

Impact of an Integrated Approach to Youth Service Delivery - Evidence from Choices for Youth

Objective:

To highlight the impact of Choices for Youth (CFY) integrated youth service delivery model for the population they serve.

Practice Points:

1. CFY's integrated youth service delivery model provides important wrap around services, in addition to housing, to address underlying drivers of instability, including trauma, mental health, and social disconnection.
2. Over 1200 youth under the age of 30 are supported every year by CFY programming that includes housing, health, employment, and family supports.
3. Equity deserving groups represented in population served by CFY:
 - a. 36% experienced homelessness in previous six months
 - b. 35% identify as living with a disability
 - c. 32% identify as 2SLGBTQIA+
 - d. 4% identify as Indigenous
4. Evaluation of youth supported by CFY indicates significant improvements in housing stability, self-reported mental health status, strengthened family relationships, and engagement in employment among youth engaged with CFY programming.

Background:

CFY is a non-profit, social services organization based in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. CFY delivers services through a continuum of care that includes emergency shelter, supportive and transitional housing, primary care and mental health services, employment and education programming, and community and family-based services.

The organization operates 69 housing options, including shelter beds and supportive housing units, as well as affordable housing units, providing immediate support for youth in crisis and long-term stability. Youth accessing these services often present with multiple intersecting needs, including mental health challenges, substance use, and family instability.

Additional information about CFY and their programming can be found in [this previous Practice Points article](#).

Data

Data was obtained from CFY's Client Management System (CMS) and EMHware. Data is collected through youth intake forms, quarterly impact surveys completed with youth and staff-reported intervention data.

Results:



Figure 1. Integrated Services Delivered by CFY

- Approximately 70% of youth engage in food security services, while 43% access mental health supports, and 33% engage in family and natural supports programming.
- Program outcomes demonstrate evidence of effectiveness across multiple domains.

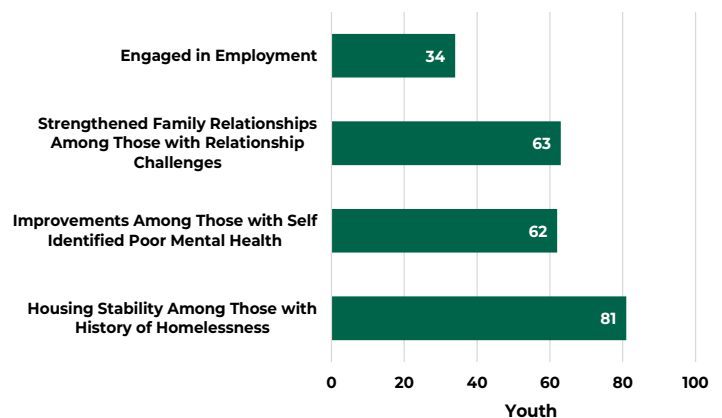


Figure 2. Program Outcomes Across Domains of CFY Supports

- 34% of participants were engaged in employment
 - ◇ Education, employment and social enterprise programs provide transitional employment, skills

development, and certifications to help youth overcome barriers including limited work experience, trauma, and disrupted education pathways

- 63% of participants with family challenges indicated strengthened relationships
- 62% of participants with self-reported poor mental health reported improvements to their mental health
- 81% of participants with a history of homelessness experienced housing stability

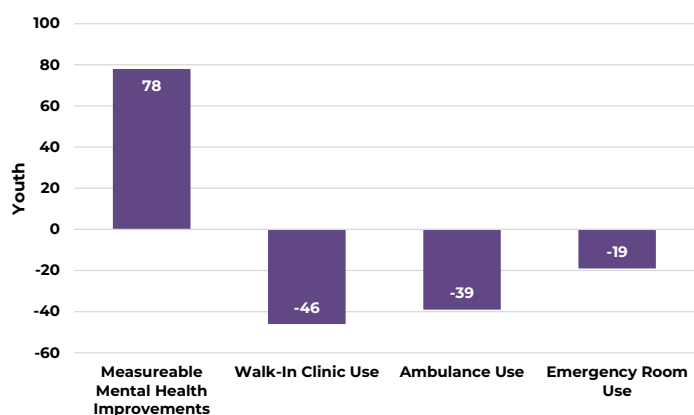


Figure 3. Impacts on Youth with Poor Mental Health

- System level impacts are also reported. In youth with self-reported poor mental health:
 - ◊ 78% reported improvements in mental health
 - ◊ 46% fewer reported walk-in clinic use
 - ◊ 39% fewer reported ambulance use
 - ◊ 19% fewer reported emergency room use

Program Model Effectiveness

CFY's approach is grounded in Housing First for Youth principles, trauma-informed care, harm reduction, and integrated service delivery. This model reflects a growing body of evidence demonstrating that coordinated, holistic supports are more effective than siloed interventions in addressing youth homelessness. By combining housing with mental health, employment, and family supports, CFY is able to produce sustained improvements in outcomes across multiple domains.

Conclusion

1. The integration of services, including housing and comprehensive supports, drives long-term stability and improved life outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.
2. Outcomes achieved through CFY's integrated services model highlight the effectiveness of this approach with improvements in housing stability, mental health, family connections and engagement in employment.
3. There is well-documented risk of chronic homelessness among individuals, who experience housing instability at a young age¹ (Gaetz et al., 2016).
4. National data indicate that a majority of youth experiencing homelessness report mental health challenges² (Government of Canada, 2024). Improvements in mental health are closely linked to increased capacity for employment, education, and independent living.
5. Interpersonal conflict is one of the leading causes of youth homelessness, so family-focused interventions can serve as both a prevention and stabilization strategy¹ (Gaetz et al., 2016). In many cases, repairing these relationships may be the pathway that youth need to housing stability.
6. Youth who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), face long-term risks of economic and social exclusion.
7. Integrated, community-based supports can reduce reliance on acute healthcare systems, contributing to broader public system efficiencies.

References

1. Choices for Youth. (2024/25). Annual Report. St. John's, NL: Choices for Youth. Gaetz, S., O'Grady, B., Kidd, S., & Schwan, K. (2016).
2. Homelessness Data Snapshot: Youth Homelessness in Canada. Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. [Housing Infrastructure Canada 2024](#).