

# Youth Transitional Housing



*How can transitional housing programs help youth develop lifelong well-being, beyond mere independence ?*

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Youth without support from guardians are often expected to achieve full independence at age 19; transitional housing can help ease this transition into adulthood and ensure youths' long-term stability and well-being.

### KEY FACTS

- ❑ Many youth, particularly those discharged from provincial foster care or with a history of homelessness, do not have guardians who can or will house them past their 19th birthdays.
- ❑ Transitional housing provides a free or heavily subsidized home for these youth with structured activities, supervision, life skills, education, and employment training, and support for addictions and mental health.
- ❑ Youth in transitional housing come from diverse backgrounds; strong programs aim to stay flexible to meet individual youths' needs.
- ❑ Transitional housing programs where youth can stay for longer periods of time are generally more successful in ensuring long-term stability (Gaetz & Scott, 2014).

- ❑ Social services organizations must recognize youths' strength and resiliency in coping with trauma many of them have experienced. Some youth may take time to trust they will not be abandoned and may be slow to commit to a program and build relationships (Morrison et. al., 2015; Gaetz, 2014).
- ❑ Trauma survivors accessing services should be active collaborators in their treatment process, with the opportunity to contribute to the development of when, where, and how treatment plans are delivered and to provide feedback on services accessed (Morrison et. al., 2015).
- ❑ Providing transitional housing support to vulnerable youth when they need it prevents more serious later outcomes, including criminal activity, impaired educational and employment attainment, prostitution, poor mental and physical health, substance abuse, and poor emotional and social support systems (Medes, Pinkerton, & Munro, 2014).

*Youth who had at least one supportive adult in their lives were more likely to define their mental health as “good” or “excellent”, were more likely to graduate high school and continue their education beyond high school, and were more likely to feel happy, skilled, and valued (Smith, 2015).*

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

❑ Transitional housing can be used as a direct transition from foster care, as an intervention when youth are already experiencing homelessness, and as a proactive measure with youth facing housing instability or an imminent risk of homelessness (Brown & Wilderson, 2010). Transitional housing is most effective when implemented proactively (Gaetz, 2014).

❑ Transitional housing should be part of a collaborative system of care that involves government and social services, the youth corrections system, mental health support services, and parents and/or guardians when appropriate (Gaetz & Scott, 2012).

❑ Transitional housing can only be effective in the long term if there are community options for affordable, independent living for youth to access after they leave the program and if youth have external, supportive relationships (Gaetz, 2014).

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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

❑ Transitional housing services have demonstrated greater effectiveness in ending homelessness than providing services alone (Novac et al, 2004a), and greatly improve outcomes for foster youth aging out of care (Courtney et al, 2007).

❑ Experience with the foster care system and with homelessness are often associated with a lack of connection with caring, supportive friends and adults (Brown & Wilderson, 2010; Smith, 2015; Gaetz, 2014)

❑ Supportive relationships, life meaning, and identity can be positive resources in increasing resilience and in coping with loss, trauma, and mental illness – supportive housing programs and workers can help youth cultivate these things (Gaetz & Scott, 2012; Noble-Carr et al, 2014).

❑ Effective transitional housing facilitates access to recreational and community involvement activities which help enhance life skills, improve mental health, and increase connection to other youth in the program, program staff, and others in the community (Gaetz & Scott, 2012).

*Having the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities that provide support for others, along with a caring community, can help youth overcome isolation and also provide youth with structure, a sense of self-worth, pride, and satisfaction (Noble-Carr, Barker, McArthur, & Woodman, 2014).*