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Effectiveness of Youth Homelessness Strategies: A Canadian Jurisdictional Evaluation

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Abstract

Age matters when understanding and responding to homelessness. Although adults and youth both experience similar challenges when homeless, youths in particular experience distinct circumstances and pathways that often differ from adults in their causes, consequences, and targeted strategies, as much of their lives have been governed by adult caregivers. With a significant percentage of the homeless population having their first onset of homelessness as a youth, these distinct differences emphasize the importance of providing targeted strategies that are effective and long-term in improving the well-being of youths and preventing chronic homelessness. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the effectiveness of current youth homeless strategies implemented in Canada. A jurisdictional scan was conducted to synthesize information on current youth-related homelessness strategies that have been evaluated and identify current prevention elements associated with successfully improving the well-being of youths at risk or experiencing homelessness. Strategies will be evaluated based on their outcomes on how “effective” it was in addressing the specific needs of homeless youths. This analysis attempts to provide a high-level overview of best practices that could be applicable to homeless youths in Calgary, Alberta. Results shown that evaluated youth-targeted strategies generally have favourable outcomes for youths while also illuminating the gaps in prevention programming that can be improved upon. Understanding of current best practices and evident gaps in prevention strategies for youth homelessness will be helpful in informing policy-makers and shaping potential new policies. Further evaluations on other existing strategies and rural programming for youths are discussed.

Introduction

On any given night, about 286 youths experience homelessness in Calgary. Furthermore, more than 1,500 youth use emergency shelters in Calgary annually (Calgary Youth Sector Refresh Steering Committee 2017). Calgary has made ongoing progress in developing strategies to support homelessness over the past few decades, being home to one of North America's largest homeless shelters and the first Canadian city to adopt a 10-year plan to end homelessness (The Calgary Drop-In Centre 2022; Turner and Ballance 2018; Turner, Ballance, and Sinclair 2018). Youth often experience unique pathways to homelessness, requiring targeted, meaningful programs that cater to those who are younger. Yet, present literature has primarily focused on the general population of adult homelessness, with a gap in youth homelessness literature and youth-targeted strategies (Morton et al. 2020).

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2016) defines youth homelessness as individuals between the ages of 13 and 24 living independently of adult caregivers but do not have the means for stable and safe housing. Unlike adults, youths often enter homelessness with little to no life management experience, as much of their lives have previously been governed by adult caregivers (The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2016). As a result, their lack of personal experience living independently from adults can significantly throttle their social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development (The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2016; Park, Fertig, and Allison 2011). Moreover, the lack of social support, education, and resources needed to support youths transitioning into adulthood can have long-term implications, potentially prolonging their homelessness (The Homeless Hub 2022). Extended periods of homelessness can also result in youths experiencing higher vulnerability and victimization on the

streets (The Homeless Hub 2022). Without early intervention and long-term social support, they will likely experience the same situation again (i.e., episodic, or chronic homelessness).

A 2016 Canadian study reported that 40.1 per cent of the participants were under the age of 16 when they first experienced homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2016). Furthermore, a 2018 Calgary point-in-time (PIT) count reported that about 25 per cent of the current homeless population suffered their first onset of homelessness as a youth (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2018). This illustrates gaps in effective youth-specific strategies that support youths in leaving homelessness and their successful transition into adulthood (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2018). It can also be inferred that intervention and prevention measures are essential in addressing long-term chronic homelessness that often follows into adulthood if not tackled during their first experience (Baker-Collins 2013; Gaetz et al. 2018; YFile 2016). Therefore, analyzing the effectiveness of current youth homelessness strategies will provide important implications for policy-making and impact policy recommendations for youth homelessness. It will also provide a deeper understanding of the problem and help refine youth-targeted strategies that can be replicated and adapted locally.

Purpose

This study aims to explore and analyze the effectiveness of current youth homeless strategies in Canada and their applicability to local municipalities. With Calgary pioneering the 10-year plan to end homelessness and inspiring other jurisdictions to create similar programs, this has made it the primary city to analyze the issue of how youth homelessness is framed (City of Edmonton 2009; City of Ottawa 2020; City of Toronto 2019; City of Vancouver 2011). A jurisdictional scan and analysis were conducted regarding background information on current youth homeless support strategies and programs to identify elements associated with successfully

preventing youths from re-entering homelessness. How “effective” a program is will be evaluated based on its main objectives and how they reach its targets of reducing or preventing youth homelessness. While programs and initiatives do exist to target youths experiencing homelessness, literature on evaluating and assessing the outcomes of these programs is limited (Altena, Brilleslijper-Kater, and Wolf 2010). Therefore, this study attempts to synthesize current publications regarding interventions that effectively address the specific needs of homeless youths to provide a high-level overview of best practices that could be applicable to homeless youths in Calgary, Alberta. This will also help inform policy-makers and organizations about potential shortcomings and next steps to improving programming and shaping new policies and programs. Due to the lack of academic peer-reviewed literature and data available pertaining to youth homelessness, grey literature will be included as part of the synthesis and analysis. The literature will be selected based on whether it examined the effectiveness of a strategy that distinctly reflected the results of improving the well-being of youths experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The literature will be selected based on whether it examined the effectiveness of a strategy that distinctly reflected the results of improving the well-being of youths experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Literature identified relating to youth homeless strategies will be divided into categories with similar approaches. Based on the most common frameworks, general characteristics will be used to compare and examine how each approach category may differ or be similar. Using the prevention framework by Gaetz et al. (2018), reciprocal determinism, and intersectionality as theoretical models of reference, findings of these similarities and differences will then be discussed in relation to their effectiveness in providing sufficient support for youth homelessness.

The use of existing literature in this examination helps contextualize information relative to what strategies are currently targeting homeless youth needs. It will also provide the foundation for analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of youth homeless strategies by identifying current gaps.

Literature Review

Pathways into Youth Homelessness

Pathways into youth homelessness are complex and shaped by various factors, mainly individual and structural risk factors. Furthermore, researchers have acknowledged that the path to homelessness often begins early due to traumatic and hostile childhood experiences (Gaetz et al. 2016; Herman et al. 1997; Lee, Tyler, and Wright 2010). For many individuals, the entrance into homelessness commonly occurs through a process rather than a single unexpected event. This showcases that homelessness is not a singular sporadic occurrence but instead through a series of unfortunate circumstances (Coates and McKenzie-Mohr 2011; Collins 2013; Hyde 2005; Winland 2013). In other words, homelessness occurs through an intersection of individual and structural factors that puts individuals in a situation where they end up losing their homes (Gaetz 2014; Gaetz et al. 2016; Piat et al. 2015). In addition to these factors, Gaetz et al. (2016) cite that significant events such as “coming out” to their family can be one of the main triggers of a timeline of crisis, often leading youths to run away or be kicked out (Janus et al. 1995). Many of these situations that youths are put into are without choice, making social support during these traumatic events vital. Therefore, a successful transition into adulthood is essential for youths to leave homelessness. This is especially important when wanting to prevent chronic adult homelessness, which often becomes an outcome for youths who do not receive adequate support (Baker-Collins 2013; Gaetz et al. 2016).

Individual Factors

Some of the most significant individual risk drivers contributing to youth homelessness are family conflict and mental health challenges (Gaetz et al. 2016; Mallett, Rosenthal, and Keys 2005; Mallett et al. 2009; Wang et al. 2019). Family conflict and violence comprise an array of situations, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, which may result in a youth fleeing to the streets (Government of Canada 2022a). Two-thirds of youths leave their homes due to family conflict and violence, with some suggesting it to be a precipitant cause of homelessness (Government of Canada 2022b; Winland 2013). Research has also cited the potential negative consequences of long periods of homelessness, noting that it will likely result in youths encountering more violence on the streets, experiencing worsening mental health, developing addiction, and becoming more entrenched in street life, which can impact their overall ability to leave homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2016).

It is estimated that more than 85 per cent of Canadian homeless youths have experienced a mental health crisis, signifying that deteriorating mental health is highly correlated with homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2016). Additionally, the absence of mental health support often results in youth developing substance abuse in an attempt to manage and cope with their mental health struggles. Data reflects these factors, with suicide and drug overdoses being the top two leading causes of death for homeless youths (Roy et al. 2004). Comparatively, family conflict and mental health challenges are also linked with one another (Carver et al. 2020; Didenko and Pankratz 2007; Mallett, Rosenthal, and Keys 2005). These factors often inflate without intervention and can eventually lead to a pathway into chronic adult homelessness.

Structural Factors

Some structural risk factors of homelessness include poverty, exiting foster care, marginalization, and discrimination (Baskin 2007; Gaetz 2014; Nooe and Patterson 2010; Piat et al. 2015). Recent research has looked at neoliberal governance and policies as having significant implications for poverty and homelessness (Donnan 2014; Johnstone, Lee, and Connelly 2017; Klodawsky, Aubry, and Farrell 2006; Young and Moses 2013). Gaetz (2020) argues that the neoliberal policy shift has resulted in the current socioeconomic conditions that have created increased poverty, inequality, and the modern mass homelessness problem in Canada. Changes in social policy have also contributed to the widespread lack of affordable housing in Canada (Donnan 2014; Gaetz 2020). While demand for changes to the political system can be slow and unrealistic to provide meaningful amendments to the current situation, the potential growing concerns of homelessness should be considered and acknowledged to better understand the contributing factors to youth homelessness. That is, to understand the neglected social support that vulnerable populations like homeless youth face.

Studies show that social support and policies that provide financial support to individuals living in poverty have been found to reduce homelessness, while a lack of affordable housing increases the risk of homelessness (Gaetz 2010; Shinn 2007; Uppal 2022)

Affordable Housing

The issue of a lack of affordable housing often interplays with family violence. Literature shows that both are factors in keeping victims from leaving or contributing to their decision to return to abusive households to avoid homelessness (Government of Canada 2022b). This makes emergency shelters a critical part for those escaping abusive home environments. A national study conducted between 2005 and 2016 reported that unaccompanied youth aged 13 to 24

accounted for 17.3 per cent of shelter users in Canada (Duchesne, Cooper, and Baker 2022). However, it should be noted that the purpose of emergency shelters is to provide temporary relief for homelessness and is not a permanent system of support. An estimated average occupancy rate of emergency shelters in 2016 was over 90 per cent due to extended shelter stays (Duchesne, Cooper, and Baker 2022). Operational costs of emergency services like shelters are also expensive. Canada spends an average of \$53,144 annually for a person experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges (Latimer et al. 2017). The costs to keep a youth in the shelter system are estimated to be \$30,000–\$40,000 per year (Raising the Roof 2009). Likewise, in a review of the cost of homelessness in four major Canadian cities, Pomeroy (2005) found that the annual emergency shelter cost per person is approximately \$13,000-\$42,000 annually. While the reports from Pomeroy (2005) and Raising the Roof (2009) do not entirely reflect current financial expenses due to time and inflation, it helps to give a general outlook of how emergency responses can be expensive and should only be used as described – during emergencies. Long-term options have been a frequent argument for creating more cost-effective and impactful strategies, as a significant number of youths rely on shelters for much longer stays (Jadidzadeh and Kneebone 2021). This is particularly evident for those who are suffering more sporadic period of homelessness, which in the study done by Jadidzadeh & Kneebone (2021), saw increase in readmissions is driven mainly by marginalized populations such as Indigenous youth.

Transitioning from State Care

The period spent in the foster care system for many youths is often limited. Once they “age out” of the system, that is, left to be independent, they tend to have little support in navigating life in adulthood, usually resulting in them being homeless. For youths with a history of family violence, living instability, and many other issues, foster care youth represent a

particularly vulnerable group that coincides with the issue of youth homelessness. Every year, approximately 800 to 1,000 youths “age out” of foster care at around 18 or 21, depending on province policy (Monsebraaten 2017). When considering Canada’s changing social and economic conditions, legislation about foster care and child protection services has also not kept up, making it difficult for these youths to transition into independence (Gaetz et al. 2016). Whether in foster care or not, youths today take longer than previous generations to achieve independence (Milan 2016; Rugaber 2016). For example, it is estimated that about 40 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 20 to 29 still live with their parents due to current socioeconomic factors (i.e., high standard of living costs, lack of affordable housing, poor labour market prospects, and lack of educational qualifications for higher prospect jobs) (Gaetz 2014; Milan 2016; Rugaber 2016). Transitioning from foster care without support can be difficult, creating lifelong adverse outcomes that could jeopardize youths and their lives (Gaetz 2014; Knoke 2009). Recent research has also highlighted that over 57 per cent of homeless youths have been involved in child protection services in Canada, gleaned that both the experience of being in the child protection services and the transition to independence account for the significant percentage of youths experiencing homelessness (Gaetz, O’Grady, and Buccieri 2010; Gaetz et al. 2016; Nichols, Schwan, and Gaetz 2017).

Marginalized and Racialized Youths

Youth homelessness disproportionately affects marginalized and racialized communities, frequently suffering from discrimination. Indigenous individuals are commonly overrepresented in the homeless population, potentially implying the lack of targeted, culturally sensitive programs available to these populations (S. Kidd, Thistle, Beaulieu, O’Grady, et al. 2019). Youths experiencing homelessness are also more likely to belong to a marginalized and

discriminated group based on their race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality (K. Schwan 2016). As a result, the need for targeted, effective strategies delivered by individuals with first-hand experience with homeless youths has been one of the main arguments to provide better outcomes (Gaetz 2014; K. Schwan 2016; Taylor 2017b; Woolley 2016). This may mean training staff and having staff experienced with handling vulnerable populations such as homeless youths and other ethnically diverse individuals to help administer culturally appropriate and effective services. Racialized and marginalized communities are more likely to have poorer health outcomes when experiencing homelessness, so social services need to be culturally considerate and diverse (Woolley 2016; Taylor 2017b). Current social and health services in Canada largely reflect predominately white and middle-class values, which can significantly affect the quality of care and the health outcomes of marginalized groups (Woolley 2016). The lack of knowledge of the direct experiences of marginalized individuals reflects in the overrepresentation of racialized and marginalized individuals that disproportionately experience homelessness.

Types of Youth Homelessness

While the stresses and strains discussed above are experienced by a large number of youths, it should be noted that not all of them will become or remain homeless. Gaetz (2014) has pointed out that the pathways to experiencing homelessness can be gradual, episodic, or sudden, depending on the events experienced in a youth's life. That is, there is a need to differentiate between those who experience short-term, episodic, and those who become chronically homeless "because the circumstances and needs of young people in these situations may differ greatly" (Gaetz 2014, 15). Homeless youths also tend to be challenging to find as they are mostly part of the "hidden" population, meaning they may have temporary living accommodations, but do not have guaranteed permanent, stable housing (Gaetz et al. 2014). For instance, many youths may

be “couch surfing,” which describes people who temporarily stay with a friend, relative, neighbour, or stranger, as they do not have a sustainable means for stable housing or other options. Other examples include sleeping in cars, abandoned buildings, camping tents, and under bridges. With all things considered, there is a multitude of potentially stressful life events that could correlate to being homeless. This could include major financial crises, the loss of relationships, the death of a loved one, foster care placement, psychiatric hospitalizations, abuse, and sexual violence (Zugazaga 2004). Although many of these adverse life events can be combated through support services and programs, there are barriers and issues with potentially assessing these resources. This can make it more difficult to leave homelessness, potentially resulting in them being chronically homeless.

Existing Barriers Towards Leaving Homelessness

While many youths who are experiencing homelessness desire to leave the streets, many existing barriers can stop them from seeking help or receiving help from social services. Some of the most prevalent obstacles include healthcare, education, employment, justice, and being in a minority group (i.e., indigenous, LGBTQ2S+). Other prevalent gaps in support services for homeless individuals identified by service providers have been in emergency housing options, integration of mental health and housing services, and long-term social support services (Kerman et al. 2017). Despite identifying these gaps, service providers have also encountered challenges in meeting service users’ needs due to the lack of stable funding and resources at their disposal to provide quality services and care for this vulnerable population (Kerman et al. 2017). Kerman et al. (2017) emphasize this, stating that it is important to highlight the need for “the development of service partnerships to reduce burden and barriers faced by direct-service providers in addressing the unmet support needs of people [and help] them to stay stably housed” (73). In

short, current existing barriers are not only affecting the ability of youths to leave homelessness but are also hindering social service providers from meeting the needs of these individuals.

Healthcare

Personal health care is one of the most significant issues homeless individuals face when experiencing homelessness, as they often live in conditions that can adversely affect their overall short-term and long-term health. This may contribute to the increased mortality rates seen in homeless individuals, with causes of death often being freezing, injury, and the harsh effects of life on the streets (Hwang 2001; Hwang et al. 2009). Numerous studies have discussed the association between homelessness with lower-health-related outcomes (Hwang 2001; Saab et al. 2016; Stafford and Wood 2017; Sun et al. 2012). These health struggles are often exacerbated, as accessing health-related services can become challenging. Affordability, accessibility, lack of trust and empathy in healthcare providers, and systemic issues within the healthcare system are common issues (Ramsay et al. 2019). Determinants of health are also highly correlated with socioeconomic status. For instance, those with higher incomes and socioeconomic status will have more access to healthier and fresher food options (i.e., unprocessed produce, etc.), have better access to health care services, have lower rates of illness and injury due to their higher quality of life, and the ability to live longer lives (The Homeless Hub 2022e).

Being unhoused makes it difficult, and in some cases, almost impossible, to access general health care services. Individuals experiencing homelessness often cannot obtain medical treatment as most do not have personal identification, such as a healthcare card (Campbell et al. 2015; Sanders et al. 2020; Taylor 2017a; The Homeless Hub 2022). A permanent address and a personal identification card are regularly required to apply for a healthcare card (Taylor 2017b; The Homeless Hub 2022f). Similarly, making a health appointment is challenging due to a lack

of an address and phone (The Homeless Hub 2022f). This makes coordinated care and tracking of medical records difficult as homeless individuals frequently move around due to their unstable housing status (The Homeless Hub 2022f). Follow-ups to care are often insufficient and not enough as a result (The Homeless Hub 2022f). Paying for health-related items can also be difficult as some might not be covered by provincial medical or drug insurance plans. A lack of access to health-related items such as prescriptions can prevent them from receiving adequate treatment that could worsen (The Homeless Hub 2022f). For many homeless individuals with unstable living conditions, it is difficult to have adequate personal care and hygiene, affecting their personal appearance. Personal appearance can sometimes play a role in deterring health providers from delivering services due to their lack of training when dealing with homeless individuals (The Homeless Hub 2022f).

As a result of all these issues, health care delivery for homeless individuals is concentrated in emergency services such as emergency clinics and hospitals. Nonetheless, acute health problems experienced by homeless individuals may not be adequately treated, resulting in the issue only being addressed when it worsens. Therefore, it is important to address current active chronic health problems that are prevalent in the homeless population and provide simpler ways for vulnerable populations like those experiencing homelessness to access healthcare efficiently and effectively without frequent involvement of emergency services. It is evident in current literature that homelessness is significantly associated with a high burden of illness (The Homeless Hub 2022a; Hwang 2001). Yet, the health care system has not adequately met the needs of people experiencing homelessness (The Homeless Hub 2022a).

Education and Employment

Education and employment are both correlated barriers that youth encounter when trying to leave homelessness. Most youths experiencing homelessness leave their homes before finishing high school, a critical issue that affects pathways to gaining employment, financial security, and, as mentioned previously, better health outcomes (Solomon 2013). Additionally, youths with lower academic attainment are generally at a higher risk of unemployment compared to those who have higher educational attainment (i.e., did not drop out of high school) (The Homeless Hub 2022c). This makes education a critical aspect of understanding the unique issues of youth homelessness and how it can affect parts of gaining stable employment. While some individuals can find employment, they are often precarious, low-paying jobs that could be unsafe and unregulated (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2013; The Homeless Hub 2022c). An environmental scan by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reported that the vast majority of homeless youth – with about 63 per cent to 90 per cent of Ottawa and Toronto youth experiencing homelessness, did not complete high school, despite being the age to have done so (The Homeless Hub 2022c). Hence, the rate of homeless youths not finishing school is significantly high.

Education and employment support often take a backseat to meeting more immediate critical needs such as food and emergency shelter. Without educational and employment opportunities, at-risk youths will often experience episodic homelessness and will likely need access to these emergency necessity services again. Research has shown that housing stability predicts academic achievement and high school completion (Rafferty, Shinn, and Weitzman 2004; Kahlmeter 2021). This showcases that targeted programs and policy related to education

and employment is highly interconnected with the success of youths leaving homelessness and accessing long-term housing (The Homeless Hub 2022c).

Overrepresentation of Racialized and Marginalized Youth

Often, the topic of the overrepresentation of racialized and marginalized youths is discussed in conjunction with youth homelessness. As mentioned previously, significantly more racialized and marginalized youths are being affected by existing barriers to accessing proper social support and services, leading them to be commonly overrepresented in the homeless population (The Homeless Hub 2022h, 2022j). This is partly due to the lack of diversity of services that may deter youths from seeking help and support because it may not be appropriate for their cultural needs (Saphir 2015; Government of Alberta 2017; Woolley 2016; The Homeless Hub 2022j). Being culturally sensitive to other youths' needs is often integral to their ability to seek long-term help and leave the streets. For instance, an indigenous homeless individual may be unable to seek help for their immediate needs due to differences in targeted support (i.e., lack of understanding of their situation and awareness of their cultural needs) (Woolley 2016). If shelters cannot accommodate these cultural needs, individuals tend not to get the long-term support they need. Some homeless individuals may also require special diets for health reasons, such as those who have severe food allergies or need to manage health conditions like diabetes (MAZON Canada 2020). While social services try to accommodate variations of food options, premade food is common in food services for those experiencing homelessness, and fresh produce is seldom available (Schanes 2012; Sekharan 2014; Brown and Chatterjee 2018). Research from Chu (2003) has shown that options for a vegetarian meal or variations of food choices for these individuals make an inherent difference in their willingness to trust social services more and to seek help more.

LGBTQ2S+ youth are disproportionately marginalized among youths experiencing homelessness, with an estimated 25-40 per cent of homeless youth in Canada identifying as LGBTQ2S+ (The519 2022). Many youths end up on the streets due to the rejection they receive from “coming out” to their parents. However, they are also underrepresented in shelters and housing programs (Start Me Up Niagara 2021; Abramovich 2016). If there is no safe space for these marginalized individuals, they may feel unsafe and unwelcomed in these social service institutions leading them to not seek help from these services due to fear for their safety. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario (2022), LGBTQ2S+ face higher risks for particular mental health issues due to the effects and their experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and the social determinants of health, often worsened when experiencing homelessness.

Currently, limited literature emphasizes the problems of current social services and policies using a “one size fits all” approach in framing youth homelessness. This may contribute to some youths falling through the cracks in receiving meaningful long-term services, making it essential to understand the diversity and unique needs of youths when experiencing homelessness.

Justice System and Legal Issues

Homeless youth are often characterized as perpetrators of crime. However, when a youth leaves home, stressors from homelessness can often increase the risk of youths facing victimization rather than being perpetrators of crime (Gaetz 2009, 2004). The nature and social exclusion of homelessness can frequently push youths into situations of survival, forcing them to participate in criminal activities and other risky behaviours (Gaetz 2009, 2004). A study by Gaetz (2004) reflects these remarks, finding that nearly 82 per cent of homeless youths in

Toronto, Canada, reported having been victims of crime, and nearly 32 per cent reported being victims of sexual assault. Beyond Toronto, a report from the Government of Canada (2018a) revealed that rates of violent victimization were highest among youths aged 15 to 17. This showcases that whether homeless or not, youths are among the most victimized populations in Canada, which stresses the need for youths to have targeted, effective support in preventing these issues from worsening. Additionally, a 2002 study conducted in Toronto on their local youth homeless population found that 81 per cent of participants reported being victimized over the past year and were extremely unlikely to report the incident to the police due to the many barriers to receiving justice (Gaetz 2009). As a result, some youths end up not accessing these necessary supports and rely on unconventional methods in order to support themselves.

With barriers to education and employment, youths experiencing homelessness often have unconventional forms of employment, such as panhandling (asking for money) and squeegeeing (cleaning car windshields) (The Homeless Hub 2022i; Gershon 2015; The Homeless Hub 2022k). For many, this is a means of survival and income. This is because having a regular job can be difficult due to the lack of basic resources that can assist them in getting a job offer (e.g., resume, transportation for the interview, etc.) or maintaining a job (e.g., hygiene, having a permanent address, bank account, etc.) (The Homeless Hub 2022d). However, this informal employment is also often criminalized by legislation and can be seen as deviant behaviour by law enforcement. The criminalization of being homeless often relates to the issue and concept of social profiling. This is defined as “a range of actions undertaken for safety, security or public protection, or in response to public fear, that relies on stereotypes about the danger and criminality of people who are homeless and their uses of public space (for money-making, sleeping or resting), rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to be singled out for greater

scrutiny or differential treatment” (O’Grady, Gaetz, and Buccieri 2011, 22). For instance, the Safe Streets Act in Ontario is one of the most prominent provincial laws that target the outlawing of aggressive panhandling and squeegeeing, known jobs that street youth undertake (The Homeless Hub 2022b). These laws can be problematic for youths experiencing homelessness as they are already limited in their resources for income, with many being forced into this position of having no choice but to use public spaces due to their lack of access to a private space (e.g., drinking in public). O’Grady, Gaetz, and Buccieri (2011) have mirrored these issues with anti-panhandling laws, pointing out that “it is their status of being homeless that is being criminalized rather than their inherent criminality” (22).

As a result of the many kinds of anti-panhandling and anti-homeless bylaws that exist in various Canadian cities, the issue of ticketing those experiencing homelessness is frequent. Homeless individuals often receive many tickets due to their lack of a private space to conduct their activities (Hodgetts and Stolte 2016). This includes public urination, sleeping or tenting on private or public property, jaywalking, loitering, public intoxication, and much more (Urban Institute 2020). Homeless individuals, especially youths, usually cannot pay for tickets issued to them and end up going to jail instead of making payments (The Homeless Hub 2022g). This is one of the most significant issues when dealing with homelessness. Their survival activities are often criminalized, repeating the cycle of an individual experiencing homelessness.

Youth homelessness, while a national problem throughout Canada, can vary depending on the local jurisdictional context. Calgary, Alberta, in particular, is unique in that it was one of the first Canadian cities to adopt a 10-year plan to end homelessness and a plan explicitly catering to youths in the local area.

Youth Homelessness in Calgary

The contextual understanding and policy landscape of those experiencing homelessness varies in local jurisdictions – an important consideration when formulating policies that target and cater to the local population. How homelessness is interpreted can change through country, province, and municipality. For instance, the weather may play a major role in the policy initiative in providing increased emergency shelters. In Calgary, the winter weather season is some of the coldest and snowiest in Canada, which may influence policy-makers and decision-makers to focus on increasing the number of emergency shelters in the city to prevent freezing deaths (Weather Spark 2022). In contrast to cities such as Vancouver, they may focus less on emergency shelters due to the warm, moderate, oceanic climate they get all season long (City of Vancouver 2022). The cost of living in a city is another important consideration that could affect housing costs and the ability to provide affordable housing prices for those experiencing homelessness. Albertan cities such as Medicine Hat have living costs that are relatively low compared to Calgary (MovingWaldo 2021). Hence, to understand the needs of youths experiencing homelessness, recognizing the unique issues endured by homeless youths in Calgary, Alberta, will be necessary for effective targeted, area-specific policy recommendations.

Youth follow various pathways into homelessness. Some key findings were identified in a report from Worthington et al. (2009), highlighting specifics related to Calgary. Abuse was one of the frequent issues experienced by Calgary street youth in the past, with about 71 per cent of the surveyed youth reporting some form of abuse or neglect (Worthington et al. 2009). A high proportion of Calgary street youth was also involved in the justice system, with about 69 per cent of youth being charged with a crime in their lifetime (Worthington et al. 2009). About 62 per cent of those surveyed at some point made contact with child welfare services, with about 19 per

cent not receiving any services. Approximately 45 per cent of youths on the street have been kicked out of school, suspended, or dropped out, and 46 per cent indicate they have been in special classes (Worthington et al. 2009). The contact process with social services and institutions is critical in reaching out to street youths experiencing homelessness. However, some of the concerns Calgary youths have brought up were location, limited operation hours and availability, safety, and program restrictions (Worthington et al. 2009). While data from the Worthington et al. (2009) report is not recent and not the most reflective of the contemporary portrait of youth homelessness in Calgary, it helps to utilize an understanding of the many gaps that exist in Calgary that those experiencing homelessness have fallen through.

Prevention, Reciprocal Determinism, and Intersectionality

When it comes to looking at critical strategies that have helped youths in leaving or from entering homelessness, current approaches have focused on prevention strategies. Prevention strategies are a central focus of addressing youth homelessness as it is meant to minimize and counteract the risks associated with experiencing homelessness (Gaetz and Dej 2017). Prevention, especially early, would also shorten the time spent on the streets and thwart potential re-entry into homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2018; Gaetz and Dej 2017). However, despite broad interest and support for youth homeless-focused prevention strategies, there has been a lack of clarity regarding what this implies (Gaetz et al. 2018). Thus, Gaetz et al. (2018) have drawn from Gaetz & Dej's (2017) broader classification of homelessness to produce a more youth-specific definition:

Youth homelessness prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that either (1) reduce the likelihood that a young person will experience homelessness, or (2) provide youth experiencing homelessness with the necessary supports to stabilize their

housing, improve their well-being, connect with community, and avoid re-entry into homelessness. Youth homelessness prevention thus necessitates the immediate provision of housing and supports for youth experiencing homelessness, or the immediate protection of housing, with supports, for youth at risk of homelessness. Youth homelessness prevention must be applied using a rights-based approach and address the unique needs of developing adolescents and young adults (p. 20).

In determining what prevention strategies may look like in practice, Gaetz et al. (2018) provides a viewpoint on how to think and operationalize intervention through public health. Public health is one of the major examples of operational prevention, where the aim of health care staff is to “minimize harm to individuals...by identifying risk and protective factors, and putting in place structural and universal interventions...as well as targeted interventions for those deemed to be at higher or more imminent risk” (Gaetz et al. 2018, 21). The prevention framework that Gaetz et al. (2018) adapts from the public health model provides a central focus on three levels of prevention adapted for homelessness: primary prevention, secondary prevention, and tertiary intervention. Gaetz et al. (2018) also helps outline the range of activities that constitute youth homelessness prevention by including a typology that identifies five categories that align with the three levels of prevention. The main objective of the prevention framework and typology is to stabilize youths experiencing homelessness for better long-term outcomes. Figure 1 below outlines the prevention framework and typology that Gaetz et al. (2018) have adapted to cater to youth homelessness.

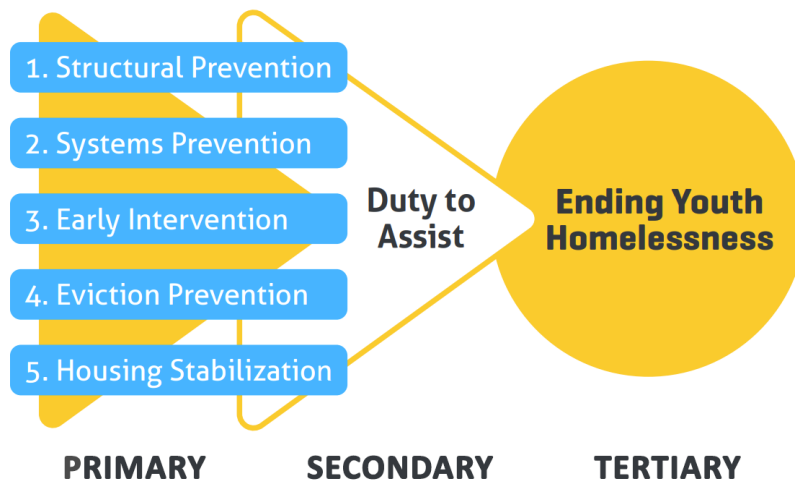


Figure 1: Youth Homelessness Prevention Framework Typology. The Homeless Hub, Accessed July 20, 2022, https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/YPRfullreport_2.pdf.

Primary prevention addresses the leading causes of structural factors contributing to “family breakdown and housing precarity for young people” (Gaetz et al. 2018, 21). Primary prevention strategies could include increasing affordable housing accessibility for youths, access to alternative educational programs, and much more. Secondary prevention focuses on targeted strategies for youths at imminent risk of homelessness or who have recently experienced homelessness to receive support quickly. Most youths at imminent risk come from state care (e.g., correctional services, child protection, foster care), which this secondary step concentrates on strengthening support for (Gaetz et al. 2018). It also aims to help youths to maintain stable housing and remain connected to other support systems (e.g., school and community programs) they may have potentially lost when they lost their housing. Lastly, tertiary prevention focuses on supporting youths to exit homelessness quickly by giving them adequate support and accommodation to ensure a lower likelihood of re-entering homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2018).

Overall, this prevention framework clearly illustrates what youth homeless strategies should aim to achieve.

The typology that aligns with the prevention framework helps to break down other additional policies, practices, and interventions that constitute prevention that must be developed to sustain and help create an effective response to youths experiencing homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2018). The typology includes the five following categories: structural prevention, systems prevention, early intervention, eviction prevention, and housing stabilization. Structural preventions refer to preventions that work upstream and address structural and systemic factors that contribute to homelessness through major developments in policies such as affordable housing and poverty reduction (Gaetz et al. 2018). Systems prevention aims to address institutional and system failures potentially correlated with homelessness (Gaetz et al. 2018). For instance, the lack of support from transitioning out of public institutional care (e.g., hospital, corrections, child welfare system, etc.) can be related to issues of housing stabilization as they are not provided with long-term after-care support when they leave. Early intervention aims to develop policies, interventions, programs, and initiatives that target youths at-risk or experiencing homelessness to receive immediate efficient support to either retain their current housing or rapidly access new and appropriate housing (Gaetz et al. 2018). Early interventions can include a variety of strategies and integrated systems in response. Eviction prevention refers to strategies to prevent youths at-risk of homelessness from being evicted from their current housing, focusing on housing supports such as landlord/tenant legislation and policy, housing education, and crisis support (Gaetz et al. 2018). Finally, housing stabilization aims to provide and enhance long-term support related to housing stabilization in a timely matter in order to prevent them from experiencing it again. This includes housing-related supports, health and well-

being supports, supports related to income access and education, social inclusion supports and other complementary supports that help to support the wellbeing of youths.

The second part of the typology involves Duty to Assist. The work of Duty to Assist highlights the statutory obligation, or legal duty, to ensure that authorities and higher levels of government make reasonable efforts to support and stabilize youth homelessness, making it as brief as possible (Gaetz et al. 2018). In other words, this ensures that governments utilize legislation and a systems approach as a tool to prevent youth homelessness by preventing youth homelessness by providing the necessary support to remedy a youth's situation. This typology is important in categorizing strategies and initiatives currently being implemented in Canada and their potential applicability to Calgary.

Alongside understanding how to think and operationalize prevention strategies that target youth needs, reciprocal determinism is a theoretical framework that provides important insight into youth and their experiences when homeless. Reciprocal determinism is a central concept interconnected with social cognition theory which states that an individual's behaviour is influenced by personal factors and social environment (Bandura 1986). He argues that not only does the environment influence a person's thinking, but their subsequent behaviour also influences their environment. The theory of reciprocal determinism can relate closely to homeless youths as their behaviour can be heavily influenced by their environment, and their environment can also be influenced by their behaviour (Bandura 1986). For instance, family conflict, street violence, and lack of quick access to social support could influence a youth's behaviour to take substances to cope or to commit crimes to survive due to their situation. These issues that grow from their unstable environment can also influence and prevent homeless youths from reaching out as they become more entrenched and complacent in the streets to be their

“home,” potentially because they have remained homeless for an extended period of time. According to (Bandura 1986), understanding reciprocal determinism can help to formulate strategies that improve individual risk factors related to homelessness (e.g., behaviour and mental state) and help to develop housing services that will alter the adverse social conditions that they have faced on the streets (i.e., environmental factors).

Inequities and overrepresentation of marginalized and racialized communities in the youth homeless population require an intersectional lens of understanding to create a solid foundation of targeted strategies that cater to all youths of different backgrounds. Intersectionality discusses the differing and multiple forms of discrimination and oppression that overlap in the experiences of marginalized and racialized groups (Crenshaw 1989). The theory was conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989) and originated in the discussion of racialized women in America and the imbalances of justice for women during the fourth wave of feminism in the United States. While efforts in tackling youth homelessness do currently exist, research has reflected the inequities of these intervention strategies without the consideration of diversifying its programs to cater to the cultural or sexual needs of youths. These unique needs are especially essential for youths as they are still in the process of developing their individual identities. An intersectionality lens will be helpful particularly to challenge and analyze existing strategies in their cultural sensitivity and inclusionary characteristics of other vulnerable subsets of the homeless population.

Literature Review Summary

Overall, academic literature on youth homelessness in Canada is limited, with most literature stemming from grey literature from social organizations. Additionally, Canadian literature reveals the main pathways and significant gaps that exist in supporting youth

homelessness – mainly structural and individual factors, highlighting the vulnerability and unique situation of precariously housed youths. Theoretical frameworks discussed are essential and will provide a better understanding of the prevention and intervention strategies necessary to provide practical policy recommendations.

Methods

A jurisdictional scan was conducted to identify and evaluate the current evidence for youth homelessness prevention and intervention strategies. Jurisdictional scans are “decision-making” tools that governments and organizations use to compare and evaluate how a policy problem is framed in other jurisdictions, helping them to compare and identify implementation considerations associated with options for policy recommendations (Kilian, Nidumolu, and Lavis, n.d.). They are generally viewed as a high-level overview of the topic and are not intended to be a systematic or fully comprehensive review. By referring to other jurisdictions, current information with evidence related to effective youth homeless strategies can be synthesized to understand best practices, benefits, and limitations of specific programming strategies, helping to navigate the issue in a policy-making setting.

Search Strategy

This jurisdictional review will include both scholarly research and grey literature published between January 2008 and December 2021. The following databases were used to execute the searches for academic articles: Academic Search Complete and SocINDEX. A web search was conducted to locate grey literature using keywords that mirrored search terms employed in the academic databases. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords (see Appendix A).

Analysis

Data extracted and taken from articles and reports were analyzed based on their examination of the effectiveness of targeted interventions that reflected results of intending to improve the long-term well-being of youths experiencing homelessness. Similar characteristics identified in the strategies discussed in the readings will be categorized and highlighted based on the similarities and approaches that Gaetz et al. (2018) highlight in their prevention model and typology.

Results

Search and Screening Results

The academic search resulted in 942 articles identified, with 11 search results meeting the inclusion criteria after removing duplicates.

Effectiveness Evaluation

Studies were compiled and categorized by intervention types mentioned based on the youth homelessness prevention typology from Gaetz et al. (2018), which consists of five main categories. These five categories are the following:

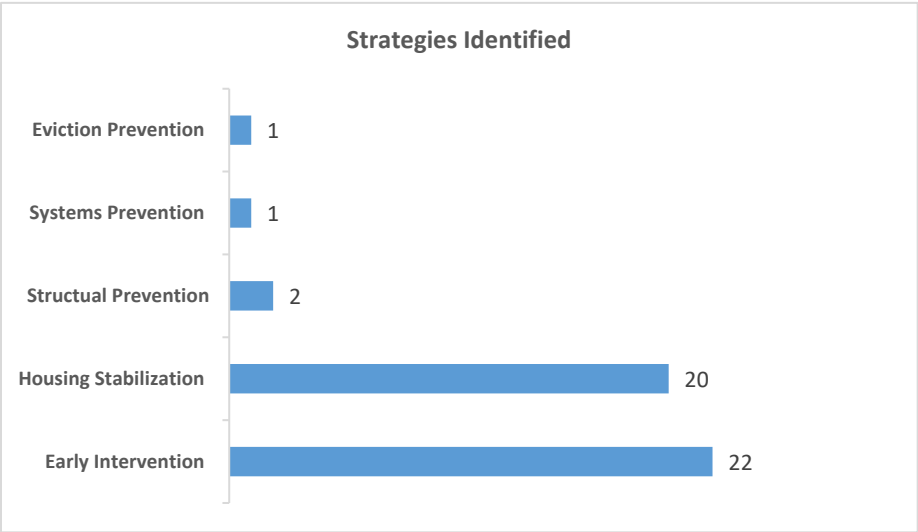
1. Structural prevention
2. Systems Preventions
3. Early Intervention
4. Eviction Prevention
5. Housing Stabilization

The frequency of strategy types discussed in the literature is evaluated and summarized in Figure 1. This jurisdictional scan found 46 types of strategies assessed on their effectiveness in reducing

and preventing Canadian youths experiencing homelessness. Two of the most common evaluation categories were early intervention and housing stabilization strategies aimed at youth homelessness. The less common evaluated strategies were systems prevention, structural prevention, and eviction prevention — many of the strategies evaluated in the readings commonly combined one or two of the categories. Appendix B provides a more detailed outline of the interventions, the jurisdiction where it was assessed, the prevention design, and overall outcomes. In terms of study location, the majority of youth homeless strategies assessed in the literature came from Ontario, followed by Calgary and Quebec. The following subsections describe the included studies and their results for each prevention category.

Figure 1

Number of Strategies Identified in Academic and Grey Literature Categorized



Outcomes

1. Structural Prevention

While structural prevention is a frequent argument of some of the leading causes of homelessness, it is also one of the least evaluated preventions. As seen in the results, only two

strategies had characteristics related to evaluating the structural prevention of youth homelessness. In this case, studies by Abramovich & Kimura (2021) and Toombs et al. (2021) explored the outcomes of targeted programs for LGBTQ2S+ and Indigenous youths experiencing homelessness. Both programs mainly fall under housing stabilization; however, they also fall under structural prevention as both aim to increase housing stability, economic security, and social inclusion for specific groups with higher risks of homelessness. The outcomes of the LGBTQ2S+ Transitional Housing Program assessed by Abramovich & Kimura (2021) were positive, with youths indicating better perceptions of safety and better overall targeted support for their needs. While there were mentions from the participants for improvements in diversifying mental health services, the importance of inclusive housing resulted in improved housing status for sexual minorities and overall social and mental well-being. The results of adapting the Housing Outreach Program Collaborative (HOP-C) program for indigenous youth were also shown to be effective in providing interventions through its enhancements of relevant cultural programming. This has helped to increase educational enrollment, attainment of employment, reduced hospitalizations, and increased life satisfaction (Toombs et al. 2021).

Both outcomes provide an outlook of the effectiveness of structural preventions aimed at targeting particularly vulnerable subpopulations of homelessness by providing transitional support to avert youths from experiencing homelessness when leaving public institutions. It also suggests that the efficacy of structural preventions for reducing risk factors can be combined with other prevention efforts to develop other intricate strategies grounded in equity and anti-discrimination. Although both studies took place in Ontario, their applicability to other jurisdictions in Canada is highly relevant. With racialized and sexual minorities often being overrepresented in the youth homeless population, it can be used to improve current LGBTQ2S+

and indigenous services in other jurisdictions, helping to guide future initiatives of equity and inclusion in youth homeless services.

2. Systems Prevention

Similarly to structural preventions, evaluations on systems preventions are minimal. One unique strategy identified in the publications was a transitional housing program called the RaY Optional Occupancy Mentorship (ROOM) Program. It is a pilot program designed to prevent youth from exiting the child welfare system into homelessness, as was a common pathway for youths in Manitoba (Parity 2019). While RaY is not an Indigenous-focused organization, most of their youth clientele seeking help when transitioning from public systems with the organization are mainly Indigenous. This has made them a prime organization in providing cultural counselling and adding cultural components into their program, including in their systems prevention strategy program known as ROOM. Indigenous youth in this program can connect with cultural staff and elders, receive traditional teachings, and reconnect with Indigenous communities (Parity 2019). These culturally sensitive supports are integrated with their ongoing housing supports that provide youths leaving public institutions to get the necessary supports that would stabilize their housing.

While the effectiveness of this program was not entirely clear as outcomes came from a selected individual of the program, it was seen that the youth participant who was previously transitioning out of Child and Family Services (CFS) was able to find housing and receive cultural counselling. This gave them an opportunity to facilitate stronger social inclusion and connectedness, allowing them to participate in ceremonies and receive their spirit name (Parity 2019). Effectiveness evaluation for this particular program lacks coherent evidence. However, it

discusses the importance of incorporating cultural counselling in conjunction with systems prevention.

3. Early Intervention

The largest number of publications focused on early intervention strategies. Many readings focused on outreach and community-based programs aimed to either divert youths from entering homelessness through services to enhance resiliency or provide access to support to quickly reduce long-term adverse outcomes. For instance, many early interventions evaluated focused on family and social reconnection to divert youths from entering shelters (Doré-Gauthier et al. 2019; Kozloff et al. 2016; Parity 2019; Rachel Caplan et al. 2021). These programs have been effective in preventing youth homelessness by decreasing shelter occupancy rate and substance use and helping to achieve housing stability quicker. Mental health and social-specific supports were also commonly seen in early intervention strategies as a means to stress management and trauma recovery, frequent individual risk factors of youth homelessness (K. Schwan, Fallon, and Milne 2018). The targeting of individual risk factors intervention focuses on the preliminary importance of establishing effective support for housing stabilization to follow.

Unlike structural preventions, early interventions focused on individual risk factors of youth homelessness, such as breakdown of relationships, conflict at home, and adverse childhood experiences. This makes case management important in early intervention strategies in providing youth-focused care that supports their complex and differing needs for success. Early interventions were also commonly embedded alongside housing stabilization strategies (Abramovich and Kimura 2021; CanadaHelps 2022a; Csiernik et al. 2017; Doré-Gauthier et al. 2020; Government of Canada 2018b; S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Daley, et al. 2019; S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Leon, et al. 2019; Kozloff et al. 2016; Parity 2019; Perreault et al. 2013; Rachel Caplan

et al. 2021; The Alex 2022; Toombs et al. 2021; Trellis Society 2022), showcasing the importance of youth homeless prevention being a continuum range of flexible and adaptable strategies rather than just a specific strategy type. The outcomes of early intervention evaluations showed that the aims of these strategies were able to prevent youth homelessness through enhancing family and natural support, shelter division, and housing-led support. However, the assessment of strategies related to school-based interventions and interventions related to sexual exploitation and trafficking are lacking. These were additional key forms of early intervention mentioned in the typology by Gaetz et al. (2018).

4. Eviction Prevention

One study evaluated the effectiveness of eviction-related prevention services, called CERA's Arts-Based Model for Rights Education. Their model focuses on educating youths on rental housing and how to navigate the complex system through training sessions and workshops (Parity 2019). They use an arts-based program approach to facilitate creative space for youths to build connections with others, helping to improve the learning experience. The outcomes of this eviction prevention strategy have reportedly been successful, with 88 per cent of youth participants reporting that the training gave them a substantially better understanding of their rights in rental housing (Parity 2019). Over 93 per cent of youth also indicated the learning sessions helped them to understand housing-related issues resolutions (Parity 2019). Further research and identification of eviction prevention strategies are needed for better analysis of effective best practices in providing related programs.

5. Housing Stabilization

Housing stabilization was the second most cited strategy that was evaluated. Numerous publications focused on housing and additional support to maintain youths' permanent housing.

Three unique academic studies evaluated specifically the Housing Outreach Program Collaborative (HOP-C), with a 6-month follow-up after entering the program (S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Daley, et al. 2019; S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Leon, et al. 2019; Toombs et al. 2021). This housing stabilization program was particularly popular and has been frequently evaluated due to its flexible, multi-component design that can shift depending on the needs of youths, providing a seamless and consistent delivery in supporting the balance of isolation and independence (S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Leon, et al. 2019). It was flexible in adapting and increasing engagement and outreach with marginalized populations such as indigenous youths (Toombs et al. 2021). Outcomes for reducing youth homelessness included gains in employment, education, and mental health service connectedness (S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Daley, et al. 2019; S. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Leon, et al. 2019; Toombs et al. 2021). Housing First (HF) programs, another popular strategy that many jurisdictions have implemented, have been effective in shelter diversion, providing flexible support and more targeted mental health access (CanadaHelps 2022b; Kozloff et al. 2016; Rachel Caplan et al. 2021; The Alex 2022). However, jurisdictional considerations, such as the lack of affordable housing, may affect housing stabilization programs in more expensive cities such as Toronto (Rachel Caplan et al. 2021). Lack of supply of affordable housing can be a limitation in transitioning out of the program and having long-term independent stable housing.

Discussion

This jurisdictional scan synthesizes recent literature that evaluates the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs that addresses youth homelessness in Canada. Overall, there is a growing effort across Canada in understanding the need to target the unique needs and circumstances of youths experiencing homelessness. Despite growing evaluations of effective

interventions, few assess preventions implemented in smaller jurisdictions in rural areas. As seen in the analysis, the majority of publications focused on strategies implemented in Toronto, followed by Calgary and the province of Quebec. As such, the effectiveness evidence from this jurisdictional analysis should be suggestive as many of these programs may have varying outcomes depending on the implementation location. Further future studies and evaluations should particularly focus on programs outside of major urban areas, as location characteristics and resource availability often differ in rural areas (Taylor 2018).

The analysis also showcases potential gaps in certain specific strategies that do not have enough sufficient coverage or evidence of their effectiveness. For instance, structural prevention and systems preventions were the least evaluated in youth-related strategies. This may be the case because structural preventions are generally broad universal strategies implemented at a societal level and affect a much larger segment of the general population beyond those who experience homelessness. This can include poverty reduction, anti-discrimination policy, affordable housing supply, and the effects of colonialism (Gaetz and DeJ 2017). Thus, it is important to have an intersectional lens when implementing structural preventions in order to create equitable outcomes for all.

When wanting to address inadequate policy and service delivery significant changes, coordinated efforts take time. Similarly to systems prevention, careful changes need to happen within public institutions as it affects individuals beyond those who experience homelessness. Evidence on eviction prevention strategies was particularly thin, with only one publication assessing its outcomes. This illustrates a gap in the lack of programs and strategies designed to educate and prevent individuals from being evicted from their homes. While this can be classified as a form of early intervention and housing stabilization, the relationship between age

and housing precarity is vital to consider as youths frequently face challenges accessing rental housing, maintaining rental housing, and avoiding eviction (Gaetz et al. 2018). This makes education on housing supports, landlord/tenant legislation and policy, and crisis support for those at risk of eviction essential, as youth often lack the earning power and education to obtain and sustain housing.

With all things considered, the growing evaluated outcomes of these youth-based strategies help provide a promising general framework of what has been working and the next steps in improving their delivery and services. For instance, all publications analyzed regarding a particular strategy or program emphasized the unique needs of youths experiencing homelessness, citing the importance of targeted initiatives. This focus has resulted in unique evaluated programs due to their adaption and alignment of tailored support for youths. For example, Youth Reconnect or Family and Natural Support (FNS) programs focus on strengthening relationships between vulnerable youths and their families, friends, and other meaningful individuals in their lives (Gaetz et al. 2018). These programs were catered to youths who may be still developing to build resilience and improve social connectedness and wellbeing, aspects that youths may need support to grow. This relates to the theory of reciprocal determinism, as behaviours can be influenced and shaped through our experiences. By providing supportive connections and a supportive environment, it can help to deter youths from wanting to become more entrenched in street life. In contrast, the lack of intervention could result in long-term adult homelessness if not dealt with quickly. In other words, stability and seamless support are essential to youth-targeted strategies to reduce or prevent youth homelessness.

Many of the outcomes in these strategies have cited positive effects and improvements to the wellbeing of vulnerable youths compared to if they did not receive any support. Case

management, peer support, and housing-led support were particularly shown to help with long-term housing stability, increased education attainment, employment opportunities, and much more. Additionally, various individual-focused interventions such as mental health support, therapy, and substance treatment were associated with decreased substance use, increased mental well-being, and increased life satisfaction. However, it should be noted that these individual-focused interventions have not been analyzed beyond a few weeks or a few months post-intervention, suggesting that further evaluations on the long-term effectiveness (i.e., annually) of these supports should be conducted.

Overall, while many of the outcomes of these studies may not be replicable in other jurisdictions, they provide many insights on best practices and strategies that may be applicable. That is, understanding the policy problem of youth homelessness and how it is framed in an area will help to provide potential suggestions for best practices. For instance, evaluations done on Calgary-specific programs have shown to be focused on early intervention and housing stabilization prevention. We also see that many current homeless adults in Calgary experience their first onset of homelessness as a youth, suggesting that prevention strategies have not been adequate in providing enough support for youths to leave homelessness quickly. Many interplaying factors could be contributing to these issues in Calgary, such as the lack of supply and rising housing costs in general, lessening substance support, and much more. These structural and systems failures are also current evident gaps in strategy evaluation. These issues have been acknowledged in Calgary's 2017 plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, showcasing that not only is there a lack of assessment of the effective strategies related to structural and systems prevention, but there has also been a lack of implementation related to structural and system failures.

Limitations

Due to the time constraints of this jurisdictional analysis, there are several limitations. Firstly, the search strategy that was conducted only screened the first five results for each search rather than a comprehensive screening of all the results. This may have resulted in missing publications that could have been included in the analysis. The sole focus on Canadian English-only publications could have also resulted in missing relevant readings that could have been included to create a more comprehensive analysis. Additionally, comprehensive studies and publications on youth homelessness were lacking, making it difficult to find research variety. For instance, in Canada, major publications and studies on youth homelessness come from Stephen Gaetz, a well-known professor focusing on homelessness in Canada, which could introduce bias. There is also limited guidelines and standardization of the conduction and interpretation of jurisdictional scans, which may result in inconsistencies in analysis and conclusions (Kilian, Nidumolu, and Lavis, n.d.).

Conclusions

Although Canada is continually moving forward in providing initiatives focused on youth homelessness, the evaluation of their effectiveness is minimal, and additional research should be continued in this area. Further evaluation of current strategies will help to improve current policies and initiatives surrounding youth homelessness and help navigate existing gaps that may not be covered in current programs. For instance, there are currently fewer programs regarding eviction prevention, which could provide suggestions to policy-makers to develop policy that protects vulnerable populations at risk of losing their homes and ways to navigate the difficulties of understanding tenant and housing laws. Additionally, further research and evaluations of

youth-based homeless strategies beyond urban areas need to be considered. Characteristics and certain challenges faced by youths experiencing homelessness often vary throughout locations, especially in rural locations. Widespread application of an intersectional lens in youth homelessness strategies has been shown to have positive impacts, highlighting the importance of future programming in creating a safer and more inclusive social space youths can trust. In short, based on this analysis, the following key recommendations are provided for improving the evaluation and implementation of future youth-targeted strategies and programs:

1. Policy analysts and researchers are advised to collaborate regularly to help evaluate and provide insight into effective strategies for preventing and stabilizing youth homelessness.
2. Youths who have entered certain targeted programs should be tracked regularly to help gauge the outcomes of certain interventions.
3. Increased consultation, outreach, and engagement with precariously housed youths and those currently in youth-targeted programs to provide better data on intervention effectiveness.
4. Application and training of an intersectional lens in understanding and developing youth-targeted homelessness programs.
5. Additional further analysis of youth-based homeless programs in rural areas.

Overall, the continual dedication toward preventing youth homelessness will be essential in lowering those who end up chronically homeless, a population that often struggles to leave life on the streets. Future evaluations of specific programs from organizations, governments, and research will provide a foundation for intervention improvements that will increase the well-being of youth homelessness. Calgary has showcased its innovations in pioneering its plan to end

youth homelessness. However, further investigation of the outcomes of currently implemented programs will be necessary for developing long-term, practical and effective improvements that cater to the needs of Calgarian youths experiencing homelessness.

Appendix A: Sample Search Terms

Category	Search Terms
Population	- youth* homeless*
AND Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 50%;">- prevent* <li style="width: 50%;">- program* <li style="width: 50%;">- strateg* <li style="width: 50%;">- initiative* <li style="width: 50%;">- interven* <li style="width: 50%;">- servic* <li style="width: 50%;">- plan* <li style="width: 50%;">- respons* <li style="width: 50%;">- project*
AND Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 50%;">- Canad* <li style="width: 50%;">- Calgary <li style="width: 50%;">- Alberta
AND Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 50%;">- result* <li style="width: 50%;">- evaluat* <li style="width: 50%;">- effect* <li style="width: 50%;">- impact* <li style="width: 50%;">- outcome*

Appendix B: Included Literature Summaries

Publication	Literature Type	Jurisdiction(s)	Strategy Type(s)	Study/Evaluation Design	Follow-Up Period(s)	Outcome(s)
Peer Support in the Homeless Youth Context: Requirements, Design, and Outcomes (S. A. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Daley, et al. 2019)	Academic	Large Canada urban setting -Toronto, Ontario	Housing Outreach Project Collaborative (HOP-C) - Youth peer support - Housing stabilization - Tertiary prevention - Secondary prevention	Qualitative and Quantitative - Feasibility Study - Interviews - Youths (18-26)	6-month period	- Social/mental wellbeing and inclusion - Sense of community and engagement - Implications for highly marginalized youth populations
Adaption and Implementation of the Housing Outreach Program Collaborative (HOP-C) North for Indigenous Youth (Toombs et al. 2021)	Academic	Thunder Bay, Ontario	Housing Outreach Project Collaborative (HOP-C) - Youth peer support - Structural Prevention - Housing stabilization - Secondary prevention - Tertiary prevention	Qualitative and Quantitative -Self-report survey -Interviews -Indigenous youths (16-24)	6-month period	-Social/mental wellbeing -Increased educational enrollment, attainment of employment, reduced hospitalizations, and increased engagement in clinical mental health services -Life satisfaction -Adapted for Indigenous youth (relevant culture programming) -Enhancing Outcomes for INDIGENOUS Youth
Outcomes for Youth Living in Canada's First LGBTQ2S Transitional Housing Program (Abramovich and Kimura 2021)	Academic	Greater Toronto	Canada's first transitional housing program for LGBTQ2S youth, operated by the YMCA - Housing stabilization - Early Intervention - Tertiary prevention - Secondary prevention	Qualitative and Quantitative - Survey - Interviews - LGBTQ2S youths (17-24)	- First when entering the program and second when exiting the program - Interviews between 2016-2017	- Inclusive targeted housing - Higher level of safety - Normalize gender and sexually-diverse identities - Social/mental wellbeing - Unmet mental health needs and the need for a more diverse mental health team

Publication	Literature Type	Jurisdiction(s)	Strategy Type(s)	Study/Evaluation Design	Follow-Up Period(s)	Outcome(s)
Substance Use of Homeless and Precariously Housed Youth in a Canadian Context (Csiernik et al. 2017)	Academic	London, Ontario	Three-year project examining intervention and treatment service provision for youths experiencing homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early intervention - Housing stabilization - Tertiary prevention - Secondary prevention 	Qualitative and Quantitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire - Open-ended questions - Youths (16-25) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants completed a total of four interviews - Administered once every 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interventions led to substance use decreases for both sexes - There remains a small group of females that continued to have substance-related issues. - More targeted initiatives are required to address the unique needs of these high-risk young women
How to help homeless youth suffering from first episode psychosis and substance use disorders? The creation of a new intensive outreach intervention team (Doré-Gauthier et al. 2019)	Academic	Montreal, Quebec	Outreach intervention team (EQIP SOL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early intervention - Tertiary prevention 	Qualitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long prospective longitudinal study - Interviews - Youths (23.4 mean age) 	12-month period for two years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority reached housing stability after 6 months - Mental wellness - This suggests that homeless youth suffering from first episode psychosis and addiction (HYFEPA) improve with an intensive outreach intervention team integrated to an early psychosis intervention (EIS). - Long-term effectiveness yet to be concluded
Specialized assertive community treatment intervention for homeless youth with first episode psychosis and substance use disorder: A 2-year follow-up study (Doré-Gauthier et al. 2020)	Academic	Montreal, Quebec	An intensive assertive community intervention team (IACIT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early intervention - Secondary prevention 	Qualitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long prospective longitudinal study - Interviews - Youths (23.6-24.1 mean age range) 	24 months of follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth suffering from first episode psychosis and substance use disorder (HYPS) receiving early intervention services (EIS) and getting support from a intensive assertive community intervention team (IACIT) achieved housing stability more rapidly and

Publication	Literature Type	Jurisdiction(s)	Strategy Type(s)	Study/Evaluation Design	Follow-Up Period(s)	Outcome(s)
						spent less time hospitalized than HYPS getting EIS only
"Housing First" for Homeless Youth With Mental Illness (Kozloff et al. 2016)	Academic	Five Canadian Cities - Moncton - Montreal - Toronto - Winnipeg - Vancouver	Housing First (HF) - Early intervention - Housing Stabilization - Secondary prevention - Tertiary prevention	Quantitative - Randomized controlled trial - Youths (18-24)	Every 6 months for 24 months	- "Housing First" was associated with improved housing stability in homeless youth with mental illness.
Dialectical Behavior Therapy as a catalyst for change in street-involved youth: A mixed methods study (McCay et al. 2015)	Academic	Two Canadian service agencies in cities - Toronto, Ontario - Calgary, Alberta	12-week Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) intervention - Early intervention - Secondary prevention	Qualitative and Quantitative - Quasi-experimental mixed methods design - Youths (16-24)	12-weeks	- Social/mental wellbeing - Social inclusion - Youth who received the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) intervention demonstrated significant improvement in mental health challenges - Improvement in resilience, self-esteem, and social connectedness immediately post-intervention. - Participants in the wait-list control did not demonstrate significant improvement on any of the study outcome measures. - The gains attained for the intervention group were sustained at four to 10 weeks post-intervention
A vacation for the homeless: evaluating a collaborative community respite programme in	Academic	Countryside Quebec	Urban Breakaway Project - Housing stabilization - Early intervention - A structured respite program - Secondary prevention	Qualitative and Quantitative - Questionnaire - Open-ended questions - Youths and adults (18-67)	No follow-up - Data collection took place within the project's first	- Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the services received

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Canada through clients' perspectives			- Tertiary prevention		year of operation - October 18th, 2005 to October 17th, 2006	- Greatest changes in relation to mood, leisure, appetite, physical condition and self-esteem
“The one thing that actually helps”: Art creation as a self-care and health-promoting practice amongst youth experiencing homelessness (K. J. Schwan, Fallon, and Milne 2018)	Academic	Canada	Arts-based programming - Promote mental wellness and recovery, social inclusion, and life skills - Housing stabilization - Early intervention - Secondary prevention	Qualitative - Interviews - Youths (16-24)	No follow-up - Data collected between January and May 2016	- Participants identified important benefits to art creation, - Stress management, positive identity formation, trauma recovery, and improved self-esteem - Social/mental wellbeing - Broad applicability of this intervention across demographic groups, developmental stages, mental health challenges, and life experiences - Arts-based programming is a promising intervention
A Relationship-Based Intervention to Improve Social Connectedness in Street-Involved Youth: A Pilot Study (McCay et al. 2011)	Academic	Downtown Toronto	Relationship-based intervention - Early intervention - Development of positive relationships to build strengths and self-esteem - Secondary prevention	Quantitative - Preliminary pilot study - Quasi-experimental design - Intervention and comparison groups were compared - Youths (16-24)	6-weeks	- Participants receiving the intervention demonstrated a significant improvement in social connectedness, with a trend toward decreased hopelessness. Those participants who did not receive the intervention did not demonstrate any improvements in social connectedness and hopelessness

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						- Relationship-based intervention may strengthen social relationships and to mitigate overwhelming hopelessness and despair
Youth Without Shelter (YWS) CanadaHelps Charity Page (CanadaHelps 2022b)	Grey	Toronto, Ontario	Resilience (strength) based case management - Dedicated to providing shelter and support programs - Early intervention - Housing stabilization - Secondary prevention - YWS's six core empowering programs: - Emergency Residential Program - Life Skills Program - Housing Program - Employment Program - Stay in School Program - Educational Outreach Program	N/A	N/A	2018-2019 Highlights - Employment Program: 65 youths were employed - Youth integrated approach to accessing life skills support: 1,025 participated in one-on-one life skills sessions - Housing First framework 41 youths moved into permanent housing
Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth Charity Page (CanadaHelps 2022a).	Grey	Toronto, Ontario	Youth-targeted programs - Family Reconnect - Harm reduction - Graphic communication and print training - Youth succeeding in employment - Education program life skills - Housing stabilization - Early intervention	Annual Report	Annually	2019-2020 Annual Report - 821 residents found shelter, safety and 24-hour wrap around support - Eva's Family Reconnect Program: 158 Youth and family members were supported to build healthier relationships - 75 Youth succeeded in the employment training program

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Shelter, Housing & Outreach (Trellis Society 2022b).	Grey	Calgary, Alberta	Shelter and long-term housing - Housing stabilization - Early intervention	N/A	N/A	- 239 received help leaving homelessness - 19 LGBTQ+ youths found secured housing - 145 were diverted from a temporary shelter and homelessness
RADAR: Re-Engaging Academically Disconnected Adolescents Respectfully (Government of Canada 2018b).	Grey (government report)	Calgary, Alberta	RADAR: Re-Engaging Academically Disconnected Adolescents Respectfully Initiative - Youths (13-15) - Early intervention - Housing stabilization	Qualitative and Quantitative - Outcome evaluation - General analysis -	24-months	- Successfully engaged and connect vulnerable youth to appropriate supports and services. - 10 of RADAR's 18 active youth were in attendance in the RADAR classroom more than 40% of the time. - RADAR is effectively supporting these youth to begin to re-engage with educational programming and to exhibit some student-like behaviour
The Alex Impact Report 2020-2021 (The Alex 2022).	Grey	Calgary, Alberta	- The Alex Health Care Centres - Youth Health Centre - Community and Youth Health Buses - The Alex's Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Housing First (HF) programs - Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team - HomeBase with Intensive Case Management (ICM)	Impact/Annual Report	Annually	- 66% and 65% of Community and Youth Health Centre clients reported that Alex services helped them to avoid serious problems like homelessness, jail, or hospital - Access to preventable urgent dental care - 72% of opioid-dependent clients were initiated on pharmacotherapy had improved physical and

Publication	Literature Type	Jurisdiction(s)	Strategy Type(s)	Study/Evaluation Design	Follow-Up Period(s)	Outcome(s)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Place-based permanent supportive housing (PBPSH) - The Mental Health and Addiction Outreach Initiative (MAOI) - Assisted Self-Isolation Site (ASIS) - The Alex Community Food Centre (CFC) - Early intervention - Housing Stabilization 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mental health and increased recovery - 66% of youth who received counselling reported a significant decline in psychological distress - Formerly homeless people with many challenges remained safely housed (no youth specification) - 47% of a youth reported significant improvements at six to 18 months follow up
Youth Programs (Trellis Society 2022a).	Grey	Calgary, Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelter, Housing & Outreach - Youth Group Programming - Education & Employment Support - Housing stabilization 	Annual Impact Report (2019)	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intersectional lens - 86% of youth in residential care learned self-care skills - 47 youths sexually exploited received support - 333 youths acquired work experience - 95% of youths in the All in For Youth Program enrolled in next school year or graduated
Parity - Preventing and Sustaining Exits from Youth Homelessness in Canada (Parity 2019).	Grey/Academic	Canada - Compilation of articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RaY Optional Occupancy Mentorship (ROOM) Program - Systems Prevention - Preparing Young Women for Safe, Secure Housing Pilot Program - Early Intervention - Housing Stabilization Choices for Youth (CFY) - Housing stabilization 	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RaY Optional Occupancy Mentorship (ROOM) Program - Benefitted from cultural counselling Choices for Youth (CFY) - Drop in shelter occupancy - Consistent decrease in child

Publication	Literature Type	Jurisdiction(s)	Strategy Type(s)	Study/Evaluation Design	Follow-Up Period(s)	Outcome(s)
			Family and Natural Supports (FNS) Program - Early intervention - Housing stabilization CERA's Arts-Based Model for Rights Education - Eviction prevention DK Leadership program - Housing stabilization			apprehension rates; increased engagement with educational systems and employment opportunities; an increase in addressing physical and mental health issues for both moms and children - Long-term stabilized housing for participants Family and Natural Supports (FNS) Program - Decreased shelter occupancy rate from 61 per cent to 49 per cent (Calgary) - Intervention before residing in shelter CERA's Arts-Based Model for Rights Education - 88 per cent of youth workshop participants reported that the training gave them a substantially better understanding of their rights in rental housing - Over 93 per cent of youth indicated learning about housing-related issues resolution - 77 per cent of youth workshop participants indicated activities throughout the session improved

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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> their learning experience DK Leadership program - Identity capital intervention had a positive impact - Positive effects of self-esteem, physical community integration, social connectedness, hopelessness
Impacts of a Peer Support Program for Street-Involved Youth - Homeless Hub Research Summary Series (The Homeless Hub 2012).	Academic/Grey	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links program - Peer support - Social connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative - Interviews 	12 2-hour sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program helped change the participants' initial preconceptions of one another. - Enabled the youth to develop better communication and interpersonal skills, to overcome fears of rejection, and to become more outgoing - Self-esteem - Encourage other peer support interventions that improve the employment prospects, economic wellbeing, and health of street-involved youth
Supporting Youth At Risk of Homelessness: An Evaluation of Hamilton's Youth Reconnect Program (Rachel Caplan et al. 2021).	Grey	Hamilton, Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Reconnect - Youths (13-24) - Family and Natural Supports (FNS) framework - Guided by principles of the Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) program model - Early intervention - Housing stabilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative and Quantitative - A review of program documentation - Interviews - Reconnect workers - Focus groups - 2018-2019 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelter diversion - Flexibility of supports - Access to mental health supports Challenges - Lack of housing - Resource limitations - Limitation in access to - Transitioning out of the program

Publication	Literature Type	Jurisdiction(s)	Strategy Type(s)	Study/Evaluation Design	Follow-Up Period(s)	Outcome(s)
More than four walls and a roof needed: A complex tertiary prevention approach for recently homeless youth (S. A. Kidd, Vitopoulos, Frederick, Leon, et al. 2019).	Academic	Canada	Housing Outreach Program Collaboration (HOP-C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth peer support - Housing stabilization - Tertiary prevention - Secondary prevention 	Qualitative and Quantitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed methods design - Pre-post intervention metrics - Interviews 	6-months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This programs' flexible, multicomponent design appeared to map on well to the complex and shifting needs of youths - Gains in employment, education, and mental health service connectedness - Higher engagement with marginalized populations - Seamless delivery and supporting youth in the balance of isolation versus independence

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