	281
Male	N/A	178	N/A
Female	N/A	106	N/A
Average Length of Stay	N/A	20 days	16 days
Male	N/A	22.5	16
Female	N/A	15	15
Total Overnights by Year (not different youth)	6,801	5,615	5,957
Total Drop-Ins by Year (not different youth)	N/A	N/A	12,519

Source: Good Shepherd Centres Youth Services, City of Hamilton HIFIS data, Author's Calculations.

The data in Table 2 shows a no real change in the number of youth who were staying overnight from 2005 to 2006. There was also a notable decline in the length of stay for male youth, from approximately 3 weeks to 2 weeks. The number of total drop-ins was available for the first time this year, and is presented as a baseline for further monitoring.

3.3 Adult Shelter Usage by Youth

Youth in need of emergency shelter can also stay at some of Hamilton's emergency shelters for adults. Data gathered by the Hamilton Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) showed that 5% of emergency shelter users were aged 13-17, and 9%

³ 2004 statistics are based on a fiscal year, April 1, 2004 – March 31, 2005. 2005 and 2006 statistics are based on calendar years.

of emergency shelter users were aged 18-21. Given that in 2006 there were a total of 3,950 different shelter users, this means that 198 youth aged 13-17 and 346 youth aged 18-21 used emergency shelters. These numbers do not include Violence Against Women shelters. It is important to note that youth, as part of families accessing the family shelter, may be part of this data.

As HIFIS data becomes more available, it will be able to show this information by gender, as well as tell us how many of these youth are using the adult system exclusively or how many are also using youth services.

3.4 Key Findings – Indicators

- The information that is available about street involved and homeless youth is improving, but limited. The community will have to continue to monitor both Living Rock, Notre Dame, and adult shelter service usage to see emerging trends.
- The decline in numbers served at Notre Dame is substantial and should be monitored to determine if it is a one-time drop, or an emerging trend.
- The rise in number of people under 16 accessing the Living Rock is a concern.
- As resources become available, the community needs to identify consistent methods for counting and measuring youth homelessness. Recommendation #26 in the *Addressing the Needs* report called for the City of Hamilton to work with the Street Youth Planning Collaborative in order to better measure and track the demographics of street involved youth. This recommendation has been postponed until the transitional housing is open, but action to develop this data system should be pursued in the Winter 2008.

4.0 PROGRESS ON COMMUNITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The report, *Addressing the Needs of Street Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* (October 2005), contained 27 recommendations in 11 different theme areas. Three years of funding were obtained from the Government of Canada to support the implementation of these recommendations. A detailed workplan to guide the implementation was also developed which designated the time frame for each recommendation, and thus, some recommendations have not yet been started. The following section gives detailed information on the status of each recommendation. The section concludes with key findings about the implementation of recommendations.

Recommendations

1. *It is recommended that a working group made up of the Street-Involved Youth Managers (SIYM), Family Services of Hamilton, Catholic Family Services of Hamilton, the Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Children's Aid Society examine child welfare policy and its impacts on street-involvement in youth. Additionally, this group could have the capacity to identify strategies for preventing street-involvement including primary prevention with supports early on for parents to limit the incidence of family conflict and abuse. Finally, the Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Children's Aid Society might have creative responses to early intervention with youth who have runaway that could be shared with the community.*

PROGRESS:

- An initial backgrounder (Street Involved Youth and Children's Aid Society) has been prepared.
 - Initial meeting of Crown Ward Unit and Front Line Supervisors from CAS met as a part of the training for the Couch Project, and were very supportive of this recommendation.
 - First meeting of working group expected in early 2008
2. *The school boards, hospitals, health clinics, recreation centres and other large institutions require tools to enable their staff to recognize and intervene with at-risk youth, to prevent street-involvement and homelessness. It is recommended that the Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) develop an "at-risk checklist" with options for follow-through and provide it to the appropriate organizations and institutions.*

PROGRESS:

- This piece of the project was really an effort to increase the knowledge and understanding of a variety of stakeholders who do not work directly with homeless youth but who come in contact with young people at risk of homelessness. Three approaches were developed:
 - The "How Can I Help Youth At Risk of Homelessness?" Posters. Over 700 have been distributed. A preliminary evaluation found that the posters were useful and user-friendly.
 - The "Youth At Risk of Homelessness: Understanding the Issues" Training Sessions. Seven training sessions have been completed with over 200 people trained. Evaluations have been resoundingly positive.

- “The Couch Project” – Social Marketing Campaign. The Public Service Announcement is being shown on CHCH TV and Cable 14. It is being aired on CFMU and C101.5. Print ads appeared in The Hamilton Spectator. The launch of the campaign was well covered by television, radio and print media. An excellent partnership has been formed with The Hamilton Spectator.
3. *Research, explore and develop strategies to prevent family breakdown due to: sexual orientation issues, the struggles faced by newcomer families, justice issues and addictions, particularly for families with youth who are 16-19 years old. The Rainbow Youth Drop-In, Settlement and Integration Service Organization, the John Howard Society and the various addiction treatment services do this work with families and would benefit from continuing and building on this work in their programming.*

PROGRESS:

- This research is being started by focusing on newcomer families through a research partnership with St. Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Centre. The research is currently underway and is focusing on gathering information from different ethnocultural groups about street-involvement among youth in these communities. Final report expected February 2008.
4. *That the SIYN continue meeting on a regular basis to discuss service provision issues for street-involved youth.*

PROGRESS:

- Street involved youth network continuing to meet to discuss service provision.
5. *Street-involved youth do not have open access services available twenty-four hours a day. It is recommended that the community identify resources to guarantee that youth have an open-access program open to them at all times of the day.*

PROGRESS:

- February 2007: Open Access Programming for Weekend has begun at Living Rock Ministries to enable weekend open access throughout the three year grant period.
 - May 2007: Health Initiatives for Youth was provided with some capital funding to enable them to open on Monday evenings – a current gap in the Open Access hours in the community.
 - May 2007: Transitional Youth Drop In closed.
6. *The community requires the dissemination of current effective program models and the development of further investigation of effective service design and provision for street-involved youth, including an examination of work happening in other municipalities. It is recommended that the SPRC work with the SIYM to identify resources to carry out this research.*

PROGRESS:

- Project manager and several other community members attended the first conference in St John's Newfoundland where they shared progress in Hamilton, and brought back learnings from services in other communities across Canada.
- Through the development of the Transitional Housing units, there has been dialogue and sharing of best practice models with Peele Youth Village and Eva's Phoenix in Toronto.

7. *It is recommended that the SIYM explore models of an early intervention team to respond within 24 to 48 hours when youth first leave home.*

PROGRESS:

- The SPRC and the SYPC contracted consultants to engage the Hamilton community and develop a model for early intervention work. The best model was described as outreach with a housing first mandate. The Good Shepherd Youth Services has agreed to take the lead on this project. The early intervention worker has been hired and will focus in street involved youth agencies, adult shelters, and one high-needs high school.

8. *It is recommended that the Children's Service System (CSS) committee (with research and support) identify, develop and implement effective treatment models that are specific to meet the unique needs of street-involved youth (including concurrent disorders and living in a culture of use). Additionally, it is recommended that this group advocate for funding envelopes targeted for youth mental health or substance use to identify a percentage of the allocation for street-involved youth to be delivered on-site for street-involved youth. Where the resources already exist in the community, these should be built on; when the group finds areas where no resources or mechanisms for this work exist, the group should identify ways to make this happen.*

PROGRESS:

- Project manager has presented to Children's Service System committee. The committee is working with the Managers to map mental health services and gaps for street involved youth in Hamilton.

9. *It is recommended that services for street-involved youth build the capacity in their staff to address the unique and complex needs of the population, particularly around mental health issues and substance use and misuse issues. This requires several steps including:*
 - a. *Resources for hiring highly trained front-line workers.*
 - b. *Resources for professional development of the front-line workers*
 - c. *Clinical support for front-line workers.*

PROGRESS:

- The McMaster Children's Hospital Child and Youth Mental Health Outreach Team was selected to develop training. Will take the form of four ½ day training workshops, which will be converted to training manuals/CD-ROM's. A Steering Committee has been formed to oversee this work, and a training needs survey was developed and distributed to

front line staff. Sixty two surveys were returned and will serve as the basis for the development of the curriculum. Training is expected to begin in early winter 2008.

- Clinical support (additional consulting psychiatrist time) is expected to begin Winter 2008.

10. *The Hamilton community has an existing network that works on addictions issues in the community. The Hamilton Addictions Services Coalition (HASC) has the mandate to do system planning for our community. In this capacity it is recommended that they work to address some of the gaps in Hamilton's response to street-involved youth substance use and misuse including:*

- a. Advocating for the funding support necessary to develop services that are appropriate and reflect best practices for street-involved youth affected by substance use.*
- b. Increased accessibility to a continuum of substance use treatment services appropriate for their needs including – education, community treatment, day/evening treatment, withdrawal management, residential – all built on a harm reduction philosophy.*
- c. Increased understanding and community capacity to provide integrated treatment for street-involved youth with concurrent mental health and substance use concerns.*

PROGRESS:

- Project manager presented to HASC in November 2006. HASC is working on service system mapping of addiction services for street involved youth.

11. *Consideration of the use of peer support/educator programs as part of a harm reduction strategy that may address the culture of use.*

PROGRESS:

- Action to proceed in year 2 of project.

12. *It is recommended that the community expand and ensure adequate and consistent funding of pre-employment programs to ensure continuity and availability.*

PROGRESS:

- Funding for the Tri-Rock program has been secured for the next year. SIHYM will review as necessary.

13. *It is recommended that issues around employment and education, as they pertain to street-involved youth, be brought to the Skills and Training Flagship through the City of Hamilton to ensure a stronger profile and attention are afforded to issues faced by street-involved youth.*

PROGRESS:

- Project manager has presented to the Skills Development Flagship. They agreed to incorporate street involved and homeless youth issues into the work they are undertaking around at-risk youth and employment and will follow up with other opportunities.

- Summer 2007: The Skills Development Flagship has decided to focus on at-risk youth and are presently refining their strategies to begin implementation over the next quarter.
- Year 2, Quarter 1: Amity Goodwill has been selected as the agency that will deliver employment services to at-risk youth. They are planning to open a drop-in service that will allow youth to meet a variety of needs while encouraging employment.

14. *Build on and continue existing efforts to be explicit and open in stating (with defined follow through) that racism, homophobia, sexism and ableism will not be tolerated in services for street-involved youth.*

PROGRESS:

- With the intention to develop a poster campaign targeted to send consistent messages about anti-racism and anti-oppression through all youth serving agencies, a steering committee of stakeholders was struck. The Community Centre for Media Arts was hired. The Steering Committee has approved the key concepts, and youth have been interviewed in order to incorporate their real experiences into the social marketing campaign. We expect to launch this in the next quarter.

15. *The SIYM and the SIYN should develop outreach strategies, including getting to know services in Hamilton that serve marginalized groups (at a minimum, this would include, the AIDS Network, Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO), the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre) to understand issues and develop strategies around meeting the needs of diverse youth. A number of initiatives could be addressed such as including staff and volunteers from cultural communities, posters welcoming diversity, rainbow stickers near main access points indicating safe spaces for LGBTQ youth.*

PROGRESS:

- The SIYN has had presentations by the Aids Network, SISO, Aboriginal community, the Well (LGBTQ), and Rainbow Youth Network. Presentations by the remaining groups are intended to occur over the next year.
- There has been an interest expressed in bringing SOS – a Toronto organization who helps youth who are involved in the sex trade to the Network.

16. *An outreach strategy, in conjunction with SISO, should be developed by the SIYN for understanding and connecting with the different cultural communities of Hamilton*

PROGRESS:

- Action on this recommendation will coincide with the research of recommendation #17.

17. *More research is needed on the needs of street-involved youth from cultural communities.*

PROGRESS:

- Fall 2007. A research plan was developed and a partnership agreement formed with St. Joseph's Immigrant Women's Centre to carry out the research. St. Joseph's has a complement of community-based researchers from newcomer communities. The research questions have been refined, a Steering Committee formed, and the research is expected to conclude in February 2008.

18. *That the SIYN agencies work with a variety of services that work with diverse youth (including but not limited to, the AIDS Network, SISO, the Afro- Canadian Caribbean Association, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre) to create spaces that bring together youth based on culture (for example, substance use support group for gay youth, open-access programming for Native youth).*

PROGRESS:

- There has been significant discussion about this recommendation. There are limited resources to implement this so the resources will be used by the Living Rock to work with an Aboriginal agency in Hamilton to provide Aboriginal specific programming options at Living Rock.

19. *That the community work to increase the range of transitional housing options for street-involved youth who require a variety of housing options. This range should be creative, flexible and offer a range of levels of support and structure. There are a number of community stakeholders who need to be involved including the City of Hamilton, the SIYM and the SIYN.*

- a. *Research on effective models of transitional housing from other communities is needed to inform the above efforts.*

PROGRESS:

- Fall 2006: Capital funding for two transitional housing projects secured: one for street involved youth, and one for pregnant/parenting teens. Funding through SCPI.
- Winter 2007: One year of funding obtained from the United Way for 2 transitional housing staff. Construction is underway.
- October 2007: Two youth live in transitional housing, applications and referrals are being processed.

20. *That the SIYM explore effective models of peer counseling, given its complex nature. The integration of peer support in street involved youth services will engage youth who like to work with young people and will help to alleviate some of the responsibility front line workers feel in addressing the emotional needs of all the youth who access those services. This might look like a program modeled on other mentorship programs for children – specifically for street involved youth.*

PROGRESS:

21. Action to proceed in year 3.

22. *That the SIYN work to identify models for engaging youth appropriately in decision-making.*

PROGRESS:

- The Youth Advisory Committee took time to get up and running. Now named the Street Youth Involvement Committee, 4-6 youth meet once per month to provide advice and guidance to the project director. One of the youth from SYIC sits on most steering committees for the project. They have also carried out a public survey to determine what questions the public may have about youth homelessness. The SYIC have been involved in the Launch of the Couch Project, an All-Candidate's Meeting on Poverty issues, and a Training Session for the At-Risk checklist. They have recently taken a trip to Toronto to investigate innovative, youth-centred agencies.
- In Fall 2006 the Project Director assisted in the holding of Listen Up! Hamilton Youth Speak Out – a community forum attended by over 100 people (over 60 of whom were youth) about strategies for engaging marginalized youth.

23. *That street-involved youth agencies continue to build on and expand their existing work with youth involvement initiatives and should publicize these opportunities widely.*

PROGRESS:

- Spring/Summer 2007: The Street Involved and Homeless Youth Managers were successful in their application to administer the recent initiative of the Provincial Government called the Youth Opportunity Strategy. Hamilton received 4.6 FTE outreach workers to assist at-risk youth to link to existing community services. The outreach workers are currently deployed to 3 high needs neighbourhoods in Hamilton.
- Spring/Summer 2007: The Street Involved and Homeless Youth Managers and Project Director were involved with a submission from Hamilton to the Building Resilient Communities by Engaging Youth program of the McConnell Foundation. This initiative is currently underway.

24. *That the SIYM and SIYN work with the community and City of Hamilton in lobbying for change in the Ontario Works policy directive for Applicants Under Age 18 in order to make sure youth are not homeless because they lack any income. Key stakeholders in the community who could join this effort include the Food Shelter and Housing Committee, the Children and Families Flagship Initiative, the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits working group and the Social Justice Policy working group.*

- a. *This effort should also look at the ways to allow older youth (18-21 years old) to engage in work without the risk of losing their benefits, should their employment situation break down. Initial efforts at employment are often tenuous for street-involved youth and Ontario Works policy states that an applicant loses benefits for three months if they are fired or quit.*

PROGRESS:

- There has been a lack of progress in this area.

25. *That Ontario Works provide access to youth to complete applications for benefits and receive information on-site at street-involved youth agencies*

PROGRESS:

- There are OW workers working with street involved youth servicing agencies to deliver services on-site. The SIYN will continue to monitor challenges and opportunities to expand services.

26. *That the SIYN work with the City of Hamilton to explore a model (HIFIS or similar) that can be implemented to identify and track the demographics of street-involved youth in Hamilton in order to ensure appropriate service design and provision. This system should be present at open access programs as well as the shelters. Quarterly results should be reported to both the SIYN and the SIYM.*

PROGRESS:

- This recommendation is being postponed. Given the current changes in the service system (the development of two transitional housing projects, and the closure of one of the drop-in services), it is necessary to wait until the full system is in place.

27. *That the SIYM access resources for an evaluation of community progress on this plan. This should include identification of community indicators, a process for monitoring the implementation of the plan and identifying and reporting emerging issues.*

PROGRESS:

- Resources for evaluation secured from National Crime Prevention Centre. Year 1 evaluation should take place in the summer and early fall 2007 to be released in the fall 2007.

28. *A research alliance be formed between McMaster University and the above named working groups to identify best practices, evidence-based program models and other academic research on street-involved youth particularly around mental health issues, substance use and misuse and sex trade work.*

PROGRESS:

- A research team made up of McMaster University, Good Shepherd Centres, St. Joe's Health Care Team has formed to conduct outcomes based research on the mental health liaison nurse program at Good Shepherd Centres.

4.1 Key Findings – Progress on Recommendations

- Overall, the project is on schedule and there has been substantial progress on implementing the recommendations in the report. In several cases, progress is exceeding expectations – particularly:
 - the development of two transitional housing that will create 19 spaces for homeless youth, and an additional 12 for pregnant and parenting teens;
 - the development of risk-assessment tools to prevent youth homelessness along with the development of “The Couch Project” to increase the visibility of the initiative and reach far more agencies and organizations (approximately 700 organizations);
 - the expansion of open access hours to the weekend that has provided service to an average of 300 youth monthly;⁴
 - the partnership with the McMaster Children’s Hospital Child and Youth Outreach Team to develop training materials for front-line staff at no cost to the project, thus freeing up training resources to be used elsewhere.
 - the involvement of youth who have been street involved in a wide range of capacities – including on committees to implement recommendations, in the development of marketing materials, and as speakers at public forums.

- There are a number of recommendations that will be generating very important findings in the next several months:
 - The Early Intervention Project will begin to pilot an Early Intervention Worker who will be intervening with first time youth shelter users to quickly find an appropriate housing option. This project should be monitored closely and expanded if results are positive.
 - Research on ethno-cultural communities in Hamilton and the experience of youth homelessness by St Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Centre. This research is expected due in February 2007, and is expected to have a major impact on several of the recommendations and the strategies to address youth homelessness in these communities.
 - The addition of Ontario Works intake workers at several street involved youth agencies. Again, this process should be monitored closely and expanded if the results are positive.

- There are a number of recommendations that need increased attention and/or are behind schedule:
 - a. Recommendation #1 – the formation of a working group on issues related to child welfare and street involvement.
 - b. Recommendation #3 – research on preventing family breakdown due to sexual orientation, justice issues, and addictions issues
 - c. Recommendation #5 – ensuring that open access programming is available to youth every day of the week. Weekend service was expanded, but consistent open access programming through the week is not available.

⁴ This number includes repeat users.

- d. Recommendations #8 and #10 – working with HASC and the Children’s Services Committee around mapping services for street-involved youth with regard to addictions and mental health.
 - e. Recommendation 9a – working with street involved youth agencies to identify resources for highly trained front line workers.
- Recommendation #24 which describes policy changes to the Ontario Works policy directive for Applicants under 18 in order to ensure that youth are not homeless because they lack income continues to be in place.

5.0 CHECK-IN WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

As a part of this evaluation, we wanted to talk with people who were involved with the project to ensure that the work we had undertaken fit with their experience and understanding. We spoke with three different stakeholder groups: the Street Youth Involvement Committee, the Street Involved Youth Network, and the Street Youth Planning Collaborative. We asked them what had gone well in the first year, what could be improved, what changes they would recommend (if any), and if there were any emerging trends that they were seeing on the street that the project should be addressing.

5.1 The Street Youth Involvement Committee

The Youth Involvement Committee is a collection of youth who are meeting regularly with the Project Coordinator to discuss the implementation of the project. There were three youth who completed a brief survey.

Overall, the youth were very positive about the initiative, the Project Director and their involvement in the various aspects of the project. Of particular note were the Couch Project, associated media work, and the All Candidates Meeting organized by the Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

The youth also reported that there were some emerging trends on the street that the community should pay attention to: increasing violence on the street, and that the kids were getting younger and younger.

5.2 The Street Involved Youth Network

The Street Involved Youth Network is a committee formed of front line workers who work with street involved and homeless youth. At the Network meeting where this discussion took place, there were 8 front line workers, and one member who was unable to attend provided written feedback.

The Network felt that there had been a number of very positive developments as a result of the *Addressing the Needs* project. Specific strengths that were identified were:

- The Couch Project that increased visibility of the issue of youth homelessness, and provided resources for community members to respond;
- The Youth Opportunities Strategy that has provided neighbourhoods with outreach resources;
- The development of the transitional housing beds
- The training sessions for front-line workers.

There were additionally more general comments about the project that there had been positive impacts on youth being involved, an increased comfort level of front line workers because of collaboration of agencies, and a sense that “youth services are really picking up”.

A final point of discussion around project's strengths was around the overall implementation of the project. The group felt that it was very encouraging and positive that there were resources to *implement* the recommendations in the *Addressing the*

Needs report. As one of the members said “it’s exciting to see a Report be implemented, rather than just sit on a shelf”. One of the keys that the committee identified to this implementation was the strong performance of the project director.

There were also continued concerns around service gaps that were expressed:

- The lack of open access services during the week (after Transitional Youth closed)
- Many of the programs for youth require attendance at school (tied to eligibility for Ontario Works), but for youth who will not go to school, this requirement creates a barrier to getting help
- Ontario Works for youth aged 16-18 (again, with the requirement for school)
- Programs for engaging the youth who are difficult to engage

Finally, the group noted two emerging groups that should be focused on in the coming year: youth in the sex trade and youth in the corrections system.

5.3 The Street Youth Planning Collaborative

The Street Youth Planning Collaborative (formerly the Street Involved Youth Managers) is a committee of senior managers from agencies whose primary mandate is to address youth homelessness in Hamilton. This committee worked with the SPRC in the development of and the implementation of the funding to the Government of Canada.

The SYPC identified many specific or program successes of the project:

- The Youth Opportunities Strategy;
- The development of two transitional housing projects
- The front-line worker training
- The Early Intervention Project
- The At Risk Checklist and Couch Project

The Managers also pointed out more generally that the project has had a profound positive impact on the way that street involved youth agencies were doing business. In the words of one manager, “this project has culturally shifted the Managers in a very positive way...we won’t tolerate business being done the way it used to be done”. This quote refers to street involved youth agencies not collaborating with one another when serving youth.

Several of the Managers also pointed out the important role of the Project Director in the implementation of the project, saying that her “good support and leadership” helped the SYPC in its collaboration.

The only suggestions for improvement were to raise the profile of the project with some of the influential committees in Hamilton, in particular the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the school boards, and City Council.

Collaborative members had hopes for the next year that the project could focus on culturally specific programming, building the capacity of front-line staff, and exploring links with the Children’s Aid Society and Catholic Children’s Aid Society. Several members also suggested that there be an additional focus on youth in custody and youth in the sex trade.

6.0 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first year of the *Addressing the Needs* project has shown **strong progress** in several areas:

- 1) *Implementation of individual recommendations from the Addressing the Needs report.* For the most part, the implementation is on-schedule, and in the case of several recommendations (two transitional housing projects, the development of risk assessment tools, the expansion of open access hours to weekends, training resources for front-line staff, and involvement of youth) – expectations have been exceeded. Much of this progress is due to the funding support of the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre, as the three year grant encouraged an implementation plan for the *Addressing the Needs* report, as well as resources to help coordinate its implementation.
- 2) *The ability to leverage additional resources to meet needs.* One of the factors that has made this progress possible is the ability to leverage the *Addressing the Needs* project with other opportunities. These include: 1) major investments by the Government of Canada's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative and the City of Hamilton to help build the youth transitional housing; 2) the 4.6 full time outreach workers now deployed in high needs neighbourhoods as a part of the Government of Ontario's Youth Opportunities Strategy; 3) grants from the Hamilton Community Foundation and the United Way to supplement programs to address youth homelessness; 4) partnerships with the Hamilton Spectator to contribute over \$80,000 in advertising space to help build the profile of the Couch Project.
- 3) *The level of collaboration between agencies serving street involved and homeless youth.* Reports from the SYPC as well as from front-line workers within agencies demonstrated that through this project, new levels of collaboration are being reached that will benefit the agencies and the youth that they serve.

This research also found that there continue to be **service system gaps** that require attention:

- Short term gaps include - consistent open access programming throughout the week and primary health care are service on-site for street involved youth.
- Longer term gaps include increased street outreach, emergency shelter for young women, mental health and addiction services designed specifically for street involved youth, and a housing 'aftercare' program – where supports are provided to youth to help them maintain housing for a period of at least 6 months.

One of the consistent themes that we heard while carrying out this consultation was the opportunity for **service adaptation or new services**. Pilot projects like the Early Intervention Project and the Diversity Research that will be generating findings in the coming months represent an exciting opportunity for service providers. We are anticipating that the findings of these projects will enable dialogue around providing different kinds of services in different prevention mechanisms in youth homelessness and street involvement. As well, as these projects that are underway, we will be starting

similar research around LGBTQ issues, addictions, and corrections issues that could have similar impacts.

From the section 3 on Key Indicators, we found **several trends** that should be noted:

- First, the number of street involved young women appears to be increasing.
- Second, there appear to be an increased number of younger youth accessing services.
- Third, information from adult shelters shows a high number of people under 21 accessing adult shelters.
- Finally, we need better, more consistent, information in order to monitor youth homelessness. We would anticipate that as HIFIS becomes more refined, we will be able to develop a better picture of who the youth are that are homeless in our community.

There were also some more **systemic challenges** that were noted by front line workers and managers. One of the most common challenges noted was around rigid program criteria – particularly for Ontario Works – around the requirement for school attendance. Changing this criteria was a recommendation in the *Addressing the Needs* report, but there has been no progress in this area.

Another systemic challenge was around addictions issues. In our research, many of the youth on the street who are using substances do not express a desire to quit using substances, and thus addressing these addictions issues is significantly more complicated. Similarly, addressing the needs of street-involved youth with concurrent disorders – either a mental health or physical disability with an addiction – is very difficult in our present service system environment. In both of these cases, the community must develop different and improved approaches to working with the youth to respond to these issues.

Two sub-groups of street involved youth were identified as needing increased attention in the coming year. Youth who are involved in the sex trade and youth involved with corrections have a high degree of overlap with youth who are accessing the services for street involved youth. However, as a community, we know relatively little about the pathways onto the street, and more importantly, the pathways off the street for these groups.

Finally, our growing understanding of street involved and homeless youth points to the need for earlier and earlier intervention. As we see documentation that 70% of street involved youth become street involved because of family conflict and abuse, and we hear reports from service providers that over 75% of the youth are coming out of the child welfare system, the implications for preventing homelessness are to intervene years before the child ever sets foot on the street.

7.0 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

While the Street Youth Planning Collaborative offers advice and direction on each aspect of the broader project, the following organizations have provided tremendous support on various project steering committees.

The Couch Project

Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton
Catholic Family Services – St. Martin’s Manor
The City of Hamilton
The Community Centre for Media Arts
The Street Youth Involvement Committee

The “How Can I Help Youth At Risk of Homelessness?” Poster

Good Shepherd Youth Services
The City of Hamilton
Contact Hamilton
Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton

Youth At Risk of Homelessness: Understanding the Issues – Training

Good Shepherd Youth Services
The Street Youth Involvement Committee

Mental Health Training for Front Line Staff

The McMaster Children’s Hospital – Child and Youth Mental Health Outreach Team
Good Shepherd Youth Services
Lynwood Hall
The City of Hamilton
Contact Hamilton

The Early Intervention Project

Good Shepherd Youth Services
The City of Hamilton
The Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton

Research on Unique Risk Factors of Homelessness for Diverse Youth

St. Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Centre
Settlement and Integration Services of Ontario
Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion

Diversity Poster Project

McMaster University
Good Shepherd Youth Services
Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton
The LGBTQ Community Wellness Centre
The Living Rock Ministries
The Community Centre for Media Arts
The Street Youth Involvement Committee