

***Addressing the Needs of Homeless Youth Through Housing,  
Education, and Career Services in Kingston, Ontario, Canada***

***By***

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Executive Summary

Youth homelessness is experienced by youth between ages of 16-24, where they are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These youth typically lack social structures, stability, and sense of security in their lives. They also face many issues such as drugs, violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy. In the past decade, youth homelessness has become an increasingly important issue in Canada. Many organizations such as Covenant House in Toronto and Crisis House in Calgary are designed specifically to help homeless youth in finding shelter spaces. However, in smaller cities such as Kingston, there is a lack of reports on the conditions of homeless youth. The aim of this master's report is to fill the gaps and provide a research base for future studies. The report provides a detailed literature review on the subject of youth homelessness, and an analysis of how agencies have met the needs of homeless youth in Kingston based on interviews with youth and agencies to identify gaps in services. The agencies interviewed include Kingston Youth Shelter (KYS), Kingston Youth Employment Services, and Passage House.

The interview results show that with the exception of employment needs, all other agencies have addressed the needs of homeless youth in

their service areas respectively. From the interview results, it is determined that in Kingston, there is a range of shelters from emergency shelters to longer term housing. Therefore, homeless youth have the opportunity to move along the system from Kingston Youth Shelter to Passage House to Journey House, and living independently. Each stage serves a purpose. For instance, KYS helps youth establish a daily routine, and provides a sense of stability for homeless youth. Passage House provides life skills and encourages interaction between peers by promoting a shared living environment. Journey House gives youth more space to experience the concept of living independently. These steps allow homeless youth to move through the system as they become more familiar with living independently. The education system including Second Chance and Street Smart offers youth an opportunity to complete high school at their own pace, and increases their chances of receiving post secondary education. Improving their education is expected to improve their life and work opportunities and the chances for success in their lives. Even though KEYS do not currently offer services specifically for homeless youth, it is offering services that homeless youth can take advantage of, such as free job training and career counseling. With these services available to homeless youth in Kingston, it is reasonable to expect that youth who experience homelessness have some opportunities to improve their housing, education and employment opportunities.

Several gaps were identified in the services provided by the agencies. For example, Kingston Youth Shelter is currently lacking daytime programming and extended operational hours for youth to use the facilities on a regular basis. The shared-living model was identified as the top priority in

the future improvements of services at Passage House. For KEYS, the gap identified was that the agency currently does not offer services that specifically target homeless youth.

To conclude, several recommendations tailored for the agencies, the City of Kingston as well as general researchers were suggested. The following are a summary of a few key points that should be taken from this research:

1. The city should increase collaboration with the agencies to conduct statistical analysis and produce a detailed report with regard to the current conditions of homeless youth in Kingston, and obtain an estimate of the number of youth that needs assistance.
2. The agencies need to conduct needs assessment and feasibility analysis to determine if the current service approach is efficient, and if funding is reaching the area that is most in need.
3. Federal and Provincial Governments should provide necessary fundings to aid the development of a comprehensive program in Canada that focuses on researching the topic of youth homelessness, and providing services to homeless youth.
4. The agencies need to increase outreach and run campaigns to raise awareness within the Kingston community with regard to the homeless youth population.