

**EVALUATION OF THE
ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF STREET-INVOLVED
AND HOMELESS YOUTH
IN HAMILTON PROJECT**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is an evaluation of the three year project led by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative and based on the 27 recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* report. It reflects the project's status as of June 30, 2009 when the community research was completed. There is a project update provided in section 9.0 of the report that outlines a significant project development that occurred after that date.

1.1 Background

The Street-Involved Youth Network was formed in 2002 when community partners from the street-involved youth services sector in Hamilton came together to initiate a collective project. This collaboration acted as a catalyst to the development of a networking group comprised of street-involved youth service providers from agencies across Hamilton. Front-line and management level service providers met regularly to share information, to talk about service system trends, and to provide support to one another. In 2004, a visit by documentary filmmaker, Andree Cazabon, provided the right atmosphere for moving the street-involved youth service system forward in terms of their partnerships. The management started to meet separately from the front line staff – a move which provided clarity and role definition for each planning table.

It was after that event that the managers from the street youth serving agencies partnered with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to work on the *Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* report. Released in October 2005, the *Addressing the Needs* report was met with community support and a substantial resource commitment from the government of Canada. Over the next three years, the management committee (re-named the Street Youth Planning Collaborative) worked with the SPRC to implement the 27 recommendations outlined in the report.

Over the last three years, this organizational structure evolved into a three-pronged committee system that ensured the representation of youth, front-line workers and management in the project. The three groups are the Street Youth Planning Collaborative, the Street-Involved Youth Network and the Street Youth Involvement Committee.

1.2 The Street Youth Planning Collaborative

The Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) is a group of five directors from Hamilton organizations who are mandated to work directly with homeless youth. This group meets once per month and communicates regularly in between meetings to understand the continuum of services for homeless youth, and work together to fill gaps within that continuum. The member agencies are Good Shepherd Youth Services, the Living Rock Ministries, Wesley Urban Ministries, Catholic Family Services and Alternatives for Youth. The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton is also a member in an ex-officio capacity.

The functions of the SYPC are outlined as follows:

1. Ensure collaboration, enhancement, support and ensure communications between SYPC service providers.

2. Identify issues and gaps in service based on research, information from street involved and homeless youth and the needs identified by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative Network.
3. Develop and endorse a community plan and a yearly work plan for the SYPC and network groups.
4. Initiate and encourage innovative solutions and system planning.
5. Heighten public awareness and education concerning street-involved and homeless youth.
6. Meet bi-monthly or as needs exist/arise.

1.3 The Street-Involved Youth Network

The Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) is the frontline arm of the SYPC. The SIYN boasts a membership of 35 individuals from 20 community agencies. In addition to representation from the SYPC agencies, affiliate organizations also send delegates. This group identifies emerging trends and issues in the homeless youth community, organizes ongoing training, and builds cross-agency collaboration around serving young people with complex needs.

The SIYN's objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To encourage partnerships and enhance communications among service providers offering programs to street involved youth.
2. To identify issues and gaps in service based on research and information from young people and frontline service providers.
3. To initiate and encourage innovative solutions to identified issues and gaps in service.
4. To strive to heighten public awareness and education.

1.4 The Street Youth Involvement Committee

The Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC) is the youth engagement arm of the SYPC. Five currently or formerly homeless youth meet once per month to provide advice and direction to the SPRC support staff around youth friendliness and the lived experience of homelessness. The group is consulted by other community initiatives and completes youth-led projects.

1.5 Project Goal and Objectives

Project Goal: To reduce homelessness and street-involvement among youth in Hamilton through the implementation of recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* report.

Project Objectives:

- To coordinate, facilitate, and provide support to the implementation of the recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* report.
- To enable the development of several pilot project initiatives with evaluation components based on best practice research.
- To build on the initial project success of bringing together a wide range of community stakeholders and partners to address issues of street-involved and homeless youth.
- To raise public awareness of street-involved and homeless youth and of long term solutions.
- To monitor progress on recommendations and identify indicators for evaluation of community progress.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The following section outlines the methodology used in the evaluation process. An analysis was conducted of the recommendations and outcomes, pilot projects, key indicators of youth street-involvement and community assets and gaps. In addition, the perspective of community stakeholders was captured through interviews and focus groups with members of the Street Youth Involvement Committee, the Street-Involved Youth Network, the Street Youth Planning Collaborative and the project coordinator.

2.1 Recommendations and Outcomes

An analysis was conducted of the progress that was made on the 27 recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs* report. The activities and outcomes related to each recommendation were tracked to determine if the recommendations had been addressed. The information was gathered through project records and reports to the funder.

2.2 Pilot Project Profiles

The ten pilot projects that were initiated during the *Addressing the Needs* project are profiled in this section. An evaluation or project activity report had been completed for each pilot project during the project and their results are outlined. The information was gathered through project records, project evaluations and project activity reports.

2.3 Key Indicators of Youth Homelessness

Data from local shelters that work with street-involved youth were analyzed as key indicators of youth homelessness in Hamilton. The shelters are Good Shepherd Notre Dame House and several adult shelters in Hamilton that also provide service to the youth population. The data was gathered from the Hamilton Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database.

2.4 Community Assets Analysis

The service system for street-involved and homeless youth was mapped to determine the service continuum available to youth in Hamilton. The service system mapping was informed by prior reports and community stakeholders.

2.5 Community Gaps Analysis

The community gaps identified in the *Addressing the Needs* report and the *Progress Report -- The First Year and a Half* are presented with an update on their current standing. In addition, new gaps that exist within the service system for street-involved youth are identified. The community gaps analysis was informed by prior reports and community stakeholders.

2.6 The Street Youth Involvement Committee Perspective

To gain the perspective of the members of the Street Youth Involvement Committee, key informant interviews were conducted with each of five committee members. The questions centered on four areas: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

2.7 The Street-Involved Youth Network Perspective

The perspective of the members of the Street-Involved Youth Network was gathered in two ways. A focus group was held with nine participants from the committee and two key informant interviews were conducted with two other committee members. The questions centered on four areas: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

2.8 The Street Youth Planning Collaborative Perspective

To gain the perspective of the members of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative, key informant interviews were conducted with each of five committee members. The questions centered on four areas: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

2.9 Project Coordinator Perspective

A key informant interview was conducted with the project coordinator in order to gain her perspective. The questions centered on four areas: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

1. *It is recommended that a working group made up of the Street-Involved Youth Managers (SIYM), Family Services of Hamilton, Catholic Family Services of Hamilton, the Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Children's Aid Society examine child welfare policy and its impacts on street-involvement in youth. Additionally, this group could have the capacity to identify strategies for preventing street-involvement including primary prevention with supports early on for parents to limit the incidence of family conflict and abuse. Finally, the Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Children's Aid Society might have creative responses to early intervention with youth who have run away that could be shared with the community.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Children's Aid Society (CAS), the Catholic Children's Aid Society (CCAS) and the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) developed the Housing Youth Leaving Care Project with funding from the Homelessness Partnership Initiative. A community developer was hired to develop a plan for building collaboration between the child welfare and street-involved youth services sectors. Research was conducted including a literature review, model review, focus groups, key informant interviews and a community consultation.
- The CCAS, CAS and SYPC developed the After-Care Worker Project with funding from the Homelessness Partnership Initiative. Four after-care workers were hired to provide support to youth in maintaining their housing in the community.
- The CCAS, CAS and SYPC received funding from the Homelessness Partnership Initiative to provide additional staff support to two transitional housing projects: Wesley Youth Housing and Angela's Place.

OUTCOMES:

- A final report, *Building Collaboration between the Child Welfare and Street-Involved Youth Services Sectors in Hamilton*, was completed and launched in May 2009. A plan has been developed for disseminating the report throughout the two sectors in Hamilton.
 - Four after-care worker positions have been in place since June 2008 and funding continues until October 2009.
 - Two transitional housing projects, Wesley Youth Housing and Angela's Place, received funding for additional staff support in June 2008. The funding continues until October 2009.
2. *The school boards, hospitals, health clinics, recreation centres and other large institutions require tools to enable their staff to recognize and intervene with at-risk youth in order to prevent street-involvement and homelessness. It is recommended that the Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) develop an "at-risk checklist" with options for follow-through and provide it to the appropriate organizations and institutions.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Initiatives were developed to increase the knowledge and understanding of a variety of stakeholders who do not work directly with homeless youth but who come in contact with young people at risk of homelessness. Three approaches were developed:

1) "At-Risk Checklist" Community Resource: the "How Can I Help Youth At Risk of Homelessness?" posters were developed.

2) "At-Risk Checklist" Community Training Sessions: the "Youth At Risk of Homelessness: Understanding the Issues" training sessions were developed.

3) "At-Risk Checklist" Social Marketing Campaign: the Couch Project Campaign was developed.

OUTCOMES:

- Over 1200 "How Can I Help Youth At Risk of Homelessness" posters were distributed to youth-serving organizations, secondary schools and recreation centres.
- Seven "Youth At Risk of Homelessness: Understanding the Issues" training sessions were completed with over 200 people trained. Participant evaluations of the training sessions were positive.
- "The Couch Project" campaign produced a Public Service Announcement that was shown on CHCH TV and Cable 14. It also aired on CFMU and C101.5 and print ads appeared in *The Hamilton Spectator*. The launch of the campaign was well covered by television, radio and print media.
- *The Hamilton Spectator* and the Street Youth Involvement Committee continue to work on a public education campaign.

3. *Research, explore and develop strategies to prevent family breakdown due to sexual orientation issues, the struggles faced by newcomer families, justice issues, and addictions, particularly for families with youth who are 16-19 years old. The Rainbow Youth Drop-In, Settlement and Integration Service Organization, the John Howard Society and the various addiction treatment services do this work with families and would benefit from continuing and building on this work in their programming.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- A diversity research project was developed through a partnership with St Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre to look at the needs of youth in newcomer families. The research's focus was on gathering information from different ethno-cultural groups about street-involvement among youth in these communities.
- A Health Sciences placement student completed research on barriers to primary health care for street involved youth.
- A second Health Sciences placement student worked with community stakeholders to identify ways to fill the service gaps in primary health care for street involved youth.

OUTCOMES:

- A report entitled *Newcomer and Aboriginal Youth Running Away From Home: Prevalence and Issues* was completed in July 2008. Five presentations on the report's findings were made to a variety of community stakeholders.
- A report, *Service Gaps in Providing Health Care to Street-Involved Youth*, was completed in September 2008 and circulated to community stakeholders.
- A report, *Best Practices in Providing Primary Health Care to Street Involved Youth in Hamilton*, was completed in April 2009 and circulated to community stakeholders.

4. *That the SIYN continue meeting on a regular basis to discuss service provision issues for street-involved youth.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) is a group of street-involved youth service providers who meet monthly to discuss their work with youth. Attendance has been consistently strong at meetings and the group has added a seat at the table for a street involved youth. There are currently 35 active members from 20 different agencies.

OUTCOMES:

- The Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) continues to meet monthly to discuss service provision. The membership has expanded to include workers from the City of Hamilton Public Health and the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton.

5. *Street-involved youth do not have open access services available twenty-four hours a day. It is recommended that the community identify resources to guarantee that youth have an open-access program open to them at all times of the day.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Open Access Weekend Program began at The Living Rock Ministries in November 2006 to provide youth with open access to services during the weekend.
- Health Initiatives for Youth received funding in May 2007 to provide open access on Monday evenings – a previous gap in the open access hours in the community.
- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative partnered with the McMaster School of Social Work to host a planning workshop to discuss potential designs for open access services. The workshop was attended by over 40 people – 1/3 of whom were street involved youth.

OUTCOMES:

- The Open Access Weekend Program at The Living Rock Ministries continues through private sector donations that will sustain the program until December 2010. The program no longer has a public funding source.
- Open Access Programming on Monday evenings is no longer available due to the downsizing of the host agency Health Initiatives for Youth.
- A report was produced based on the findings from the open access services workshop hosted by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative in partnership with the McMaster School of Social Work.
- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative has committed to completing strategic planning for open-access programming but sustainable funding continues to be an issue.

6. *The community requires the dissemination of current effective program models and the development of further investigation of effective service design and provision for street-involved youth, including an examination of work happening in other municipalities. It is recommended that the SPRC work with the SIYM to identify resources to carry out this research.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

Dissemination of current program models and investigation of effective service design was carried out through the following activities:

- Attendance at the National Youth Homelessness Conference in St John's, Newfoundland in 2007.
- Information- sharing with Peele Youth Village and Eva's Phoenix in Toronto.
- Visited the Youth Link program in Toronto with three street-involved youth from Hamilton.
- Attendance at the OMSSA conference in February 2008.
- Meeting with the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth and attendance at a provincial session in Windsor Ontario in June 2008 related to the Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement.
- Attendance and presentation at the National Youth Homelessness Conference in Toronto in 2008.
- Attendance and presentation at the Shovel Ready conference in Hamilton in October 2008.
- Attendance and presentation at the National Homelessness Conference in Calgary in 2009.
- Information-sharing with the Niagara Region's Youth without Secure Housing committee and Waterloo's Youth Housing Stability Group.
- The SYPC presented as the keynote speaker at York Region's Get Honest conference on street involved youth issues.

OUTCOMES:

- At the National Youth Conference in 2007, progress in Hamilton was shared and learning from services in other communities across Canada was gathered.
- Dialogues and sharing of best practices models occurred with two transitional housing projects in Toronto.
- Identified possible best practices for implementation in Hamilton at the Youth Link program in Toronto.
- Successes and challenges in Hamilton's approach to youth street-involvement were shared at the OMSSA conference.
- A research grant to look at the issue of street-involved youth and violence was obtained through contact with the Provincial Advocate. As part of the project, presentations about Hamilton's experience were made to representatives from cities across Ontario.
- A presentation by the Street Youth Involvement Committee at the National Youth Homelessness Conference in 2008 resulted in a request for the project coordinator to communicate with Eva's Initiatives around the National Strategy to Address Youth Homelessness and the National Learning Communities.
- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative hosted the Director of National Initiatives for Eva's Phoenix and the Raising the Roof Director for a site visit about the groundbreaking work that Hamilton is doing regarding street-involved youth.
- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative is providing leadership around systems planning to the municipalities of York, Niagara, Ottawa, Waterloo and Hamilton to talk about common challenges and successes when working with homeless youth.

7. *It is recommended that the SIYM explore models of an early intervention team to respond within 24 to 48 hours when youth first leave home.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Early Intervention Project was developed by the Social Planning and Research Council and the Street Youth Planning Collaborative with funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre. Consultants were hired to develop a best practices model

for early intervention with young people in the Hamilton context. Good Shepherd Youth Services began delivering the project in November 2007 through the newly developed Youth Homelessness Prevention Worker position.

OUTCOMES:

- The Early Intervention Project ran from November 2007 to July 2008. A project report found that the project had been successful and identified several strengths and next steps.
- A funding proposal was submitted to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy in April 2009 to reinstate the Early Intervention Project. The funding would allow the program to run until 2011.

8. *It is recommended that the Children's Service System (CSS) committee identify (with research and support), develop, and implement effective treatment models that are specific to meet the unique needs of street-involved youth (including those with concurrent disorders and those living in a culture of use). Additionally, it is recommended that this group advocate for funding envelopes targeted for youth mental health or substance use to identify a percentage of the allocation for street-involved youth to be delivered on-site for street-involved youth. Where the resources already exist in the community, these should be built on; when the group finds areas where no resources or mechanisms for this work exist, the group should identify ways to make this happen.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Two presentations were made to the Children's Service System committee who began working with the Street Youth Planning Collaborative to map mental health services and gaps for street involved youth in Hamilton.

OUTCOMES:

- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative and the Social Planning and Research Council will convene dialogue with the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and with community committees on this issue.
- Recognizing that mental health presents a very complex and system-wide set of issues for this project, the Street Youth Planning Collaborative has decided to convene a community-wide strategic planning process to make progress in these areas. The strategic planning sessions will result in specific community plans around mental health, substance use and open access for street involved youth.

9. *It is recommended that services for street-involved youth build the capacity in their staff to address the unique and complex needs of the population, particularly around mental health issues and substance use and misuse issues. This requires several steps including:*
- a. *Resources for hiring highly trained front-line workers;*
 - b. *Resources for professional development of the front-line workers;*
 - c. *Clinical support for front-line workers.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Mental Health and Front Line Workers Project was developed to provide increased resources for the professional development of front-line workers around mental health issues. The McMaster Children's Hospital Child and Youth Mental Health Outreach Team was selected to develop an interactive training curriculum for street-involved youth front-line staff. A curriculum of three half day training workshops was developed which was also converted to training manuals and DVDs.

- The McMaster Children's Hospital -- Regional Mental Health Outreach Team partnered with Good Shepherd Youth Services to strengthen their Mental Health Liaison Nurse position.

OUTCOMES:

- Four training sessions were conducted with front-line workers using the project's curriculum.
- The sessions were evaluated using pre- and post-training questionnaires and participant evaluations.
- The training manual and accompanying DVD, *Front Line Staff Working with Street-Involved and Homeless Youth*, were produced.
- The Mental Health Liaison Nurse position at Good Shepherd Youth Services was strengthened with additional hours of consultation time from a psychiatrist and mental health nurse practitioner. This partnership has continued beyond the funding and is still in place.

10. *The Hamilton community has an existing network that works on addictions issues in the community. The Hamilton Addictions Services Coalition (HASC) has the mandate to do system planning for our community. In this capacity, it is recommended that they work to address some of the gaps in Hamilton's response to street-involved youth substance use and misuse including:*

- Advocating for the funding support necessary to develop services that are appropriate and reflect best practices for street-involved youth affected by substance use;*
- Increasing accessibility to a continuum of substance use treatment services appropriate for their needs including, education, community treatment, day/evening treatment, withdrawal management, residential facilities – all built on a harm reduction philosophy;*
- Increasing understanding and community capacity to provide integrated treatment for street-involved youth with concurrent mental health and substance use concerns.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Two presentations were made by the Project Coordinator to HASC in November 2006. HASC suggested they could work on a strategic planning effort around addiction services for street involved youth.
- (HASC has been reformulated as a part of the Hamilton Addictions and Mental Health Network)

OUTCOMES:

- As outlined in Recommendation #8, the SYPC has decided to convene a community-wide strategic planning process to make progress in these areas. The strategic planning sessions will result in specific community plans around mental health, substance use and open access for street involved youth.

11. *Consideration of the use of peer support/educator programs as part of a harm reduction strategy that may address the culture of use.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Peer Support Project was developed to address street-involved youth substance use with a peer mentorship approach. Alternatives for Youth took the lead on the project and Health Initiatives for Youth provided two project staff. An existing peer

mentorship program was modified and peer mentors were recruited. The project's activities included a photography project, presentations, and the development of a display board and handouts.

OUTCOMES:

- The Peer Support Project ran from February 2008 to December 2008.
- The project engaged ten peer mentors and impacted on 414 youth through peer mentorship.
- A report on the project's activities was completed in March 2009.

12. *It is recommended that the community expand and ensure adequate and consistent funding of pre-employment programs to ensure continuity and availability.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Living Rock Ministries has been successful in receiving funding from Service Canada for the Tri-Rock program. This program provides youth with employment skills training and job placements, life skills training and housing support.

OUTCOMES:

- The Tri-Rock program is currently running and is contracted to provide service to 45 youth.

13. *It is recommended that issues around employment and education, as they pertain to street-involved youth, be brought to the Skills and Training Flagship through the City of Hamilton to ensure a stronger profile and attention are afforded to issues faced by street-involved youth.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- A presentation was made to the Skills Development Flagship by the project coordinator. This led to an agreement to incorporate street-involved and homeless youth issues into the work that the Flagship undertakes around at-risk youth and employment.
- Amity Goodwill has been selected as the agency that will deliver employment services to at-risk youth. They are planning to open a service that will allow youth to meet a variety of needs while encouraging employment.

OUTCOMES:

- The Skills Development Flagship has decided to focus on at-risk youth and is refining their implementation strategies.
- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative sat on the Hamilton Training Advisory Board research project to help advise on street-involved and at-risk youth strategies for multi-generational workplaces.

14. *Build on and continue existing efforts to be explicit and open in stating (with defined follow through) that racism, homophobia, sexism and ableism will not be tolerated in services for street-involved youth.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Diversity Poster Campaign was developed by a steering committee of community stakeholders to send consistent messages about anti-racism and anti-oppression throughout all youth serving agencies. Youth were interviewed in order to incorporate their experiences into the social marketing campaign. The steering committee

partnered with the Living Rock Ministries to produce posters for the “Turn the Lights off on Racism” campaign.

- Positive Space Training sessions were conducted for staff from the street-involved youth serving agencies in Hamilton. The purpose of the sessions was to remove barriers and stigma around LGBTQ issues and create a more positive space for LGBTQ youth.
- Two Positive Space training sessions on LGBTQ issues were organized for members of the Street-Involved Youth Network.

OUTCOMES:

- The “Turn the Lights off on Racism” campaign posters were launched in January 2008 and placed in youth agencies.
- Front-line staff who work at the street-involved youth service agencies in Hamilton were trained in two four hour sessions of Positive Space training on LGBTQ issues. Members of the Street-Involved Youth Network were also provided with Positive Space training.

15. *The SIYM and the SIYN should develop outreach strategies, including getting to know services in Hamilton that serve marginalized groups (at a minimum this would include, the AIDS Network, Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO), the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre) to understand issues and develop strategies around meeting the needs of diverse youth. A number of initiatives could be addressed such as including staff and volunteers from cultural communities, posters welcoming diversity, rainbow stickers near main access points indicating safe spaces for LGBTQ youth.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Street-Involved Youth Network has had presentations by the Aids Network, SISO, Aboriginal community, the Well (LGBTQ), the Rainbow Youth Network and the Sex Trade Alliance and Action Network.

OUTCOMES:

- The Street-Involved Youth Network is planning a Youth Services Fair for Fall 2009. This event is a networking event with a focus on diverse agencies.

16. *An outreach strategy, in conjunction with SISO, should be developed by the SIYN for understanding and connecting with the different cultural communities of Hamilton.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion was retained to provide two full day training sessions in cross cultural communication.

OUTCOMES:

- A total of 35 frontline staff completed the cross cultural communication training sessions provided by the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion.

17. *More research is needed on the needs of street-involved youth from cultural communities.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- A research partnership was formed with St Joseph Immigrant Women’s Centre to focus on newcomer families. A final report, *Newcomer and Aboriginal Youth Running Away From Home: Prevalence and Issues*, was completed in July 2008. Support for

the implementation of the recommendations and communication about the report to community stakeholders was provided by the SPRC.

OUTCOMES:

- As outlined in Recommendation #3, five presentations on the findings in the report, *Newcomer and Aboriginal Youth Running Away From Home: Prevalence and Issues*, were made to a variety of community stakeholders.

18. *That the SIYN agencies work with a variety of services that work with diverse youth (including, but not limited to, the AIDS Network, SISO, the Afro- Canadian Caribbean Association, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre) to create spaces that bring together youth based on culture (for example, substance use support group for gay youth, open-access programming for Native youth).*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Living Rock Ministries worked with an Aboriginal agency in Hamilton to provide Aboriginal specific programming options at the Living Rock.

OUTCOMES:

- Aboriginal specific programming ran at the Living Rock Ministries from March to July 2008. The Nya Weh program provided two hours of programming per week for youth at the Living Rock.
- A report on the project's activities was produced indicating that the program was helpful but more resources would have made a significant difference on its impact.

19. *That the community work to increase the range of transitional housing options for street-involved youth who require a variety of housing options. This range should be creative, flexible and offer a range of levels of support and structure. There are a number of community stakeholders who need to be involved including the City of Hamilton, the SIYM and the SIYN. Research on effective models of transitional housing from other communities is needed to inform the above efforts.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Capital funding for two transitional housing projects was secured: one for street involved youth and one for pregnant/parenting teens. Funding was secured through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative.
- An aftercare transitional supportive housing project was also developed to provide continued support to youth who leave the transitional housing setting.

OUTCOMES:

- Wesley Youth Housing, a transitional housing project for street-involved youth, opened in September 2007.
- Good Shepherd Angela's Place, a transitional housing project for young mothers, opened in May 2008.
- Interim evaluations of Wesley Youth Housing and Angela's Place were completed in March 2009. These indicated that the projects were meeting their objectives.
- Brennan Aftercare Transitional Supportive Housing (ACTS) opened in January 2008 through a partnership between the Good Shepherd HOMES program, Brennan House and the Street Youth Planning Collaborative.

20. *That the SIYM explore effective models of peer counseling, given its complex nature. The integration of peer support in street involved youth services will engage youth who like to work with young people and will help to alleviate some of the responsibility front line workers feel in addressing the emotional needs of all the youth who access those services. This might look like a program modeled on other mentorship programs for children – specifically for street involved youth.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- See recommendation #11 for progress on this recommendation.

21. *That the SIYN work to identify models for engaging youth appropriately in decision-making.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC) is 4 to 6 youth who meet once per month to provide advice and guidance to the project coordinator. One of the youth from SYIC sits on most steering committees for the project. The activities and projects undertaken by the SYIC include:
 - Carrying out a public survey to determine what questions the public may have about youth homelessness.
 - Being involved in the launch of The Couch Project, an All-Candidate’s Meeting on Poverty issues, and a training session for the “At-Risk Checklist”.
 - Traveling to Toronto to investigate innovative, youth-centered agencies.
 - Being consulted by the Downtown Revitalization Task Force and the Hamilton Community Foundation to help these groups determine steps for downtown renewal.
 - A member of the SYIC co-presented at the National Youth Homelessness Conference in 2008.
 - Completing a youth-directed pet care project.
 - Participating in an education campaign with the Hamilton Spectator.
- The project coordinator assisted in the organization of Listen Up! Hamilton Youth Speak Out – a community forum attended by over 100 people (over 60 of whom were youth) about strategies for engaging marginalized youth.
- The project coordinator participated in a two day event on improving youth engagement across Ontario which was convened by the Laidlaw Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

OUTCOMES:

- The Street Youth Involvement Committee continues to meet and play a role in public speaking, event planning, and best practices review.
- Additionally, the group continues to serve as a source of knowledge and expertise for many consultations taking place in the community.

22. *That street-involved youth agencies continue to build on and expand their existing work with youth involvement initiatives and should publicize these opportunities widely.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- In 2007, the Street Youth Planning Collaborative administered an initiative of the provincial government called the Youth Opportunity Strategy. Hamilton received 4.6 FTE outreach workers to assist at-risk youth to link to existing community services.

- In 2007, the Street Youth Planning Collaborative and the project coordinator were involved with a submission from Hamilton to the Building Resilient Communities by Engaging Youth program of the McConnell Foundation.
- The project coordinator co-authored Youth Engagement 101 in partnership with Youth Engagement and Action in Hamilton.
- The Ontario Youth Against Violence project was carried forward by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative, the Youth Engagement Initiative, and the Social Planning and Research Council in partnership with the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Office. The project hired two youth leaders to conduct surveys with street involved and at-risk youth about the prevalence of violence on the street.
- A Photovoice project was initiated that focused on at-risk youth and included over 35 participants over a six month period.

OUTCOMES:

- The Youth Opportunity Strategy was administered in Hamilton by the Street Youth Planning Collaborative. Outreach workers were deployed to 3 high needs neighborhoods to link at-risk youth to existing community services.
- Youth Engagement 101 was distributed widely in the community. A first year evaluation of the Youth Engagement project was produced.
- The Ontario Youth Against Violence survey results were developed into a poster and pamphlet to promote awareness. A community event co-planned with youth is in the planning stages.
- The Photovoice project was completed in November 2008 with a Photo Exhibit attended by 150 people.

23. *That the SIYM and SIYN work with the community and the City of Hamilton in lobbying for change in the Ontario Works policy directive for Applicants Under Age 18 in order to make sure youth are not homeless because they lack income. Key stakeholders in the community who could join this effort include the Food, Shelter and Housing Committee, the Children and Families Flagship Initiative, the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits working group and the Social Justice Policy working group. This effort should also look at the ways to allow older youth (18-21 years old) to engage in work without the risk of losing their benefits should their employment situation break down. Initial efforts at employment are often tenuous for street-involved youth and Ontario Works policy states that an applicant loses benefits for three months if they are fired or quit.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The project coordinator has liaised with Ontario Works managers and front line staff three times throughout the project to talk about the unique issues of street-involved youth.

OUTCOMES:

- Ontario Works has disbanded their specialized youth team – this has been viewed as a concerning development for youth accessing benefits. The Street Youth Planning Collaborative has met with key administrators, but have not been able to reverse this policy decision.
- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative has received a commitment from the Director of Income Supports to provide youth specific training to all Ontario Works staff.
- Ontario Works now sends a representative to the Street Involved Youth Network for information-sharing and networking.

24. *That Ontario Works provide access to youth to complete applications for benefits and receive information on-site at street-involved youth agencies.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- See above activity for Recommendation #23.

OUTCOMES:

- There are Ontario Works workers working with street-involved youth serving agencies to deliver services on-site.
- The Street Involved Youth Network will continue to monitor challenges and opportunities to expand services.

25. *That the SIYN work with the City of Hamilton to explore a model (HIFIS or similar) that can be implemented to identify and track the demographics of street-involved youth in Hamilton in order to ensure appropriate service design and provision. This system should be present at open access programs as well as the shelters. Quarterly results should be reported to both the SIYN and the SIYM.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- This recommendation was postponed. Given the current changes in the service system (the development of two transitional housing projects, and the closure of one of the drop-in services), it became necessary to wait until the full system is in place.

OUTCOMES:

- SPRC will liaise with the City of Hamilton around data collection possibilities.

26. *That the SIYM access resources for an evaluation of community progress on this plan. This should include identification of community indicators, a process for monitoring the implementation of the plan and identifying and reporting emerging issues.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- The resources for an evaluation of community progress on this plan were secured from the National Crime Prevention Centre. The evaluation process focused on an update of the community assets analysis, a review of key indicators of youth homelessness, progress on community plan recommendations and a check in with community stakeholders.

OUTCOMES:

- A report, *The Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton Project: Progress Report -- The First Year and a Half* was delivered in November 2007.

27. *A research alliance be formed between McMaster University and the above named working groups to identify best practices, evidence-based program models and other academic research on street-involved youth, particularly around mental health issues, substance use and misuse and sex trade work.*

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- A research team made up of McMaster University faculty, Good Shepherd Centres staff and the St. Joseph's Health Care Team has formed to conduct outcomes-based research on the mental health liaison nurse program at Good Shepherd Centres. This

group continues to work together on other street-involved youth and mental health research.

- The project coordinator attended the Community University Research Alliance conference in Vancouver in May 2008.
- The project coordinator has been consulted by the McMaster Poverty Initiative. They have decided to adopt a youth focus in their future work.

OUTCOMES:

- The Street Youth Planning Collaborative and the Social Planning and Research Council developed an evaluation framework for the entire three year project.

4.0 PILOT PROJECT PROFILES AND EVALUATIONS

This section provides profiles of the ten pilot projects that were developed in response to recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs* report. The results of evaluations or project activity reports for each pilot project are also outlined. In addition, information about the status of the projects as of June 30, 2009 is provided.

4.1 After-Care Worker Project

The after-care worker project was developed to provide support to youth in maintaining their housing in the community. Four after-care workers were employed by the two local child welfare agencies and housed in street-involved youth service agencies in the community. An interim evaluation of the project was completed in March 2009 and revealed the following findings:

- The project provided service to 127 youth in the period from June 2008 to March 2009;
- The results of a youth participant survey were overwhelmingly positive about the project and the assistance it was providing;
- The project filled a service gap that previously existed for youth maintaining housing in the community;
- The project promoted cross-sectoral education, partnership building and program development;
- The project faced some challenges in its development including policy differences, differing definitions of worker roles and of collaborative processes.

The after-care worker program began in June 2008 and funding continues until October 2009.

4.2 Open Access Weekend Program

The open access weekend program began at the Living Rock Ministries in 2006 to provide youth with open access to support and activities during the weekend. The program provided youth with services including resource referrals, movies and access to computers and games. Project activity reports for a 12 month period of the program revealed the following information:

- The total number of youth visits to the program was 4791; 1505 were female and 3284 were male;
- Unexpected successes of the program were the one-on-one support that staff members were able to provide to youth and the engagement of volunteers on a more consistent basis;
- Identified challenges were funding limitations and developing the program beyond its current format with the available resources.

The open access weekend program began in November 2006 and continues through private sector donations that will sustain the program until December 2010. The program no longer has a public funding source.

4.3 Early Intervention Project

The early intervention project was developed by consultants and a steering committee and delivered by Good Shepherd Services in order to connect with new youth within the first 24 - 48 hours of their arrival at the Notre Dame House shelter. A youth homelessness prevention worker was hired to provide this service and to liaise with and provide outreach to youth-serving

community partners. A project activity report covering the period from November 2007 to July 2008 revealed the following findings:

- The youth homelessness prevention worker engaged 81 youth – 65% of the youth were younger than 18 years old;
- Project data collection that began in January 2008 revealed that 81% of the 62 youth engaged between January and July 2008 were successfully diverted from homelessness;
- Many of the youth were connected either to the Children’s Aid Society or to the Catholic Children’s Aid Society or diverted to transitional housing projects;
- The most frequent types of support provided were emotional support and referrals to external agencies.

The early intervention project ran from November 2007 to July 2008 due to specific funding timelines.

4.4 Mental Health Training for Front-Line Staff Working with Street-Involved Youth

The Street Youth Planning Collaborative and the Social Planning and Research Council partnered with the McMaster Children’s Hospital - Regional Mental Health Outreach Team in order to develop three training modules for front-line staff who work with street-involved youth facing mental health issues. The training was delivered to two groups of front-line workers and was also converted into a distributable manual and DVD for street-involved youth-serving agencies. The training sessions were evaluated using pre- and post-training questionnaires and participant evaluations. The findings of the evaluative mechanisms are:

- The pre- and post-training questionnaires revealed a change in the trainees’ attitudes, an increase in their understanding of issues and skills and capacity to navigate the system surrounding mental health issues in street-involved youth;
- Trainees identified that they were integrating the learning from the sessions into their work with youth and sharing the information from the training with other staff from their agencies;
- Participant evaluations indicated that the training sessions were an effective tool for learning about this issue.

The mental health training for front-line staff working with street-involved youth was conducted in February to May 2008 and the manual was completed in July 2008.

4.5 Community Mental Health Liaison Program

The community mental health liaison program is an outreach program initiated by Good Shepherd Youth Services that provides early mental health intervention to street-involved and homeless youth. A mental health liaison clinician who is integrated into existing youth services in downtown Hamilton acts as a link to psychiatric consultation from McMaster Children’s Hospital. Funding through the *Addressing the Needs* project was responsible for purchasing the psychiatric consultation hours. A project activity report covering the period from April 2008 to March 2009 presented the following information:

- The mental health liaison nurse provided service to 27 youth at seven different youth serving agencies;
- The psychiatrist from McMaster Children’s Hospital provided 58 hours of intervention/consultation during the reporting period.

The community mental health liaison program has been renamed the Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Services. The program's partnership with McMaster Children's hospital has ensured the continuation of the project past its initial funding.

4.6 Peer Support Project

The peer support project was developed to address street-involved youth substance use with a peer mentorship approach. Alternatives for Youth took the lead on the project and Health Initiatives for Youth provided two project staff. A project activity report was released in March 2009 and presented the following information:

- The project engaged ten peer mentors who worked with 414 youth through harm-reduction based peer mentorship;
- The peer mentors' three month pre- and post- project substance use decreased or remained constant for all substances except alcohol;
- The peer mentors completed an evaluative survey which indicated that the project had allowed them to develop skills and increase knowledge about harm reduction strategies;
- Unexpected successes included youth commitment to the project and the development of conflict resolution skills through practice;
- Challenges included community buy-in and participation in the project and structural changes in one of the participating agencies.

The peer support project ran from February 2008 to December 2008 due to specific funding timelines.

4.7 Cross Cultural Communication Training

The Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion was retained to provide two full day training sessions in cross cultural communication. A total of 35 frontline staff who work with street-involved youth completed the training. Participant evaluations revealed the following:

- The participants' overall rating of the two seminars was positive -- on a scale of 1 to 10, the average rating was 8.24;
- The training activities and facilitation techniques were also highly rated -- on a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating was 4.73;
- The participants overwhelmingly identified that their cross cultural communication skills had increased as a result of the training.

The cross cultural communication training took place in May 2008 as a specific four session event.

4.8 Culturally Specific Programming- The Nya Weh Program

The Nya Weh program provided Aboriginal specific programming at the Living Rock Ministries in 2008. The program consisted of two hours of Aboriginal drum and dance instruction per week for the duration of 12 weeks. A project activity report was produced at the conclusion of the program. The report presented the following information:

- There were 16 different youth with 37 repeat visits engaged in the project;
- Youth were asked four evaluative questions at the end of each session. Their answers indicated that:

- Youth had learned a number of different drumming and dance techniques;
- Youth overwhelmingly indicated that they had a positive experience with the program and would use the skills they gained in the future;
- An identified program challenge was consistent youth participation;
- An unexpected success was that the youth participants performed at the Living Rock Professional Luncheon in May 2008.

The Nya Weh program was a 12 week program that ran from March 2008 to July 2008.

4.9 Wesley Youth Housing

Wesley Youth Housing (WYH) opened in September 2007 to provide transitional housing to homeless youth in Hamilton. It is a two-stage project that offers street-involved and homeless youth two-year housing with the supports needed to achieve independent living. In March 2009, an interim evaluation of WYH was conducted and a report was released. The key findings of the evaluation were:

- Twenty-three youth lived at WYH in its first year of operation and 90% of graduating youth had moved into stable housing;
- Life skills development is an effective component of the program and addresses the individual needs of youth;
- The program participants receive effective housing assistance both in terms of transitional and independent housing support;
- The education/employment requirements of the program are a successful incentive for youth and they receive strong support in these areas;
- The program is effectively linking youth to services that will assist them with independent living;
- The project could be improved with additional funding for programming and a comprehensive staff complement.

Wesley Youth Housing is sustained through secure funding sources but funding for project staffing remains precarious.

4.10 Good Shepherd Angela's Place

Angela's Place opened in May 2008 to provide transitional housing for young mothers up to 22 years of age in Hamilton. It contains fifteen furnished apartments and provides residents with on-site support staff and programming. An interim evaluation of Angela's Place was conducted in March 2009 and a report was released. The key findings of the evaluation are:

- Between May 2008 and January 2009, Angela's Place provided service for 31 youth -- 13 youth entered the program and 18 youth were referred to other sources;
- The program participants are building life and parenting skills through the programs and supports available to them;
- Angela's Place allows participants to maintain suitable housing while receiving parenting and advocacy assistance;
- The education/employment requirement of the program ensures that the young mothers have the opportunity to attend school and enter the workforce;
- The evaluation participants identified that Angela's Place was effectively linking them to services that will assist them with independent living;

- The challenges identified by the participants include a need for additional staffing and difficulty navigating other systems in order to support youth.

Angela's Place is sustained through capital funding but funding for project staffing remains precarious.

5.0 CONTEXT

5.1 Review of Key Indicators of Youth Homelessness

This section of the evaluation will review some of the indicators of service usage for street-involved youth in Hamilton. It contains data from Good Shepherd Notre Dame House and information about youth accessing the adult shelter system. Data that was presented in the 2005 *Addressing the Needs* report and the 2007 *Progress Report: The First Year and a Half* is included and updated with data from 2007 and 2008. The earlier reports also presented data from the Living Rock Ministries but updated data was not available for this evaluation.

5.1.1 Good Shepherd Notre Dame Shelter Usage

Notre Dame provides a range of drop-in meals and services for youth, as well as serving as the city's only youth emergency shelter. The following table (Table 1) provides updated data from the Hamilton Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database in relation to service usage of Notre Dame House.

Table 1: Summary of Emergency Shelter Use, Notre Dame, 2004-2008

INDICATOR	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of different youth staying overnight	N/A	284	281	313	286
Number of admissions	N/A	N/A	N/A	407	632
<i>Male</i>	N/A	63%	N/A	68%	58%
<i>Female</i>	N/A	37%	N/A	32%	42%
<i>Transgender</i>					2 youth
Average length of stay	N/A	20 days	16 days	13.25 days	10.63 days
<i>Male</i>	N/A	22.5	16	N/A	N/A
<i>Female</i>	N/A	15	15	N/A	N/A
<i>Transgender</i>	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A
Total overnights by year (not different youth)	6,801	5,615	5,957	4,800	6,717
Total drop-ins by year (not different youth)	N/A	N/A	12,519	21,447	19,847

Source: Good Shepherd Youth Services, City of Hamilton HIFIS data, Author's Calculations.

While the number of different youth staying overnight at Notre Dame has remained relatively consistent, there are several trends worth noting. Firstly, the number of admissions has increased significantly while the average length of stay has decreased. Since the number of different youth staying at the shelter has not increased, this suggests that some youth are staying for shorter lengths of time but are accessing the shelter multiple times throughout the year. Secondly, the number of drop-ins per year increased by almost 9,000 in 2007 and remained at a high level throughout 2008. A possible explanation for this increase is the closing of the Transitional Youth Drop-In in the spring of 2007.

5.1.2 Adult Shelter Usage by Youth

Emergency shelter for youth is also provided at some of Hamilton's emergency shelters for adults. The following table (Table 2) is an update of the number of people under the age of 21 accessing adult shelters. The information is from the Hamilton Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database.

Table 2: Adult Shelter Usage by Youth, 2006-2008

	2006	2007	2008
Number of youth staying overnight	553	456	430

Source: City of Hamilton HIFIS data.

The number of youth accessing adult shelters has remained relatively consistent over the three year period. As HIFIS data becomes more available, it will be able to show this information by gender, as well as tell us how many of these youth are using the adult system exclusively or how many are also using youth services.

5.1.3 Key Findings- Indicators

There are several key findings that emerge from the data from Notre Dame House and youth usage of the emergency shelter system for adults. The findings are:

- The number of youth accessing the services has remained relatively consistent over the timeframes they reflect. The exception is a significant increase of youth accessing non-shelter services at Notre Dame House in 2007. A possible explanation for the increase may be the closing of the Transitional Youth Drop-In in the spring of 2007.
- The data that is available about street-involved and homeless youth in Hamilton is limited. In order to identify emerging trends, it is important for the community to monitor service usage through the data collected by the street-involved youth services sector. Consistent methods for counting and measuring youth homelessness need to be developed in order to improve the community's ability to track the demographics of street-involved youth.

5.2 Community Assets

This section contains a map of the service system continuum for street-involved youth in Hamilton and discusses the community assets that are identified. The analysis of a continuum of services is complex. The system is always changing based on funding, the needs of youth, and the capacities of services. The map represents the service system continuum as it appeared as of June 30, 2009.

Currently, the organizations partnering through the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) deliver the services described in the continuum. The partners are Alternatives for Youth, Catholic Family Services, Good Shepherd Centres, Living Rock Ministries, Wesley Urban Ministries, and The Social Planning and Research Council (community development support). The SYPC endeavours to meet the needs of street-involved and homeless youth in Hamilton with a commitment to comprehensive systems planning.



Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton -- Service System Continuum

Young people facing street involvement and homelessness require a continuum of supports to help them achieve independence -- from basic street outreach to more complex and long term interventions such as transitional housing.

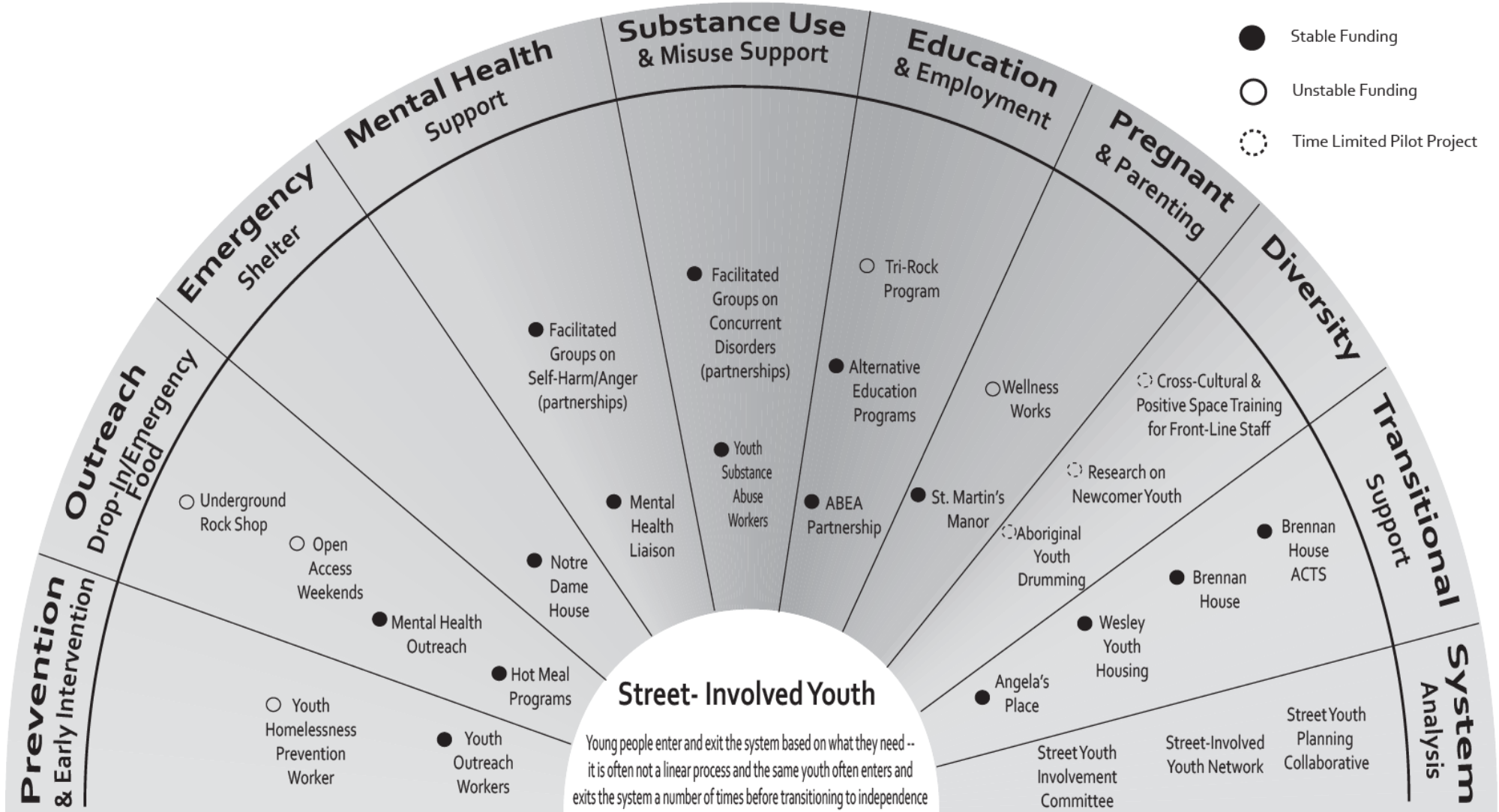


Figure 1: Service System Continuum

5.2.1 Key Findings - Community Assets

- There is a continuum of services in Hamilton to address a broad spectrum of street-involved youth needs.
- There are seven permanent, securely funded structures in place to respond to a continuum of needs from emergency shelter to transitional housing.
- Within the programs available in the service system, there is only one that provides employment support and only one that provides open access programming. Both of these programs have insecure funding sources.
- The collaborative planning process within the service continuum is enacted by an interconnected committee system that is enhanced by training and research initiatives.
- Hamilton is doing well in terms of offering a range of needed services for street-involved youth. The areas requiring more resources include open-access, mental health support, substance use and misuse and services that meet the unique experiences of diverse youth.

5.3 Gaps Analysis

This section contains an update on the gaps identified in the 2005 *Addressing the Needs* report and the 2007 *Progress Report* while outlining new gaps in service that exist in Hamilton. The following chart presents an outline of the gaps identified in 2006 and 2007 and an update of their status as of June 30, 2009.

5.3.1 Update of the Gaps Analysis

Gaps identified in the Fall 2006 report	Fall 2007: Update on the gaps/ New gaps identified	2009: Update on the gaps
Street Outreach	We have substantially increased the outreach capacity in our community. As the Youth Opportunities Strategy and Youth Homelessness Prevention worker projects are new, it may take time to see the outcomes of these projects.	<p>Youth Outreach Workers Hamilton (YOWH) -- the Youth Outreach Workers are seeing excellent outcomes in their neighborhoods and receive permanent funding from the Ministry of Child and Youth Services.</p> <p>Youth Homelessness Prevention Worker -- during the project, 81 young people were diverted from the shelter system. The project has ended, but there is a current proposal for funding from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.</p> <p>Since 2006, this gap has been filled.</p>

Gaps identified in the Fall 2006 report	Fall 2007: Update on the gaps/ New gaps identified	2009: Update on the gaps
Emergency shelter for young women	We continue to monitor the emergency shelter for young women gap. No new resources exist.	<p>There are no current plans to have a young women specific shelter. Interestingly, over the past months, there has been a shift to a higher number of women than men accessing shelters. Services providers are attempting to adjust to this trend through changes in their service. For example, one co-ed transitional housing project is considering re-organizing its beds to accommodate more women than men.</p> <p>A method of addressing this gap may be educating women's shelters about the unique needs of youth and educating youth shelters about the unique needs of young women.</p>
Mental health services	The visiting psychiatrist at Good Shepherd provides much needed mental health support and will serve as a model for a Year 2 Clinical Support Project	<p>Good Shepherd has secured funding for a second mental health liaison position.</p> <p>Year 2 Clinical Support Project -- access to clinical support continues despite a lack of funding for the project. McMaster has agreed to provide mental health support for street-involved youth without funding.</p> <p>Mental Health Training -- produced a training manual and trained 35 frontline staff.</p> <p>There still exists a gap for young people who are street-involved and facing mental health issues. There is not a continuum of services that meet the unique needs of this population. For example, the children's mental health system ends at age 18 and youth experience the disruption of entering the adult system. Future work in this area should involve strategic planning and community work around this issue.</p>

Gaps identified in the Fall 2006 report	Fall 2007: Update on the gaps/ New gaps identified	2009: Update on the gaps
Substance use and misuse services	We continue to have one service for substance use and misuse services dedicated to young people. Year 2 begins a Peer Support project in this area.	<p>Alternatives for Youth has one worker who works out of the street-involved youth services.</p> <p>The Peer Support Program was successful, but ended because of the end of pilot project funding.</p> <p>There is still a significant gap in this area. Future planning needs to address the range and continuum of services necessary to address substance use and misuse for street-involved youth.</p>
Housing 'aftercare'	Housing aftercare has been named as an essential need in our community. Specific attention will be devoted to this in Year 2.	<p>The aftercare worker project received funding from the Homelessness Partnership Initiative to employ three FT aftercare workers for a 16 month period. The pilot project will run until October 2009.</p> <p>A funding proposal has been submitted to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy to fund 7 FT workers to engage in early intervention, housing help and aftercare support.</p>
	New Gap: Open Access Programming - The Wesley Transitional Youth program closed its doors in May 2007. The Living Rock Ministries and Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton have recently increased their open-access programming to help fill this need. As open-access programming is an opportunity to keep young people safe and is often the first point of relationship building, this has been continually identified as a serious gap.	<p>Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton is no longer providing open access programming on Monday evenings.</p> <p>The Living Rock Ministries lost its funding for open access weekends but was able to secure private support to keep the program running until the end of 2010.</p> <p>Open access programming in Hamilton remains precarious and strategic community planning is needed to address this gap.</p>

Gaps identified in the Fall 2006 report	Fall 2007: Update on the gaps/ New gaps identified	2009: Update on the gaps
	<p>New Gap: Primary Health Care for Youth – Living Rock Ministries recently lost its onsite Nurse Practitioner. Additionally, the Teen Health Clinic run out of the North Hamilton Community Health Centre recently closed its doors.</p>	<p>Two research projects focusing on the gaps and best practices for primary health care for street-involved youth were completed.</p> <p>A Public Health nurse provides primary health care services onsite at Notre Dame House.</p> <p>Primary health care for youth remains a gap. There is a need for a street-involved youth-specific clinic that provides health care services.</p>

5.3.2 New Gaps: 2009

The following are new gaps that have been identified by prior reports and information from community stakeholders:

Transitional Housing Program Stability

Capital funding for two transitional housing projects was secured in 2006. However, neither project has funding for a full staff complement and both are experiencing difficulties in securing funding.

Community Development/Collaboration Support to the SYPC

Funding for a community planner to support the collaboration of street-involved youth services sectors in Hamilton ended in May 2009. A funding proposal to renew this position has been submitted to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Pre-Employment Program Stability

The Tri-Rock program needs to apply every year for funding from Service Canada. This results in lapses in intakes and an uncertain employment situation for staff.

Youth Trusteeship (for youth 18-21 years old)

Good Shepherd Youth Services provides trusteeships for youth 16 and 17 years of age. Youth who are 18- 21 years of age could also benefit from accessing this service on a volunteer basis. There is currently no funding to provide trusteeships to this age group.

Peer Mentorship around Substance Use and Misuse

The Peer Mentorship program was very successful. A more global strategy for implementing this program would be beneficial to youth.

5.3.3 Key Findings - Gaps Analysis

- The gaps in street outreach and housing aftercare that were identified in the Addressing the Needs report have been filled.
- The gaps in mental health services, substance use and misuse services and primary health care for youth are still significant gaps in the service continuum.
- Open access programming remains a gap. The Living Rock Ministries provides open access programming on the weekends but the funding for this service remains precarious.
- Five new gaps in the service continuum have been identified. All of the service gaps require program funding that is currently unavailable.

6.0 PERSPECTIVES FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The key stakeholders involved in the project were part of a three pronged committee system that ensured the representation of youth, front-line workers and management in project initiatives. The three groups are the Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC), the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) and the Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN). A project coordinator who coordinated the project's initiatives and acted as a liaison amongst the three groups is another key stakeholder within the project. The perspectives of the key stakeholders were gathered through a focus group and key informant interviews.

6.1 The Street Youth Involvement Committee - Key Findings

The Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC) is the youth engagement arm within the project. Five currently or formerly homeless youth meet once per month to provide advice and direction to the project coordinator around youth friendliness and the lived experience of homelessness. The group is consulted by other community initiatives and completes youth-led projects.

The five members of the Street Youth Involvement Committee were spoken to separately in key informant interviews. They were asked questions that addressed the four areas of the project evaluation: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

Key Achievements

In terms of key achievements, the participants were asked to identify and discuss the initiatives undertaken by the SYIC. In addition, they were asked to share their perception of the successes or challenges of these initiatives.

There were five initiatives that the majority of participants mentioned and discussed in their interviews. One was site tours of two street-involved youth service centres in Toronto in order to generate ideas and to provide a basis for comparison to the services in Hamilton. Another was the Couch Project, which produced an ad campaign for raising awareness of youth street-involvement. The participants also mentioned various meetings and presentations in which they had been involved and discussed the opportunity it gave them to talk about street-involved youth issues. In addition, they talked about a pamphlet that the committee had produced to provide youth with information about pet care resources in Hamilton.

For the most part, the participants indicated that the initiatives had been productive and had reached their goals successfully. In some instances, participants articulated that they were unsure about the successes or challenges of a certain initiative. None of the participants articulated the belief that an initiative had been unsuccessful or failed to meet its goals.

Community Development

One of the most important aspects of the SYIC's work is to provide the perspective of youth in relation to street-involved youth issues and services. In terms of community development, it was important to understand how this facet of the committee's work was being realized. The participants were asked if being a member of the SYIC had allowed them to be heard on issues of youth street-involvement.

All of the participants indicated that the SYIC had provided them with the opportunity to express ideas. They presented several different perspectives on how the committee had increased their ability to have their voices heard. First, it was articulated that just the fact of being on a committee had changed others' perspective of them. Instead of "being labeled as just a young street kid, as if I don't know what I'm talking about", their membership on a committee had resulted in others taking their opinions seriously. Second, support for the committee from people who have a presence in the street-involved youth service sector was identified as a factor that further increased the likelihood that others would listen to them. Third, the participants indicated that the SYIC gave them opportunities that they would not have on their own to go into the community to talk about street-involved youth issues. Finally, it was identified that as a group it was possible for their ideas to lead to action and for them to get help from others more easily.

Community Impact

To gain the perspective of the participants in the area of community impact, they were asked if the SYIC had made a difference for street-involved youth in Hamilton. In addition, they were asked to identify the methods the SYIC had undertaken to impact on the community in relation to street-involved youth issues.

All but one of the participants indicated that the SYIC had made a difference for street-involved youth in Hamilton. An identified method that the SYIC had employed was raising awareness about street-involved youth and the difficulties they face. The Couch Project was mentioned in this context as well as community presentations and meetings in which the SYIC had been involved. Another method was information sharing with youth to enhance their knowledge of resources and services. The pet care pamphlet was used as an example of the SYIC's work in this area. In addition, participants indicated that other youth might feel more motivated to change things when they see what the SYIC is doing and that adults like to see that youth are taking action.

One participant did not express a belief that the SYIC had made a difference for street-involved youth in Hamilton. She indicated that she had been a member of the SYIC for a relatively short amount of time and was not aware of any changes for youth that had occurred in that time.

Next Steps

In order to identify the next steps in which the SYIC members would like to engage, we asked them what the SYIC should do in the future. We also asked for their suggestions for improving the way that the SYIC addresses the issue of youth street-involvement.

The most frequent response in the area of next steps was to continue and increase the awareness building activities of the SYIC. The participants identified the importance of educating the community about street-involved youth issues and the services needed to address them. They also indicated that it would be beneficial to talk to decision makers in the street-involved youth services sector in order to share their views on the needs of youth. It was suggested that talking to the decision makers directly would be more beneficial and effective than "having our words turned into someone else's words." Additionally, it was articulated that the SYIC should meet more often and take on more projects and activities. By taking this step, the participants felt that more work could be accomplished in a shorter amount of time.

6.2 The Street-Involved Youth Network - Key Findings

The Street Involved Youth Network (SIYN) is the frontline arm within the project. The SIYN has a membership of 35 frontline workers from 20 community agencies. In addition to representation from the Street Youth Planning Collaborative agencies, affiliate organizations send delegates. This group identifies emerging trends and issues in the homeless youth community, organizes ongoing training and builds cross-agency collaboration around serving young people with complex needs.

In order to gain the perspective of the Street-Involved Youth Network, a focus group and two key informant interviews were conducted. Nine participants took part in the focus group and two other committee members were spoken to separately in a key informant interview format. All participants were asked questions that addressed the four areas of the project evaluation: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

Key Achievements

The perspective of the SIYN's key achievements was gathered by presenting the participants with ten areas that represented the main aspects of the SIYN's work. The participants were asked to identify the areas that they considered to be the most important in terms of their work together by placing dots beside those areas. Each participant was given four dots. They could place one dot on four separate areas or put multiple dots on a key area. Following the exercise, a discussion of the results was conducted.

The participants were presented with the following areas:

- Case studies
- Identifying emerging trends
- Identifying gaps in service
- Agency updates
- Networking/Information-sharing
- Presentations from the community
- Collaboration with the SYPC
- Sub-committees
- Training opportunities
- Projects

There were three areas that emerged as having the highest levels of identification by the participants. The areas were "Identifying gaps in service," "Networking/ Information-sharing," and "Identifying emerging trends."

Identifying Gaps in Service

The importance of identifying gaps in service was articulated by the participants in several ways. First, they indicated that this identification allowed them to learn where new programs needed to be designed and implemented. Second, they could be kept informed about issues arising from budget cuts and address them through group strategizing. Last, they were allowed to gain knowledge of areas where funding is needed and take steps to inform their agencies.

Networking/Information-Sharing

The participants indicated that the contacts they have gained through the SIYN have been extremely important to their individual agency work. In addition, the SIYN gives them the opportunity to keep informed about developments that are occurring in other agencies and in the community.

Identifying Emerging Trends

According to the participants, the importance of identifying emerging trends is rooted in the need to identify areas and issues that are becoming prevalent in the community. This knowledge allows the members of the SIYN to act in a proactive way to address street-involved youth issues.

There were four other areas that were identified by the participants in the exercise but to a lesser extent. These four areas were “Presentations from the community,” “Training opportunities,” “Case studies,” and “Agency updates.”

Presentations From the Community

The participants indicated that presentations from the community are beneficial because they enhance the members’ knowledge of community resources and referral processes. Presentations were also put forward as a means of networking and reinforcing training.

Training Opportunities

The participants articulated that training opportunities are beneficial to the members of the SIYN, but that there have been fairly limited opportunities for these to occur.

Case Studies

The presentation of case studies within the SIYN meetings was identified as a helpful means of generating ideas for addressing complex situations. In addition, case studies were viewed as a learning opportunity and a way of sharing the concerns of front-line workers.

Agency Updates

While agency updates were identified as an important aspect of the SIYN’s work, the participants felt that this area fell under the domain of “Networking/ Information-sharing.” They also indicated they preferred the verbal agency updates over the ones they were required to write as part of the SIYN’s minutes.

There were three areas that the participants did not identify within this exercise. These areas were “Collaboration with the SYPC,” “Sub-Committees,” and “Projects.”

Collaboration with the SYPC

The participants indicated that there was disconnection between the SIYN and the SYPC due to power dynamics, decision making processes, and policy issues. It was articulated by the participants that the power dynamic presented a barrier to communication between the two groups. In particular, they indicated that SIYN members tended to “clam up” when members of the SYPC attended their meetings and that SIYN members were only asked to attend SYPC meetings to make short presentations. They also identified that they felt a lack of control over the street-involved youth services decisions being “filtered down to them” by the SYPC. In addition, they articulated the belief that the SYPC partially bases decisions on mandates and policies rather than the realities of youth that the participants face each day.

Sub-Committees

It was articulated by the participants that they did not consider sub-committees to be unimportant but that they had no time to dedicate to them.

Projects

Similar to the area of sub-committees, participants indicated that they had no time to dedicate to projects but would consider them important otherwise.

Community Development

The SIYN participants were asked to discuss the successes and challenges of their community development work in relation to three identified areas. The areas were:

- Working as a group;
- Building community partnerships;
- Building community awareness around street-involved youth issues.

Working as a Group

In terms of their work as a group, the participants identified the SIYN as a reliable and effective resource. The experience and diverse perspectives of the SIYN members along with their willingness to assist each other were presented as the reasons for the group's success. The challenges to their work were identified as broader agency restrictions such as funding issues, time limitations and diverging mandates. While these challenges were seen to limit the SIYN in certain ways, the overall perspective of the participants was that the SIYN was effective in their work together.

Building Community Partnerships

The participants indicated that they have continued to build community partnerships by inviting people from other agencies to sit at the table. In addition, they articulated that their SIYN contacts had the ability to "network them on" in their youth work resulting in a broader contact base for agency partnering. In terms of challenges, they indicated that an interest and response from municipal politicians and other decision makers was lacking in their community partnerships. Media attention was also put forward as an effective tool for partnership building that was not currently taking place.

Building Community Awareness Around Street-Involved Youth Issues

The participants indicated that the building of community awareness is an important area in which the SIYN strives to engage. They articulated that some progress had been made in this area but that overall they were falling short of fulfilling this aspect of their work. The main reason identified was the inability of the SIYN to build a high enough profile within the wider community due to a lack of time and funding. They indicated that the development of an awareness campaign was dependent on the procurement of a budget and staff hours for coordination and outreach. Without a community profile, the participants felt that their ability to promote awareness and education was extremely limited.

Community Impact

The SIYN participants were asked for their perspective on the impact that the work of the SIYN has had on the community and on youth street-involvement.

The participants indicated that the SIYN's work has ultimately resulted in more effective service for street-involved youth in Hamilton. While service gaps still exist, participants identified that SIYN members are using available services more effectively for their clients. They also articulated that their frequent work with the same youth clients has allowed them to model a more beneficial wrap-around approach. In addition, they indicated that the understanding and trust that has been built between the SIYN members improves their communication and leads to better collective service for youth.

The participants also identified some challenges that hindered the extent of their community impact. These challenges were discussed in the broader areas of "the bigger picture" and "the red tape." The participants indicated that they were not able to fully express their ideas in the community because they need to be concerned about how they are representing their agencies. For example, SIYN members discussed the possibility of holding a rally on National Housing Day but realized they would need to get permission from their individual agencies. In addition, the location, set-up and message of the rally would need to be approved to ensure it fit with agency values and mandates. Similarly, the participants are limited in their ability to allow a youth client to receive services from another worker because agencies may have concerns about keeping client numbers at a certain level.

Next Steps

Both the focus group and key informant interview participants were asked to identify the next steps that the SIYN should take in their work.

The participants identified several next steps that the SIYN should focus on in their future work. The next steps are:

Establish the SIYN as its Own Entity

The participants articulated that the most effective next step for the SIYN would be to establish itself as its own entity with an office, contact number, meeting space, mission statement and administrative support.

Build a Community Profile

A community profile was identified as an important next step in order that the committee can be contacted in order to provide support and expertise to community members. For example, the participants indicated that producing literature about the SIYN which can be disseminated throughout the school system would allow youth to contact them for information and class projects.

Promote New Agency Membership in the SIYN

The participants indicated that expanded community outreach was needed to promote new membership from agencies which should be at the table.

Coordinate Their Next Steps With the SYPC

The participants identified that it was important to ensure that the next steps of the SIYN coincided with those of the SYPC in order to have their continued support.

Youth Engagement

A next step identified by the participants was to continue to look at ways of engaging youth in their work.

6.3 The Street Youth Planning Collaborative - Key Findings

The Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) is a group of five directors from Hamilton organizations who are mandated to work directly with homeless youth. This group meets once per month and communicates regularly in between meetings to understand the continuum of services for homeless youth and work together to fill gaps within that continuum. The member agencies are Good Shepherd Youth Services, The Living Rock Ministries, Wesley Urban Ministries, Catholic Family Services and Alternatives for Youth.

The five members of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) were spoken to separately in key informant interviews. They were asked questions that addressed the four areas of the project evaluation: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

Key Achievements

In terms of key achievements, the participants were asked to discuss the project activities that were developed as a result of the *Addressing the Needs* report. In particular, they were asked to share their perception of the successes and challenges of these activities.

Overwhelmingly, the participants indicated that the project had been successful in the project activities and initiatives that had been undertaken. One identified reason for this success was that the project was evidence-based as it came out of the best practices that formed the basis of the *Addressing the Needs* report. The participants also indicated that the project had stayed within its timeline and budget while remaining connected to all of the recommendations. It was articulated that the project's collaborative structure had allowed a coordinated effort that enabled the project activities to move forward. While some projects were seen to have stronger outcomes, all were considered beneficial because they identified areas for future growth. In addition, the accomplishments and partnerships formed were identified as a foundation for continuing to move the project forward.

There were four project initiatives that were mentioned most often by the participants in relation to successful project activities. These were the early intervention project, the youth outreach worker Hamilton (YOWH) project, the aftercare worker project and the transitional housing project.

The early intervention project was identified as an important pilot project that had been successful in diverting youth from street-involvement within the first 48 hours of their arrival at the shelter. It was based on evidence that youth are less likely to become entrenched in the street-involved youth culture if service intervention can be provided at the onset of housing instability.

The participants indicated that the importance of the youth outreach worker Hamilton (YOWH) project was its success in serving disconnected youth within the areas they frequented and matching them with the services they need. They also identified that the project's strength lies in the SYPC's commitment to its success because of the collaborative nature of the project's hiring process and set-up.

According to the participants, the success of the aftercare worker project was demonstrated by its ability to fill a service gap and build an important partnership with the child welfare agencies. Housing support for youth in the community was previously unavailable because the street-involved youth services did not have the resources to provide it. Not only did child welfare support provide the resources for the project but it also presented an opportunity for the systems to form a partnership and collaborate on initiatives for youth.

The participants identified that the success of the transitional housing projects, Wesley Youth Housing and Angela's Place, was due to their basis in research and the collaborative approach taken in their development. The projects were based on a recommendation from the *Addressing the Needs* report and moved forward by the collective voice of the SYPC. The participants indicated that the transitional housing project provides a continuum of housing that was previously unavailable.

In terms of project activity challenges, the participants indicated that some initiatives had less progress than the others and needed further attention from the SYPC. One identified initiative was working toward changes to the Ontario Works policy for youth. It was articulated that the SYPC had made a step forward in this area by increasing their voice as a coordinated body but that further strategies need to be enacted. Culturally specific programming was also identified by participants as an area that had not progressed as fully as expected. They indicated that some successful activities had been undertaken but that a more comprehensive programming strategy was needed.

Other challenges identified by the participants centered on broader systems barriers that impacted on several of the project activities without hindering their overall success. One of the presented challenges was funding and the effect it had on the development or continuation of some initiatives. The participants articulated that some pilot projects were successful but were not allowed to continue because the funding had run out. Another challenge discussed by the participants was in relation to partnerships within certain initiatives. A restructuring of one partner agency was presented as a challenge to the outcome of a project activity in which it had been involved. Another activity was not fully completed because an outside community partner differed on the manner in which the initiative's information should be disseminated. Other projects were challenged by differences in agency mandates and values that affected the ability of certain partners to work together.

Community Development

The SYPC participants were asked to discuss the successes and challenges of their community development work in relation to three identified areas. The areas were:

- Working as a group;
- Building community partnerships;
- Building community awareness around street-involved youth issues.

Working as a Group

According to the participants, the SYPC has been very successful in working together as a group. They indicated that one of the reasons for their success was their ability to work through their differences until they have reached a consensus about the direction they should take. The participants articulated that over time they have developed processes that guide their methods of addressing certain issues and situations. It was identified that their success as a group was ultimately based on placing the needs of youth before individual agency considerations. The SYPC has the ability to focus on overall systems planning rather than the procurement of programs for their own agencies. In addition, the support that the SYPC receives from the project coordinator was identified as a strong factor in ensuring the group's success.

There were also several challenges identified by the SYPC participants in relation to working as a group. First, it was articulated that the work of the SYPC was extremely time consuming. It was recognized that collaborative processes and planning required a time commitment that went well beyond their monthly meetings. The participants also discussed the challenges presented by the inherent differences of the member agencies including organizational size, structure and values. These differences also relate to the issue of membership expansion and the effect that additional members would have on the group's working process.

Building Community Partnerships

The SYPC participants identified that community partnership building was a successful component of their work. Most importantly, their partnerships with each other have improved their individual agencies' service and impacted on Hamilton's street-involved youth service structure as a whole. Beyond their connection to each other, the participants indicated that they had established many other community partners throughout the project. In the process of developing initiatives to fulfill the recommendations, the SYPC formed partnerships with other community organizations. The partnerships most frequently discussed by the participants were those formed with the two local child welfare agencies. They indicated that these partnerships had led to the development of important pilot projects and had resulted in the formation of a beneficial connection between the two sectors. In addition, the participants articulated that the project coordinator had been instrumental in building community partners on behalf of the SYPC in the process of her work.

An identified challenge in relation to community partnerships was the need to build a stronger connection to the Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC) and the Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN). In particular, SYPC participants indicated that they had had very little or no contact with members of the SYIC. While more connection has been established with the SIYN, it was identified that an effort to promote increased collaboration with the two groups was needed.

Building Community Awareness Around Street-Involved Youth Issues

According to the SYPC participants, community awareness of street-involved youth issues has increased considerably since the project began. The launch and dissemination of the *Addressing the Needs* report was discussed as an important means of promoting community awareness. The Couch Project and the media attention it received were further identified as important factors in educating the community about street-involved youth. Awareness was also promoted in community agencies that have contact with youth through the "How to Talk to Youth At-Risk of Homelessness" posters. Additionally, presentations at conferences and

community consultations were undertaken throughout the project by the project coordinator and SYPC members.

The SYPC participants indicated that it was important to continue building awareness about street-involved youth issues in the community. They also discussed the need to promote awareness about the SYPC including its role in the community and the agencies that form it.

Community Impact

The community impact of the project was discussed by the SYPC participants in relation to three key areas. First, they indicated that a better youth service system was in place as a result of the project. It was articulated that the number of services has increased and that the services overall are better and more consistent due to their collaborative work. They also identified that there were fewer barriers for youth due to the gaps in service that have been addressed throughout the project. The increased amount of training and support for both youth and the front-line workers who serve them was put forward as another means of increasing the effectiveness of the youth service system. In addition, the SYPC participants identified that the project had resulted in various preventative strategies and initiatives that were not in place at the outset of the project.

Another area of community impact identified by the participants is the information-sharing and awareness building in which the SYPC has successfully engaged. It was articulated that the collective efforts of the SYPC allows constant information to be put forward in the community and ultimately leads to a better overall understanding of street-involved youth issues. The SYPC members also attend meetings and make presentations within other systems in Hamilton to draw attention to street-involved youth and their needs. The consistent and ongoing nature of the SYPC ensures that awareness of street-involved youth issues continues to grow in the community.

The SYPC participants also indicated that they have gained the ability to achieve more in the community due to the strength of their collective voices. An example discussed by several participants was the procurement of funding for a street-involved youth service that was being forced to end due to funding issues. The SYPC's support for the program demonstrated that the core street-involved youth agencies in Hamilton were in collective agreement about the program's importance. The SYPC's collaborative effort assisted in getting the message heard and led to funding for the program.

Next Steps

While the SYPC participants identified many next steps for continuing their work, the most frequent responses were in the areas of community outreach, strategic planning, community development support and sustainability.

Community Outreach

Participants indicated that the SYPC needed to engage in more outreach to various agencies and systems within the community. The importance of networking with community agencies was presented as a means of continued improvement of the service system for youth. The participants also indicated that outreach to broader systems and awareness building in the community as a whole could improve the understanding of street-involved youth issues within Hamilton. In addition, community outreach would raise the profile of the SYPC.

Strategic Planning

According to the participants, the SYPC has engaged throughout the project in strategic planning based on the 27 recommendations from the needs assessment. They identified the importance of continuing to review their progress and identify areas for further planning.

Community Development Support

The participants indicated that community development support was instrumental in the ability of the SYPC to engage in effective work. The support is provided by the project coordinator who facilitates the collaboration and acts as a link between the three tiers of the project. According to the participants, the amount of work and level of collaboration in which the SYPC engages would not be possible without a community development support person.

Sustainability

The importance of sustainability was discussed by the participants in relation to the difficulty of obtaining secure funding for project initiatives. They indicated that the SYPC is constantly applying for time-limited funding which involves a great deal of time and work. Without secure funding, the future of various projects remains precarious and it is difficult to engage in sustainable service system planning.

6.4 Project Coordinator - Key Findings

The project received community development support from the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC). A project coordinator provided support in the collaborative process, in the development of initiatives and in the coordination of project activities. In addition, the project coordinator assisted in community partnership building, facilitated the meetings of the three committees and acted as a conduit between them.

The project coordinator's perspective was gathered through a key informant interview. The interview questions addressed the four areas of the project evaluation: key achievements, community development, community impact and next steps.

Key Achievements

The project coordinator was asked to discuss the project's achievements in relation to the community development goals set out by the 27 recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs* report. In particular, she was asked to identify the successes and challenges of the project's work.

The project coordinator articulated that the project overall was very successful in fulfilling its community development goals. In terms of the 27 recommendations, she indicated that the areas that involved enhancing services, piloting services or completing new research were all attained successfully. Several examples that she put forward were the early intervention project, the transitional housing projects, the weekend open access program and culturally specific programming. She discussed the early intervention project as an illustration of one of the project's key achievements. She articulated that outside community partners were involved in the planning of the project and that a program consultant was hired to develop the model. The result was a pilot project that had integrity based on best practices and community input from street-involved youth service providers.

It was also identified by the project coordinator that there were five areas within the 27 recommendations that did not move forward as successfully as anticipated. These areas were based on recommendations that either gave responsibility to other community planning tables or were less concrete with less explicit outcomes. The areas she identified were mental health, addictions, policy change, improvement of the street-involved youth service tracking system and completion of certain research goals.

In the area of mental health, there were some successful outcomes in terms of training and community partnership development. However, one of the community planning goals was to have the Children's Service System Committee (CSSC) develop a strategic plan for serving street-involved youth in the children's mental health system. This goal was not attained due to the amount of work and number of priorities for which the CSSC is responsible. Similarly, in the area of addictions, a goal was to have the Hamilton Addiction Service Coalition (HASC) engage in strategic planning for street-involved youth but the HASC's broad focus presented as a barrier.

Another recommendation that was not addressed as fully as expected was policy change for Ontario Works recipients under 18 years old. The project coordinator indicated that policy change is incremental and requires a great deal of problem solving to achieve. Since other recommendations had clearer guidelines, the project tended to focus on them rather than tackling this more formidable issue. The recommendation to improve the street-involved youth service tracking system was also dependent on promoting change in larger systems and resulted in a less successful outcome.

While some of the project's research goals were accomplished, others did not get addressed as anticipated. The project coordinator indicated that since these research initiatives did not have resources connected to them, it was not possible to hire researchers to complete specific projects. Time constraints involved in the development of the overall project prevented the project coordinator from undertaking the research herself.

Community Development

The project coordinator was asked to discuss the successes and challenges of the community development process in relation to three identified areas. The areas were:

- Working as a group;
- Building community partnerships;
- Building community awareness around street-involved youth issues.

Working as a Group

According to the project coordinator, the project's biggest success was the organization of the collaborative process into three groups: the Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC); the Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN); and the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC). Each group represents one of the three prongs involved in the street-involved youth sector in Hamilton: youth, front-line workers and management.

The SYIC was formed by the project coordinator in order to ensure that the engagement and voices of young people were a part of the project. The SYIC's recruitment and group development process are considered by the project coordinator to be one of the greatest

learning experiences of the project. In terms of recruitment, the project coordinator indicated that the structured approach she originally employed was not an effective way of getting young people to join the committee. Instead, she spent a year meeting casually with the youth until they made the decision to begin the development of committee projects. As the group progressed in this work, the project coordinator realized that she needed to relinquish her expectations of how the group should work toward their goals. She began to understand that the development of the young people was the important objective and that their progress needed to take whatever path was necessary. As a result, the project coordinator identified that the SYIC has exceeded expectations in the development and progress of their work together.

According to the project coordinator, the SIYN is another successful component of the three tiered organization of the project's working process. The SIYN is comprised of frontline workers who have been meeting monthly for several years with a regular attendance of 13 to 17 members. The project coordinator indicated that the SIYN is doing interesting work including identifying emerging trends and issues, providing support to each other and developing new informal community partnerships for addressing a variety of youth issues. In addition, the project coordinator has seen the SIYN progress toward a more intentional collaborative process during the course of the project.

The third tier of the project is made up by the SYPC and is comprised of the directors of street-involved youth serving agencies in Hamilton. According to the project coordinator, the SYPC is deeply committed to a collaborative model of working and spends a great deal of time and effort working toward this goal. She indicated that their effectiveness is built on a commitment to be honest and transparent in their work together. The SYPC has had significant challenges in working as a group including differences in agency sizes and stages of development. The project coordinator has seen these challenges overcome through the SYPC's collective effort to trust each other and allow funding to go to another agency for the benefit of the service system as a whole.

A challenge identified by the project coordinator is building collaboration between the SYIC, the SIYN and the SYPC. While each committee collaborates well within the confines of their own group, they have much less interaction with each other. The project coordinator indicated that she acts as a conduit between the groups but that a more coordinated effort is needed. Traditionally, young people and front-line staff have less power in community planning. This presents a challenge to finding a means to value and engage them in the process. The project coordinator articulated that she would like to have the three groups meet at the same time in the same building and have committee delegates congregate at the end to communicate their discussions and coordinate their next steps.

According to the project coordinator, an important part of the Social Planning and Research Council's (SPRC) community development support is in the area of relationship building. Skilful facilitation is an important component in the relationship building process because it provides respectful mediation of issues that arise within the groups. She indicated that community development support contributes to the committees' effectiveness in working together and stretches out to the broader street-involved youth service system.

Building Community Partnerships

The project coordinator indicated that the project has been successful at engaging affiliate organizations that come into contact with street-involved youth within their work. A variety of agencies have been involved in various planning processes, pilot project planning tables and

supported events for the SYPC. According to the project coordinator, the success of the SYPC in moving its initiatives forward has resulted in requests from other agencies to join the SYPC. Any future expansion of the SYPC's membership will need to take to consider the balance between inclusivity and maintaining the integrity of the original group.

Despite the project's success in building community partnerships, the project coordinator indicated that the SYPC could benefit from a raised community profile. She identified that other systems in Hamilton such as police services and the school board should be informed of the SYPC because they also have a stake in street-involved youth issues. The broader community would benefit from understanding who the SYPC is and what their role in the community entails.

Building Community Awareness Around Street-Involved Youth Issues

In terms of building community awareness, the project coordinator outlined the training that had been developed and undertaken as part of the project. In particular, she discussed the "Youth Homelessness 101" training that had engaged 350 people from the community, including police officers, public health nurses and students. She further indicated that the project was successfully engaging other municipalities in Ontario who are involved in youth planning work (the Niagara, York and Waterloo regions were offered as examples.) In addition, project members are beginning to discuss street-involved youth issues with federal planners and beginning to develop a national profile.

While the project coordinator identified the benefits of a national profile for the SYPC and the work of the project, she stressed the importance of continuing to build local awareness. She indicated that strategies for increasing the profile of the SIYN should be developed as there are many more people in the community who could benefit from a connection with the group.

Community Impact

The community impact of the project was discussed by the project coordinator in relation to several key areas. First, she indicated that there were many tangible program and pilot project outcomes that were a direct result of the project's work. She articulated that the project as a whole has leveraged 4 million dollars for a continuum of services directed at strategies for prevention and intervention for street-involved youth. As examples of this work, she put forward the two transitional housing projects, Wesley Youth Housing and Angela's Place, as well as the team of youth outreach workers.

The project coordinator further identified that the project has impacted on the street-involved youth service system and the methods by which it works. She indicated that the 27 recommendations were a catalyst to the formation of partnerships and to moving the community forward in a common direction. The members of the SYPC have become more invested in planning a service framework for Hamilton and working together to achieve their vision. Agency directors shifted from competing for funding to collaboratively planning a service structure that best responds to the needs of the community.

According to the project coordinator, another key area of community impact has been the media attention resulting from the project's work. There were two media launches within the project: one for the *Addressing the Needs* report and one for "The Couch Project." Both launches received comprehensive media coverage including front page articles in the local newspaper. As a result, the project was able to engage in building a profile for street-involved youth issues in the general public. The project coordinator indicated that the coverage had been successful in

providing information about the reasons for youth homelessness and debunking the stigma that is often attached to youth in their circumstances.

Next Steps

In terms of next steps, the project coordinator indicated that the community development that has taken place during the project has provided a context for effectively addressing street-involved youth issues in Hamilton. In particular, the partnership building, collaborative processes and community ownership that have been built over the course of the project have established a framework on which to build further initiatives for street-involved youth. In addition, the extensive amount of project development and strategic planning that took place has been a valuable learning experience for future community development initiatives.

In order to build on the community framework and work of the project, the project coordinator identified the following four next steps for community development:

Continue the Relationship Between the SPRC and the SYPC

The SPRC provides community development support to the SYPC that is still needed in their work. She indicated that the SPRC provides expertise in the development of research design, information gathering and facilitation. In addition, the SPRC brings neutrality to the planning table that is more difficult for service providers from individual agencies to achieve.

Continue to Build a Community Profile

The project coordinator articulated the importance of celebrating the work being done in Hamilton and being able to present the story in a concise and accessible way. She indicated that a presentation had been developed by the SYPC and that increased opportunities to put it forward need to be sought. It would be beneficial if systems in the community such as child welfare, Ontario Works and police services could gain increased awareness about the SYPC's work and opportunities for connecting with it.

Develop a Strategic Plan to Address Issues of Mental Health, Addictions and Open Access Programming

The project coordinator identified that these issues are important because they continue to be critical to the success of youth transitioning off the street. As a result, there is a need to understand them in a comprehensive and holistic way and to develop a response in the next phase of the project.

Share Hamilton's Model of Street-Involved Youth Work with Other Communities

The project coordinator articulated the belief that there is a provincial movement underway towards creating a community development response to street-involved youth issues. Other communities could benefit from the expertise and assistance of the SYPC by learning about their model for community planning and development.

7.0 ANALYSIS

7.1 Fulfilled Recommendations

The project successfully fulfilled 22 out of 27 recommendations.

The overall goal of the project at its onset was defined as the reduction of youth homelessness and street-involvement in Hamilton “through the implementation of recommendations in the *Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton* report.” The first step in evaluating the project’s progress toward this goal was to examine the key activities and outcomes that were attached to each recommendation. As demonstrated in section 2.0 of this report, the project undertook activities and achieved successful outcomes for 22 of the 27 recommendations.

The recommendations addressed a broad range of street-involved youth issues and service needs that were effectively addressed by the project. There are several key areas that demonstrate the impact of enacting the recommendations on Hamilton’s youth service system. First, the project promoted community development and increased partnerships within its initiatives. An example in this area is the project undertaken by the SYPC and the two child welfare agencies in Hamilton. The project not only filled the need for housing aftercare support for youth but promoted a partnership between the street-involved youth services sector and the child welfare sector.

A second area of development was training initiatives for staff within the street-involved youth services. Front-line workers received training in areas that included cross cultural communication, mental health and identification of youth at risk. The increase of information and skill development by youth service staff has been seen to impact on the effectiveness of services within the street-involved youth service continuum.

The development of innovative programs was a third area that demonstrates the success of the project’s enactment of the recommendations. The project initiated ten pilot projects including the early intervention project, open access weekends and two transitional housing projects. These programs represent a comprehensive systems approach to service gaps identified in the recommendations.

Another area of community development based on the recommendations is the completion of research on street-involved youth issues. Research initiatives included topics such as street-involved youth from newcomer families and primary health care for youth. The completion of research ensured that the project’s direction was based on evidence and best practices.

A fifth area that demonstrates the impact of the project is the increase of youth engagement in the street-involved youth service system in Hamilton. One innovative program that promoted youth engagement was the peer mentorship project, a youth-led strategy for harm reduction of youth substance use. In addition, an effective youth committee was developed to inform the project’s initiatives, develop projects and infuse a youth perspective into awareness building activities.

In terms of the remaining five recommendations, only one was postponed altogether due to changes in the community service system that occurred after the recommendations were in place. There was progress made toward the fulfillment of the other four recommendations but the anticipated outcomes had not been achieved during the project’s timelines. Findings from

the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) participants revealed that there are planning processes in place to continue to work on the progression of these recommendations. The members of the SYPC articulated four reasons for the overall success of the project. First, the project was evidence-based; it came out of the best practices that formed the basis of the *Addressing the Needs* report. This ensured that the SYPC worked from an informed position and could match the recommendations with the necessary initiatives.

Second, the project stayed within its timeline and budget while remaining connected to all of the recommendations. The SYPC members' ability to "stay on task and stay focused" led to the projected outcomes with the resources and timeframe allotted by the project.

The third identified reason for the project's success was that its collaborative structure allowed a coordinated effort which enabled the project activities to move forward. The SYPC's ability to "speak with one voice" provided the project with the opportunities and strength to achieve its goals.

Lastly, while some project initiatives were seen to have stronger outcomes, all were considered beneficial because they identified areas for future growth. The project as a whole was viewed as "a tool for learning, not only for the SYPC but for the community as well."

7.2 Recommendations with Less Progress

The recommendations that showed less progress had three characteristics: a lack of resources, a reliance on other systems or an attempt to address broader structures.

The four recommendations that showed less progress had specific characteristics that differentiated them from the recommendations that had been fulfilled successfully. The recommendations identified in this section are #3, #8, #10 and #23.

Recommendation #3

Research, explore and develop strategies to prevent family breakdown due to: sexual orientation issues; the struggles faced by newcomer families; justice issues and addictions; particularly for families with youth who are 16-19 years old. The Rainbow Youth Drop-In, Settlement and Integration Service Organization, the John Howard Society and the various addiction treatment services do this work with families and would benefit from continuing and building on this work in their programming.

During the course of the project, the issue of family breakdown due to the struggles faced by newcomer families was addressed through the completion of a research project and report entitled *Newcomer and Aboriginal Youth Running Away From Home: Prevalence and Issues*. In addition, five presentations on the report's findings were made to a variety of community stakeholders.

The issue of family breakdown due to sexual orientation issues, justice issues and addictions was not addressed as outlined in this recommendation. In order for research to be done in these areas, it would have been necessary for the project to hire additional staff to complete specific research projects. There was a lack of resources attached to this recommendation to undertake these projects. As a result, only one issue outlined in recommendation #3 was explored through research.

Recommendation #8

It is recommended that the Children's Service System (CSS) committee (with research and support) identify, develop and implement effective treatment models that are specific to meet the unique needs of street-involved youth (including concurrent disorders and living in a culture of use.) Additionally, it is recommended that this group advocate for funding envelopes targeted for youth mental health or substance use to identify a percentage of the allocation for street-involved youth to be delivered on-site for street-involved youth. Where the resources already exist in the community, these should be built on; when the group finds areas where no resources or mechanisms for this work exist, the group should identify ways to make this happen.

In order to address this recommendation, the SYPC made two presentations to the Children's Service System committee in relation to the need for a specific treatment model for street-involved youth. Although the project could provide support for strategic planning measures, the responsibility of the treatment model rested with the CSS committee. The time constraints and large number of priorities attached to the CSS committee did not allow for the undertaking of this initiative. The project's reliance on another system to complete the recommendation's activities resulted in a lack of progress in this area.

Recommendation #10

The Hamilton community has an existing network that works on addictions issues in the community. The Hamilton Addictions Services Coalition (HASC) has the mandate to do system planning for our community. In this capacity it is recommended that they work to address some of the gaps in Hamilton's response to street-involved youth substance use and misuse including:

- a. Advocating for the funding support necessary to develop services that are appropriate and reflect best practices for street-involved youth affected by substance use;*
- b. Increased accessibility to a continuum of substance use treatment services appropriate for their needs including – education, community treatment, day/evening treatment, withdrawal management, residential – all built on a harm reduction philosophy;*
- c. Increased understanding and community capacity to provide integrated treatment for street-involved youth with concurrent mental health and substance use concerns.*

During the course of the project, two presentations were made to the Hamilton Addictions Services Coalition (HASC) outlining the specific needs of street-involved youth. As with recommendation #8, the responsibility for this strategic planning initiative rested with the HASC, a busy committee with many priorities. The project's reliance on another system also produced a lack of progress toward this recommendation.

Recommendation #23

That the SIYM and SIYN work with the community and City of Hamilton in lobbying for change in the Ontario Works policy directive for Applicants Under Age 18 in order to make sure youth are not homeless because they lack income. Key stakeholders in the community who could join this effort include the Food, Shelter and Housing Committee; the Children and Families Flagship Initiative; the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits working group; and the Social Justice Policy working group. This effort should also look at the ways to allow older youth (18-21 years old) to engage in work without the risk of losing their benefits, should their employment situation break down. Initial efforts at employment are often tenuous for street-

involved youth and Ontario Works policy states that an applicant loses benefits for three months if they are fired or quit.

In order to address this recommendation, the project coordinator liaised with Ontario Works managers and frontline staff three times to discuss the unique issues of street-involved youth. However, the recommendation's primary directive to lobby for changes to Ontario Works policy was not undertaken during the course of the project. The enactment of structural change requires an incremental, time onerous process that was not required of the project's other recommendations. For this reason, the project did not effectively address the broad policy changes suggested in this recommendation.

7.3 Pilot Projects

The project successfully initiated ten pilot projects to address needs that were outlined in the recommendations.

The development of ten successful pilot projects was a direct result of the street-involved youth project. Each of the pilot projects corresponds to a specific need outlined in the 27 recommendations.

After-Care Worker Project

The after-care worker project was developed to provide support to youth in maintaining their housing in the community. Four after-care workers were employed by the two local child welfare agencies and housed in street-involved youth service agencies in the community. The project was a response to recommendation #1 that identified a need for preventative strategies to be developed through a partnership between the street-involved youth services agencies and the child welfare agencies in Hamilton.

Open Access Weekends

The Weekend Open Access Program at The Living Rock Ministries was developed to provide youth with open access to support and activities during the weekend. The program corresponds to recommendation #5 that outlines the need for open access programming that is available to youth at all times.

Early Intervention Project

The early intervention project was developed in order to connect service providers with new youth within the first 24 - 48 hours of their arrival at the Notre Dame House shelter. A Youth Homelessness Prevention Worker was hired to provide this service and to liaise and provide outreach with youth-serving community partners. This project addresses a need identified in recommendation #7 to develop an early intervention model to respond within 24 to 48 hours when youth first leave home.

Mental Health Training

The project partnered with the McMaster Children's Hospital -- Regional Mental Health Outreach Team in order to develop three training modules for front-line staff who work with street-involved youth facing mental health issues. The training was delivered to two groups of front-line workers and was also converted into a distributable manual and DVD for street-

involved youth serving agencies. The training addresses a need identified in recommendation #9 for the professional development of front-line workers in relation to mental health issues.

Community Mental Health Liaison Program

The community mental health liaison program is an outreach program that provides early mental health intervention to street-involved and homeless youth. The program includes youth counseling and advocacy and is integrated within existing youth services in downtown Hamilton. The program is another response to recommendation #9 that recognized a need for clinical support for front-line workers.

The Peer Support Project

The Peer Support Project was developed to address street involved youth substance use with a peer mentorship approach. The project corresponds to recommendation #11 that suggests the use of peer support/educator programs as part of a harm reduction strategy to address the culture of use.

Cross Cultural Communication Training

The Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion was retained to provide 2 full day training sessions in cross cultural communication. A total of 35 frontline staff who work with street-involved youth completed the training. The training is a response to recommendation #16 that identifies a need for an outreach strategy for the SIYN to understand and connect with the different cultural communities of Hamilton.

Culturally Specific Programming -- The Nya Weh Program

The Nya Weh program provided Aboriginal drum and dance instruction for youth at the Living Rock Ministries. The program addressed the need identified in recommendation #18 for the creation of spaces that bring together youth based on culture.

Wesley Youth Housing

Wesley Youth Housing was developed to provide transitional housing to homeless youth in Hamilton. It is a two-stage project that offers street-involved and homeless youth one-year housing with the supports needed to achieve independent living. The project was developed in response to recommendation #19 that recognized a need for an increase in the range of transitional housing options for street-involved youth.

Good Shepherd Angela's Place

Angela's Place was developed to provide transitional housing for young mothers up to 21 years of age in Hamilton. It contains fifteen furnished apartments and provides residents with on-site support staff and programming. The project also addresses recommendation #19 that identifies the need for additional transitional housing.

As outlined in section 4.0, all of the pilot projects were evaluated with positive results.

The success of the pilot projects was also identified by the SYPC participants and the project coordinator. When discussing the key achievements of the project, the participants most

frequently mentioned the pilot projects and their impact on the street-involved youth service continuum. In particular, the early intervention project, the youth outreach worker project, the aftercare worker project and the transitional housing projects were used to demonstrate the project's success in improving the community's response to youth street-involvement. The pilot projects were also discussed as a demonstration of the community development process that contributed to their successful outcomes. For example, the early intervention project involved outside community partners in the planning process and was based on a model developed by a program consultant. The result was a pilot project that had integrity based on best practices and community input from street-involved youth service providers.

7.4 Key Indicators

Key indicators of youth street-involvement and homelessness identify a continued need for services, tracking systems and funding sources.

The key indicators of youth street-involvement and homelessness in Hamilton reveal that the number of youth using street-involved youth services has remained relatively consistent. This indicates that there remains a need for the existing street-involved youth services in Hamilton. It also reinforces the need for preventative services that were identified in the *Addressing the Needs* report and are limited in the current service continuum. In addition, there was a significant increase in the number of youth accessing non-shelter services at Notre Dame House in 2007 which remained at a high level through 2008. This reflects a continued need for these services and an increase for drop-in youth programs.

Another key finding is that the amount of data that is available about street-involved and homeless youth is limited. This data is an important factor in monitoring service usage and identifying trends in order to engage in effective systems planning. Recommendation #25 from the *Addressing the Needs* report called for the development of a model for identifying and tracking the demographics of street-involved youth in Hamilton. The recommendation was postponed due to the changes in the service system that occurred with the development of two transitional housing projects. It remains an important area for development within the street-involved youth services sector.

The gaps analysis update revealed that there are several long term gaps that continue to need attention. These gaps are in the areas of mental health, addictions, open access programming and primary health care for youth. It has also been identified that many gaps exist because funding for the programs needed to address them is not available. In addition, many of the pilot projects have funding sources that are precarious. The need for secure funding to ensure a sustainable service system continues to be a significant gap in the community.

7.5 The SYIC, the SIYN, and the SYPC

The SYIC, the SIYN and the SYPC were an effective means of engaging youth, front-line workers and management in the project but coordination of the three groups could be enhanced.

The organization of the project involved three collaborative groups who represent the three prongs of the street-involved service sector: youth, front-line workers and management. The Street Youth Involvement Committee (SYIC) is comprised of five young people who are or were previously street-involved. The Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) is made up of 35 front-line workers from 20 different youth serving agencies. The Street Youth Planning Collaborative

(SYPC) is comprised of five directors from street-involved youth services agencies in Hamilton. Each group meets monthly and works on issues of youth street-involvement in differing capacities.

The Street Youth Involvement Committee's (SYIC) role in the project was identified as an effective means of engaging the voices and participation of young people. When discussing their work on the committee, the SYIC participants frequently mentioned the opportunities they were given to provide their perspective on street-involved youth issues within the community. They expressed the belief that the committee allowed their voices to be heard and that they had an impact on the community through awareness raising and information sharing. The project coordinator who coordinated the group's activities and facilitated their meetings describes the SYIC as an unexpected success story that came out of the project. The SYIC has developed into an effective working group that infuses a youth perspective into the project while empowering the young people who do this work.

The Street-Involved Youth Network (SIYN) was identified throughout the evaluative process as an effective means of coordinating the community response of frontline workers within the project. The SIYN allows its members to gain access to a broader understanding of the street-involved youth service system in Hamilton and increase their networking systems for the benefit of youth. The partnerships and support that SIYN members have gained from their work together have led to a more intentional process of collaboration by the group. During the evaluative process, the SIYN participants articulated that they would like to increase the SIYN's activities and expand their role in the community. This demonstrates the SIYN's commitment and their belief that the committee is a valuable resource within the street-involved youth sector in Hamilton.

The Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC) was responsible for developing and directing the project using a collaborative model of systems planning. It was identified within the evaluative process that the group's success was ultimately based on placing the needs of youth before individual agency considerations. This included a focus on overall systems planning rather than the procurement of programs for the member's own agencies. The project's overall success was directly linked to the SYPC's ability to leverage funding, develop effective initiatives, engage in systems planning and direct the overall project using a collaborative approach.

While each of the three committees is successful on its own, there is an identified challenge in building collaboration amongst them. The project coordinator acts as a conduit between the groups, but there is a lack of real connection to one another. Within the evaluative process, participants from each the committees identified a need to increase collaboration among the three groups.

7.6 The Collaborative Model

The project's collaborative model was an effective means for addressing youth street-involvement in Hamilton.

The success of the project's collaborative model was based on the ability to focus on the needs of youth and overall systems' planning rather than what was best for individual agencies. Throughout the evaluative process, the participants identified a strong commitment to working collaboratively toward their goals. It was identified that the success of the project was dependent on the strength of a collaborative model of community development.

It was identified throughout the evaluative process that the SYPC was deeply committed to a collaborative model of working and spent a great deal of time and effort working toward this goal. Their effectiveness is built on a commitment to be honest and transparent in their work together. The SYPC has had significant challenges in working as a group including differences in agency sizes and stages of development. These challenges have been overcome through the SYPC's collective effort to trust each other and allow funding to go to another agency for the benefit of the service system as a whole. Another reason for their success is their ability to work through their differences until they have reached a consensus about the direction the group should take. Over time, the SYPC has developed processes that guide their methods of addressing certain issues and situations.

The collaborative effort of the SYPC has given them the ability to achieve more in the community due to the strength of their collective voices. Other systems in the community are more likely to trust the service needs identified by the collective voice of the group. The expertise that the group represents has also been instrumental in leveraging funding for the project's initiatives. In addition, the SYPC's collaborative model allows constant information to be put forward in the community and ultimately leads to a better overall understanding of street-involved youth issues.

The collaborative model has been an important factor in developing an effective service system continuum for street-involved youth. Previously, the agencies worked independently and attempted to address many service needs within their own organizations. The collaborative model allows the agencies to coordinate and develop a community response to street-involved youth needs by having services housed in the agency best suited for them. In addition, events and drop-in services can be scheduled to complement each other instead of competing against one other.

It was identified that the effectiveness of the collaborative model was dependent on the community development support provided by the project coordinator from the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. The SYPC participants articulated that the amount of work and collaboration they had achieved was a direct result of the project coordinator's support. The project coordinator is an important link among the project's three committees and brings neutrality to the planning table that would be difficult for agency members to achieve. In addition, the Social Planning and Research Council provided expertise in the development of research design, information gathering and facilitation which have contributed to the project's success.

7.7 Community Impact

The project has had a significant impact on Hamilton's response to youth street-involvement.

The project's impact on the system of services for street-involved youth in Hamilton has been one of its greatest successes. The project as a whole has leveraged four million dollars for a continuum of services directed at strategies for prevention and intervention for street-involved youth. Many tangible program and pilot project outcomes resulted directly from the project's work including two transitional housing projects and a team of youth outreach workers. The *Addressing the Needs* report identified gaps in service that have now been filled due to project initiatives. These include gaps in street outreach, housing aftercare and mental health services. The overall continuum of services for street-involved youth in Hamilton has undergone a significant improvement as a result of the project.

The project has also impacted on the community by changing the development processes used by the street-involved youth services sector. The 27 recommendations acted as a catalyst to the formation of partnerships and to moving the community forward in a common direction. The project partners shifted toward a committed collaborative effort for developing a community response to street-involved youth in Hamilton. The members of the SYPC became more invested in planning a service framework for the community and working together to achieve their vision. Agency directors shifted from competing for funding to collaboratively planning a service structure that best responds to the needs of the community. As a result, the SYPC has been able to achieve more in the community with the strength of their collective voices.

Another area of community impact is the awareness building of street-involved youth issues that resulted from the project. There were two media launches within the project: one for the *Addressing the Needs* report and one for "The Couch Project." Both launches received comprehensive media coverage including front page articles in the local newspaper. As a result, the project was able to engage in building a profile for street-involved youth issues in the general public. In addition, the collective efforts of the SYPC allowed constant information to be put forward in the community and ultimately led to a better overall understanding of street-involved youth issues. The SYPC members also attended meetings and made presentations within other systems in Hamilton to draw attention to street-involved youth and their needs. The consistent and ongoing nature of the SYPC ensures that awareness of street-involved youth issues continues to grow in the community. In addition, the SYPC has infused the voices of young people into the awareness building and information sharing activities of the project which allows the message to be presented from a youth perspective.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

8.1 Increased Collaboration

Build increased collaboration between the SYIC, the SIYN and the SYPC.

The need to build increased collaboration among the groups who represent the three prongs of the project was identified throughout the evaluative process. The SYIC, SIYN and SYPC evaluation participants all recognized a lack of connection among the three committees and indicated that increased collaboration was needed. The project coordinator identified that each committee collaborates well within the confines of their own group but has limited interaction with each other. Since the overall success of the project was built on a framework of collaboration, it follows that an effort to increase the coordination of the groups is needed. The research identified several methods for achieving this next step.

- Address the issue of power differentials that exist between the three groups in order to increase opportunities for building collaboration.
- Explore means of engaging the voices of the SYIC and the SIYN more directly in the planning and decision making processes.
- Continue to have the project coordinator act as a conduit between the three groups with the goal of increasing connection between them.
- Explore opportunities to have committee delegates meet on a regular basis to share the progress and discussions happening within each of the groups.
- Ensure that the future goals of the three groups coincide and can be supported within the overall structure of the community planning initiatives.

8.2 Community Profile Building

Continue to build a community profile both locally and outside the community.

The importance of enhancing the community profile of Hamilton's street-involved youth work was identified as a next step throughout the evaluation's process. The project's initiatives and accomplishments as well as the groups and agencies involved need to be shared with the broader community. In addition, it was identified that the local model that has been developed should be shared with communities outside of Hamilton. Several means for profile building were identified within the research.

- Provide the SIYN with the resources needed to increase their profile in order for them to connect with community partners who should be aware of their work.
- Promote new agency membership in the SIYN through expanded community outreach;
- Increase the profile of the SYPC in order to create awareness in the broader community about the agencies they represent and the role they play in Hamilton.
- Continue the SYPC's outreach efforts to other community partners in order to improve the service system continuum for youth.
- Increase the profile of the street-involved youth work being done in Hamilton in order to connect with other systems in the community.
- Share Hamilton's model of street-involved youth work with other communities to allow them to benefit from the expertise and assistance of the SYPC in the area of community planning and development.

8.3 Strategic Planning

Continue to engage in strategic planning around street-involved youth issues in Hamilton

The evaluative research revealed that strategic planning around street-involved youth issues was an important factor in the project's success. The SYPC participants and the project coordinator identified the need to continue to engage in strategic planning processes to ensure an effective service system for street-involved youth. Several means of strategic planning were pointed to within the evaluation.

- Review the progress that has been made on the 27 recommendations in order to identify areas for further planning.
- Explore means of improving the data tracking methods for the street-involved youth services system.
- Engage in an ongoing process of monitoring trends and service issues in order to develop new strategies to address them.
- Continue to develop preventative strategies as part of the planning process.
- Develop a more comprehensive response to broader systems issues that impact on street-involved youth particularly in the areas of mental health and addictions.
- Develop methods for promoting change to broader policy issues such as Ontario Works' policies for youth.

8.4 Community Development Support and Resources

Continue to seek out community development support and resources for street-involved youth service system planning

Throughout the evaluative process, it was identified that the community development support provided by the project coordinator was instrumental to the project's success. In addition, initiatives must have resources attached to them in order to move them forward. The issues and difficulty of obtaining secure funding were also identified throughout the research. Several areas were highlighted in the evaluation for addressing these areas.

- Continue to have community development support to allow the SYPC to engage in the amount of work and level of collaboration they have achieved.
- Use community development support to assist in community partner building and to act as a facilitator for the three tiers of the project.
- Continue the relationship between the SYPC and the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) in order to provide expertise in the development of research design, information gathering and facilitation.
- Ensure that project initiatives are supported by the necessary resources to allow them to move forward.
- Continue to seek out sources for obtaining secure funding for project initiatives in order to engage in sustainable service system planning.

9.0 PROJECT UPDATE

Since the completion of the evaluation research on June 30, 2009, there has been an important development that will impact on the street-involved youth sector in Hamilton. In July 2009, funding from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy was secured for an 18 month project timeframe. The project is a continuation of the partnership of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (SYPC), the Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CAS) and the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CCAS). The funding allows for collaborative support to continue by resourcing the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) to provide support in four domains.

- 1) Continue to provide collaborative support to the SYPC.
- 2) Build a relationship with the Young Parent Network in order to provide collaborative support. An application for funding has been submitted to the Trillium Foundation for a research project to develop a needs assessment for young parents.
- 3) Provide collaborative support and training to the new Youth Housing Team that is funded by the project. The team will consist of seven full-time workers that will offer a range of housing support to youth.
- 4) Provide collaborative support to the SYPC, the CAS and the CCAS in order to strengthen their partnership and making sure the project runs smoothly.