

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth Employment Counselling Program at Kingston Employment and Youth Services: An Analysis of Female Voluntary Withdrawals
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The services of the Youth Employment Counselling Centre (YECC) at Kingston Employment and Youth Services (KEYS) are designed for young people who are out of school and out of work and are facing barriers in their search for work. Individual employment counselling is the fundamental service of the YECC program. However, YECC clients may also access other employment and training programs. A major goal of the YECC program is to ensure that clients will go on into employment, education, and/or training. However, in recent years there is a growing number of clients who stop participating, or "voluntarily withdraw" from the YECC program.

This report investigated the reasons for "voluntary withdrawal" among past female YECC clients. While there is growing concern with youth employment issues, women have traditionally faced unique barriers to securing paid work. These barriers may be connected to special employability needs, and are therefore particularly relevant to program development and evaluation at KEYS.

Chapter One provides background information on the establishment of Kingston, Employment and Youth Services and their Youth Employment Counselling Program. YECC eligibility requirements, service delivery model, and associated services and programs are described in detail. In addition, the purpose of the report is presented and an outline of the report is described.

The literature review is presented in Chapter Two. A number of sources were consulted to develop and describe the variety of pre-employment barriers affecting women. These barriers include: gender

stereotyping, occupational segregation, women's dual roles (at home and in the paid work force), education, access to child care, and accessibility to transportation. In addition to these barriers, other factors of self esteem, abuse, as well as teenage pregnancy are described because of their particular effect on young women's employment behaviour.

Chapter Three describes the method I used to obtain and analyze research data and is divided into three sections. The first section describes the background to the development of my research question and my involvement with KEYS. My personal reflections and experiences which led me to become involved with KEYS and pursue this research are also identified in this section. The second section describes how I became familiar with the issues surrounding my research, through conducting the literature review and volunteering at KEYS. The third section describes how I conducted the research through five phases: i) Question Development; ii) Testing Phase; iii) Sampling Phase; iv) Survey Phase; and v) Data Analysis Phase. Face to face interviews were conducted with ten past female clients of the YECC program. The reasons for this method of data collection are outlined in this chapter. Analysis of the responses obtained during the interviews uncovered various patterns with regard to the participants' experiences with employment barriers, the YECC program, and the reasons why they left KEYS.

My analysis and results of this study are present in Chapter Four. This Chapter begins with descriptive personal profiles of the study participants, illustrating the variety of backgrounds and experiences of the young women who participated in this study. I found that the research participants had encountered many of the employment barriers described in

Chapter Two. A summary of the employment barriers faced by the study participants is included in this Chapter. There were a variety of reasons found for voluntary withdrawal from the YECC program. The decision to voluntarily withdraw was predominately found to occur when clients' expectations for YECC services were not met. Detailed examination of unmet client expectations is outlined in this Chapter, revealing more specific reasons for voluntary withdrawal including: disappointment upon discovery that KEYS was not a job placement centre, disappointment with FUTURES training, and disappointment with KEYS informal counselling style. Less predominate reasons for withdrawing were due to personal circumstances and leaving upon completion of training.

The final Chapter of this report presents recommendations and conclusions. The main findings of the report are summarized, and limitations of this research as well as suggestions for further study are identified. The recommendations provided are aimed in two directions: those intended to increase client satisfaction with the YECC program; and those intended to improve the administrative component of recording YECC voluntary withdrawals. The latter recommendations include a manner in which the agency can themselves gain a deeper understanding of YECC voluntary withdrawals, and will be a useful evaluative tool for the agency. The former recommendations suggest that KEYS clarify its role and services to clients, establish clearer guidelines on their usage of an "informal counselling style", and conduct careful monitoring of clients' search for training placements.