

**FORT ERIE YOUTH LIVING WITHOUT SECURE
HOUSING**

Report

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Goal:

To determine a snapshot of what youth homelessness looks like in Fort Erie. To determine: approximately how many homeless youth are in Fort Erie, why they are homeless, what they feel they need, how long they have been homeless, and whether they would use a shelter if one existed.

Background:

On April 7th, 2005 a meeting was held consisting of key stakeholders in the Fort Erie community concerned with the issue of youth homelessness (see appendix A). At issue was the imminent closure of the Holy Family Boys Home and the resultant availability of residual funding from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. A number of key stakeholders had expressed interest in using those funds to address the needs of youth who are defined as homeless or precariously housed within the community of Fort Erie. However, there was currently no clear data available as to the scope of youth homelessness or a clear consensus as to what services might best suit this population.

As a result of this meeting Deanna Bryant (Coordinator of Health and Wellness) contacted Dr. Hans Skott-Myhre at the Child and Youth Studies Department at Brock University to see if a study could be done that would provide the necessary data. Dr. Skott-Myhre enlisted his colleague Dr. Rebecca Raby and they began to interview key stakeholders to see if a study was possible. On May 18th a meeting was held to gather data from the stakeholders group (see appendix B). The result of this meeting was a request to Dr. Skott-Myhre and Dr. Raby to develop this proposal for a study of youth Homelessness in the Fort Erie community.

Youth Who Are Homeless: Geographies of Homelessness and Invisibility

The majority of the literature on homelessness conceptualizes it as an urban problem (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002) and a wide body of research exists that provides estimates of metropolitan street youth and qualitatively describes their experiences (Van Leeuwen, 2004; Novac *et al.*, 2002; McCarthy, 1995; Whitbeck & Hoyt; 1999). Similar descriptions and population estimates are virtually absent for youth who experience rural homelessness (Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002), despite the number of urban homeless youth with rural origins (Collins, 2006; Farrin *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, although some metropolitan literature does remark on rural youth homelessness, it comments only on its invisible nature (NIDA, 2002). This exclusion has significant implications in that it marginalizes the rural homeless and hinders the development of social policy to address the issues this population faces. Centrepoint suggests that for youth "the experience of running away may be very different in rural areas from that experienced in urban areas" (2001, p. 1). Some limited literature on rural homelessness is available, however, which we will review here.

Voakes (1991) estimates that rural youth homelessness can be estimated at 3 per 1000 in overall population, although as Lawrence (1995) points out in his study of rural homelessness in Iowa, homeless populations can vary quite substantially between rural areas, depending on demographic shifts, economic distress and local transformations in patterns of labour. Surprisingly, in a 2002 high school questionnaire on youth homelessness in Lanark, Ontario, "nearly 1/3 of the youths surveyed had left home at least once" (Collins 2006, on-line). The purpose of this literature review is to take an active role by highlighting how practical preventions and interventions can occur to

reduce such homelessness for rural and semi-rural young people. Youth in this context are fluidly operationalized as those ranging in age from twelve years to early twenty. In this report, we first define rural homelessness as it relates to youth. Vissing (1999) optimistically suggests that if metropolitan intervention models are critically read, they can become rurally applicable. This review thus details the research of Beer *et al.* (2003) and the intervention categories they examine to alleviate homelessness in metropolitan and, potentially, non-metropolitan regions. Finally, we present a detailed, concrete example of an intervention project undertaken in a small community.

A final consideration is that although various rural programs exist, they are rarely explored in research and intervention literatures. During the collection of research for this review, we corresponded with several youth-workers in Canada and the United States via telephone and email. In these conversations we inquired as to whether they had knowledge of recent intervention-based literature. The majority of these youth workers stated that the literature on rural programming was, to their knowledge, scarce or non-existent; these statements suggest that most practical work with homeless youth (rural or urban) is largely unguided by relevant research literature. This gap in research subsequently influences the course of service delivery.

What is Rural Homelessness and Where Do Youth Fit?

The popular and urban depictions of homelessness present poor housing or street sleepers as those images that denote poverty (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Shifflett, 2004). As previously noted, “rural homelessness is often neglected as it is invisible to the general population and is not consistent with the rural idyll” (Beer *et al.*, 2003, p. 5). Such

conceptions of homelessness alongside idealization of the countryside make it difficult to conceive of homelessness rurally and as such, homelessness is often denied by communities (Collins, 2006). Such images also reflect quite a narrow definition of homelessness. As Farrin *et al.* (2005) discuss, a broad definition of homelessness is needed, particularly in rural areas, one which includes the hidden homeless who are staying with friends, in danger of immediate eviction and/or living without safety or security.

In rural regions, the opportunities to secure safe and appropriate housing are limited. Lower incomes, higher unemployment rates and fewer job opportunity make it extremely difficult for people to afford accommodation (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Vissing, 1999). Additionally, Beer *et al.* (2003) cite several studies which state that rural communities often have limited available housing to begin with, particularly rental stock. These factors are especially problematic for youth who are homeless or seeking independence from previous living arrangements. The Lanark Transitions Committee (2003) found that young people also experience significant age discrimination in the labour market, with many landlords unwilling to rent to them. Also, Farrin *et al.* (2005) argue that fewer resources and services are available in rural and semi-rural settings; the services that are there tend to be under-resourced, run centrally and difficult to access (e.g. due to transportation issues).

Fewer community and informational resources, higher unemployment rates for young people, and a lack of housing in rural areas restrict youth's ability to secure safe and affordable housing and may force them into homelessness (Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002; Beer *et al.*, 2003). When this occurs, rural youth "are faced with the alternatives of

sleeping rough, couch surfing, returning to unacceptable circumstances in their parental home or previous living arrangement, or being forced to leave the region” (Beer *et al.*, 2003, p. 25). Homeless youth might also rent motel rooms with other young people, camp in public areas, or inhabit abandoned barns (Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002; Vissing, 1999). In addition, the socioeconomic conditions of rural areas typically restrict the efforts of youth who are transitioning out of homelessness, which might result in extended stays in shelters or temporary housing (Beer *et al.*, 2003).

Although migration to urban centres is a possibility, this tactic is not ideal. Beer *et al.* (2003), argue that this solution ignores the strong ties and sense of community that many youth feel toward their home region, alongside their concomitant lack of such social networks within cities. Additionally, the limited social resources in rural communities do not provide youth with information to assist a transition from rural to urban settings. Seasonal and tourist-based jobs in rural communities may be appealing for homeless youth in comparison to the high-skill labour demand in metropolitan areas; thus, homeless youth might be discouraged from moving to urban areas (Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002). If they do migrate, once there, rural youth may have difficulty competing in a restricted urban labour market because “rural regions [typically] have lower levels of educational attainment” (Beer *et al.*, 2003, p. 26). Travel expenses into urban areas are, undoubtedly, also relevant to consider. Finally, urban centres often *also* have limited services and shortages of affordable housing options (Transitions Committee, 2003).

One survey of rural and smaller-town youth has been conducted recently in Ontario by the Transitions Committee in Lanark County (2003). Young people who had experience with homelessness themselves conducted 99 in-depth interviews with youth

who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness. In this study, over half the respondents reported diverse (i.e. non-nuclear) family structures and, notably, many had lost a parent through either death or abandonment. Such loss has been found to be a significant variable in adult homelessness as well. This was also quite a transient group. Most received financial support from parents, odd jobs, friends, social assistance, panhandling and relatives. Fewer were involved in criminal activities compared to homeless youth in urban areas. Homelessness had a direct effect on school attendance and performance and nearly half had, at some point, contemplated suicide. Transportation was also a significant issue, with many relying on hitchhiking at some point in time. The Transition Committee found that many youth left home due to conflict with the family, abuse and substance abuse (either their parents' or their own). Respondents stated that their inability to get and keep housing was most significantly linked to the following issues: lack of money (74%), age discrimination in the housing market (50%), lack of affordable housing (42%), unemployment (25%), drug abuse (24%), anger management (22%) and a series of other, less frequent issues such as depression and conflict with the law.

The Transition Committee also asked about the services used, and sought out, by youth. Respondents were most likely to use youth centres. Twenty-six percent of respondents visited youth shelters regularly. 16% used school guidance counsellors. Remaining possibilities were all used by under 10% of the youth and these included: private counsellors, social workers, welfare workers, the CAS, emergency shelter and police. Many were quite frustrated with their inability to access Ontario Works/social assistance due to lack of transportation, appointments during school hours, and the

eligibility requirements (needing a trustee who is over 18, needing to be in school, needing to have a permanent address). Once accessed, they discussed the impossibility of living on \$520 a month. In terms of assistance, a large majority (84.4%) said that they would use a 24-hour help-line that would provide support and advice on a range of housing issues. Many also recommended transitional housing, with services including counselling, life skills training, internet access and résumé help. Other recommendations by the Transition Committee included: local solutions, employment of experienced community workers, involvement of existing local agencies, and skill-based programming for these youth.

Service Delivery

In their comprehensive report on rural youth homelessness in Australia, Beer *et al.* (2003) provide program categories for homeless youth that are divided by primary, secondary or tertiary intervention strategies, each of which can be considered in terms of rural application. Primary interventions address homelessness before it occurs by offering youth supports so they will not become at-risk (Beer *et al.*, 2003). Secondary programming targets youth who are at high for homelessness and provides support through counselling or referral to other community agencies (Beer *et al.*, 2003). These supports are largely effective in the school setting and through the development of peer support networks (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996). Tertiary supports involve interventions when homelessness has actually occurred. The goal of this type of intervention is outcome-oriented; that is, these programs assist homeless youth in their transition to securing safe and independent accommodation (Beer *et al.*, 2003).

Outreach Models

Outreach models address youth homelessness at a structural level by providing primary and secondary intervention services (Beer *et al.*, 2003). In doing so, these models seek to identify potentially “at risk” youth before they are forced to the street without shelter or a stable home environment. Centrepont (2001) asserts that education about routes to homelessness and their avoidance needs to be made available to youth. This can be accomplished by a variety of means. First and most fundamentally, information needs to be distributed to all agencies or programs that are likely to encounter youth who are at risk. These organizations should be provided with a clear and direct referral process so that youth receive preventative support or early intervention (Vissing, 1999; Centrepont, 2001). Distributing referral information to public helplines, school guidance counsellors, churches, youth recreational services, or members of the community that are known to be in consistent contact with youth populations increases support networks and decreases isolation that some youth might experience. Additionally, making this information available to family counsellors is quite significant. Centrepont (2001) argues that these counsellors should assert that youth are free agents, and have rights and precedence for personal safety that is above and beyond their family. Yet they should also encourage youth to maintain contact with their families while offering them the assurance of confidentiality should they decide to leave home. If the youth decides to stay at home, outreach services should still continue so that youth retain access to a neutral and mediating resource.

In a report issued by Health Canada on peer initiatives to assist out-of-mainstream youth, Caputo, Weiler and Green (1996) outline the importance of peer education-based prevention. Peer helper initiatives provide youth with information in a safe and encouraging environment of peer counselling, mediation, referral, tutoring, advocacy and protection (Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996). Schools are ideal settings for peer helpers and outreach workers to provide primary and secondary intervention services. For example, schools might ask former or transitioning street youth to come to the school to deliver “speaks” (Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996). Speaks are informal meetings where these youth share their own experiences with students in hopes that this will prevent youth from entering homelessness. Another important component of outreach service delivery is its emphasis in providing youth with community resources. When community support services, businesses and government initiatives are bridged and accessible, young people and their families are supported in a more comprehensive manner (Beer *et al.*, 2003).

As cited by Beer *et al.* (2003), successful outreach programs have intervention that is preventative (not remedial), flexible, with the capacity to respond in a crisis situation, on-going, and able to provide youth with money in cases of emergency. For rural youth, such models include some specific challenges, however, for the following reasons:

- A lack of supportive community resources and local infrastructure (Victorian Homelessness Strategy (VHS), 2000 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003; Baker, 2004).
- The trend of regionalization, where services for rural communities are provided within urban regional centres (Beer *et al.*, 2003).

- The trend of centralization, where services for rural communities are run centrally: “Decision making that is not locally driven often fails to meet local needs” (VHS, 2000, p. 1 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003) – services coordinated in the city may not account for rural issues.

Intensive Support Models

Intensive models are secondary in nature and support those youth who demonstrate the greatest need, particularly those with psychosocial difficulties (Beer *et al.*, 2003), these models thus concentrate on those considered to be at high risk. In the context of youth homelessness, the literature (for detailed literature, see Van Leeuwen, 2004) suggests a cyclical relationship between psychosocial problems and homelessness; that is, those youth who display psychosocial difficulties often become homeless, and alternatively, those homeless youth without these difficulties are often exposed to situations that increase the likelihood of psychosocial maladjustment. Generally, being homeless increases the likelihood of substance abuse, sexual exploitation and prostitution, mental health difficulties, poor physical health, socially disruptive behaviour, and social isolation (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Vissing, 1999; Van Leeuwen, 2004).

Intensive models accommodate for a range of potential difficulties by being diverse in nature and by combining a variety of intervention supports, including: continued daily life/survival supports that provide youth with access to specialist services (for example, detoxification or mental health services); low youth-worker to youth ratios where the relationship between the two is reciprocal and prolonged; and ongoing support regardless of where the youth resides (for example, that support continues whether the

young person is homeless, has present accommodation, has reunited with her or his family, or has been evicted). Such programs can supply flexible hours where support is available (Bisset *et al.* in Beer *et al.*, 2003), intensive support opportunities. For youth in rural communities, such models are valuable, but also challenging due to limited funding for community mental health programs, including counselling and referral (Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002), and the above mentioned trends towards regionalization and centralization.

Generic and crisis models

Generic models provide tertiary services to the general population (as opposed to targeted or at-risk groups) by providing intervention as the need arises (Beer *et al.*, 2003). For youth in immediate crisis, this approach provides short-term accommodation with hopes of eventual youth independence and intermediate or long-term housing accommodations. Short-term accommodation is typically structured by a group-living environment for youth where (by best practice):

- accommodation is flexible (for example, housing is not communal but clustered with the capacity for individual accommodation);
- the youth-worker(s) provides flexible support;
- referral to outside services is available;
- the number of youth with complex needs is limited (Bisset *et al.*, 1999 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003).

Centrepoint (2001) stresses “a need for a more flexible range of provision for youth runaways” (p. 3) and agrees that youth-workers must be adaptable and devoted

while youth reside temporarily at the respective centre. This research particularly stresses that youth workers be patient and flexible when working in generic programs as youth may perceive such intervention as temporary.

One major disadvantage to generic models is their inability to effectively accommodate clients with problems deemed "complex". Because generic settings typically have low youth-worker to client ratios and a communal-living atmosphere, adequate time and funding to address the complex needs of some youth may be diminished or become problematic in a communal atmosphere where psychosocial problems may lead to disruption (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Cicada Place, 2004). Unfortunately, rural areas often lack such immediate generic interventions for youth (VHS, 2000 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003). Further, such models can be challenging rurally as staff are often isolated from peers and inadequately trained, resulting in high turnover rates and shortages (VHS, 2000 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003).

Crisis models, in contrast, address homeless youth when their needs are acute, unexpected, life threatening and complex (Beer *et al.*, 2003). Totally reactive and therefore tertiary in nature, these approaches offer immediate intervention but do not address homelessness at a structural level, unlike outreach and intensive support models. As indicated by the Victorian Homelessness Strategy Unit (2000), "these services cannot provide long term support, facilitate independence and[/or] minimize repeat service usage" (p. 9, as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003). Successful crisis models do, however, include crisis intervention that is available beyond business hours; wide-ranging services (for example, substance abuse counselling, needle and syringe exchange, legal aid, abuse or sexual assault counselling, and primary health care) (Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996); a

“team approach”; accessibility to a variety of intensive support service(s); opportunities to participate in social aspects of the community; and flexible financial aid (Bisset *et al.*, 1999 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003).

Coordination Models (Continuum of Care)

Finally, coordination (or continuum of care) models provide tertiary intervention when homelessness actually occurs, but links it to the outreach and intensive support models described above. For youth wishing to exit homelessness, this approach offers accessible links to mainstream services and agencies so that they may obtain appropriate housing and, in addition, a variety of social supports that reduce the incidence of homelessness (Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996; Beer *et al.*, 2003). The success of such a model is based in its ability to link unrelated resources so that youth receive social, psychological, financial, medical and other relevant supports (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996). The overall goal is inclusive and one where the unique needs of each client are provided for by bridging services, thereby creating an individualized and comprehensive care system. For example, a continuum of care model focuses on providing educational opportunities, literacy training, life skills training, and assistance with finding employment (Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996). In addition, Caputo, Weiler and Green (1996) state that coordinated interventions maintain close contact with the “street scene”. Recalling Vissing’s (1999) suggestion that metropolitan interventions can be applied rurally, it may be more challenging for rural youth workers to stay in touch with rural “street scenes”. However, consistently speaking with homeless youth or rural

outreach workers about their experiences with the culture, it is possible that youth workers can maintain such contact.

As cited by Beer *et al.* (2003), Bisset *et al.* detail the following as components of a successful coordination model:

- that care, as well as identification, assessment and referral, is provided to those individuals, or targeted at those groups, who demonstrate increased needs (for example, those with psychosocial difficulties);
- that assessment for those within at-risk groups is comprehensive and appropriate;
- that negotiation occurs with both youth and social agencies so that regular youth participation in programs is achieved;
- that the youth-worker and young person regularly review the appropriateness of the services being employed;
- “structural advocacy” that ensures the services provided assist youth with realistic problems they may face.

Northwest Michigan, a rural region with a significant homeless youth population, has adopted such a coordination approach (Jazzanno & Marquis, 2002). Asserted by Jazzanno and Marquis (2002) and Beer *et al.* (2003) as the most effective strategy for rural homeless youth, such an intervention can be complex and far-flung:

Homeless youth in [our] rural, isolated, geographically dispersed seven county service area lack a comprehensive ... [system] to assist them with becoming fully prepared for adulthood and engaged constructively in our communities ... This group recommended that a shelter be developed for homeless youth and that an ongoing coalition be formed to continue to develop the system of services and

supports. Over 25 agencies and organizations participate in this ongoing initiative ... An additional initiative ... has been in existence in five of the seven counties in our proposed service area ... comprised of representatives from 48 federal, state and local agencies (Jannazzo & Marquis, 2002, p. 2-3).

Case study: Cicada Place

Cicada Place is a transitional housing program for homeless or at risk youth in Nelson, BC. It reflects a mixed-model approach. With a population of less than 10 000, Nelson can be classified as a rural community, particularly because a substantial part of its population resides on the outskirts of town. Operating under the Nelson Community Service Centre (NCSC), Cicada Place is funded by an annual budget of \$159 000 from both BC Housing and BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, and receives additional supports from the provincial government and local charities. At first, the Nelson community (particularly local businesses) reacted negatively to the NCSC's proposal to open Cicada Place for fear that such a site would encourage the destruction of public property, loitering, and excessive partying by youth. In the initial stages of the project, turnout at public information sessions was poor. However, once media coverage of the initiative increased and once public members became aware of how Cicada Place might assist the community, Nelson was more inviting.

Briefly, Cicada Place acts in response to the serious concerns that rural displaced youth face: a lack of affordable housing; unsafe housing conditions; and exploitation of youth tenants by their landlords (for example, a disregard for the BC Tenancy Act when a renter might illegally demand first and last month's rent upfront from the youth). The

NCSC asserts that when youth are faced with such inequalities, they begin to couch-surf or reside outdoors, resulting in the neglect of self-care, education, jobs, and/or life skills training.

Cicada Place officially opened in May of 1999. The centre houses youth aged 16 to 22 in an 11-unit building with 7 single units, 1 double unit for two full-time caretakers, and 3 double units for those residences with dependents or physical disabilities. When a vacancy is available, a review panel admits one of six to eight referred applicants.

Referral and subsequent screening occurs when either the youth applies, or when she or he is referred by parents or guardians, a school, social or government agencies, or by the youth's friends. Although residence is not free, Cicada offers youth with a number of funding arrangements so they are able to pay the required rent of \$325 per month plus utilities to the program (youth with dependents pay \$520 per month plus utilities) once they sign an independent living contract. Youth residing at the transition house may stay from six months to two years depending on how progress is subjectively perceived by individual youth and caretakers' review of residency: "as long as youths are progressing ... they are allowed to stay at Cicada Place" (Government of Canada, 2004, p. 2). On average, most youth live at Cicada for 9.2 months before moving toward the goal of independence and stable long-term accommodation.

Cicada Place offers comprehensive service delivery for homeless youth because it provides housing and a variety of support systems simultaneously, reflecting continuum of care and generic intervention models. Staff at Cicada (a female/male caretaker team) promote a balance between social support and independent living. Because the youth-workers reside at the centre on a full-time basis, they adopt a neutral and monitoring, yet

supportive, role for youth. Acting as a liaison to the wider community, school and the family (90% of residents retain contact with their families), the staff can be viewed as third-party outreach workers, particularly when they mediate youth-guardian meetings or counselling sessions. Cicada youth rely on the security that they are supported by staff and are assisted by mediation; this reduces return to homelessness or an unsafe living environments. Additionally, the NCSC supports youth by providing them with a variety of referral therapy services.

So that the youth and caretakers who communally reside at the centre live together harmoniously and so youth may progress in healthy and safe ways, Cicada Place stipulates rules that its tenants must respect. If youth fail to abide by these rules, they must be ready to move on from Cicada. For youth to continue their residency in the program, they must attend school, or be either employed or actively searching for a job. Both staff and the NCSC provide youth with a variety of educational options for the completion of high school. Alcohol and drugs are strictly prohibited at the centre. No couples are admitted to Cicada, there are restrictions on guests who can stay overnight, and only same-sex roommate couplings are permitted. Youth are required to be respectful toward the communal-living atmosphere and other residents, and prepare meals for themselves and the other tenants once a week.

The compassionate atmosphere and structure of support at Cicada undoubtedly accounts for the high success that the majority of its tenants achieve. Youth are taught important life skills by a variety of means. Counselling allows youth to address a variety of individual and emotional issues and provides youth with access to alternate social and community programs designed to help them. Weekly group sessions (and one-on-one

sessions for those who cannot attend these) emphasize agency and teach independent living skills. Additionally, youth at the centre learn about advocacy; specifically, youth are informed about their rights and advocated for by Independence for Youth (IFY), a 20-year-old program providing their services annually to ten to thirteen youth (some of whom do not reside at Cicada Place).

Although no research has objectively evaluated whether Cicada Place has improved the lived experiences of homeless youth in a positive or negative way, information provided by the Canadian government itself looks at the benefits and risks of the model, and overall, considers Cicada Place favourably. In terms of having a positive impact on the lives of these youth, Cicada succeeds in two significant ways. Firstly, by accommodating all participating youth in one setting, youth-workers have ongoing contact with youth, are able to monitor their activities and progress, and can develop strong and individual relationships with youth. Additionally, youth feel supported by peers and youth-workers, developing a sense of security in these relationships and their “home”. Because youth do not have to worry about where they will sleep the next night, potential abuse, or how they will eat, they are able to concentrate on goals that will help them achieve success. Secondly, the diversity of the group at Cicada Place encourages cooperation and community, and allows youth to consistently see healthy and equal relationships between females and males.

Conversely, the Cicada model does have drawbacks. The program is not suitable for youth with complex mental health problems. This is reminiscent of Beer *et al.*'s (2003) comment on how these difficulties pose particular threats to communal living environments under generic models if effective supports are not in place. As well, some

youth (particularly those who come to the centre after a crisis situation) may have difficulties with the strict rules that Cicada imposes on its tenants. Understanding the subjective nature of each youth's goals within the program, the BC provincial government provides funding irrespective of "successful" quota. This, however, still does not shield the program from the negative effects of government cutbacks. Finally, even though youth at Cicada become educated about their rights and housing opportunities, there is no guarantee that youth will secure long term and stable accommodation once they depart. This is due to a variety of socioeconomic factors, including staggered employment for, and discrimination against, youth.

Potential solutions

From this review of the literature and after describing various intervention programs and types, we summarize the following as important when designing programs for homeless youth in rural geographies:

- Beer *et al.* (2003) argue that rural interventions are largely generic, yet service delivery is best when it adopts a continuum of care approach to youth homelessness. Programs should provide youth with links to other social resources and community supports. Programs should also emphasize individual case-management strategies and have flexible and immediate crisis interventions (VHS, 2000 as cited by Beer *et al.*, 2003).
- Intervention services need community partnerships and to be designed with local initiatives in mind (Beer *et al.*, 2003). Baker (2004) supports community partnership: “Managers of rural voluntary organizations can be agents for

improved quality of life if ... [they are] commit[ted] ... to becoming collaborators and partners, rather than specialists and bureaucrats” (p. 239).

- Crisis accommodation is needed, however, especially for younger youth (Beer *et al.*, 2003). This crisis accommodation could use forms of accommodation already available, e.g. motels, selected families and/or campgrounds.
- It is important that programs are “socially appropriate, culturally sensitive, and available at times and places that are consistent with the practices of young people” (Caputo, Weiler & Green, 1996). This is successfully achieved through peer-mediation services, for instance, and 24-hour phone lines. Programs must also be safe and non-judgmental (Beer *et al.*, 2003).
- Preventative support services are also needed, with early intervention by identifying youth who are (or might be) at risk for homelessness while they are in school (Beer *et al.*, 2003).
- Funding for programming should be ongoing and flexible, and should provide youth with access to a variety of immediate intervention services or temporary accommodations (Beer *et al.*, 2003; Cicada Place, 2004).
- The challenges to young people seeking social assistance need to be addressed so that it is more accessible to those in need.
- Alternative and affordable housing strategies are important, alongside reflexive and responsive property management (Beer *et al.*, 2003). Addressing age discrimination in the private rental market would also be useful (Cloke *et al.* in Farrin *et al.*, 2003).

- Protect the rights and confidentiality of, and advocate for, youth (Beer *et al.*, 2003).
- Consider alternative transportation schemes such as buses, taxi vouchers or, as they have in one community in the United Kingdom, a moped-rental scheme.
- Involve youth (Transitions Committee, 2005; Beer *et al.*, 2003).

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Interviews with Service Providers and Key Stakeholders

Interviews were conducted with service providers and key stakeholders from all sectors of service provision to young people in Ft Erie (see appendix C for a full listing of who was interviewed). From those interviews information was gathered on 1) numbers of homeless youth 2) Causes of homelessness 3) Coping Strategies 4) Existing programs to serve this population 5) Recommendations of key stakeholders for service provision to this population

1) Numbers of homeless youth

The local youth centre in Ft. Erie generally services younger youth yet has about 18-20 homeless youth who occasionally drop in. Many of these youth do not seem to be coming into contact with other services providers, such as the Community Outreach Program. Some do present at the Housing Help Centre, however. The following was found through intake interviews conducted between April 2004 and March 2005 (though many more drop in for info without staying for an intake interview)

1) 16-18 year olds: 14, all homeless

2) 19-24 year olds: 11, 8 homeless

About twelve per year make their way to RAFT in St. Catharines. At Nightlight, the shelter in Niagara Falls, they had 175 youth there in 2005, of those 5% (9) were from Ft. Erie and surrounding area though it was recognized that some will simply stay in Ft. Erie and 'couch-surf'. Projections suggest 8% in 2006. Bob Barkman, the coordinator for homeless programs in Ft. Erie finds that they place a few youth per month from Ft. Erie.

These youth are placed in St. Catharines, Welland or Niagara Falls but many stay in Ft. Erie, finding their own solutions. The newcomer centres for refugees see about 15-16 pseudo-homeless youth per year, for whom the adult refugee services are often inadequate. Many programs are not seeing homeless youth at all, however, including Out of the Cold where they have seen only one youth this year. The reasons for this could be threefold: 1) youth do not identify themselves as homeless, 2) they do not know about these services; 3) the services are not pitched to the needs of youth and may even be considered dangerous to them.

2) Causes of homelessness for youth in Ft Erie

Perceived causes of precarious housing among youth were many and spanned individual, family and community. In terms of the community, several care providers mentioned the lack of either employment opportunities or appropriate housing in Ft. Erie and the limited options available in terms of transportation. Many more issues were seen to arise through family dysfunction, however, including abuse, parental conflict or domestic violence, parents in new relationships or disinterested step-parents, parents into drugs or with other addictions, no room at home, kicked out for breaking rules or for conflict, low income family, and parents with mental health issues. Problems that could be identified as more specific to the individual youth included addiction, trouble with the law, mental illness, post-traumatic stress (for newcomer youth) and teen parenting. One worker observed that FACS youth are often those who are in the most dire situations and are more likely to be 'core' rather than transitional homeless.

3) What they do to cope

Currently, youth in Ft. Erie cope with their homelessness through several strategies. There are a number of them who leave, going to other surrounding cities including Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Buffalo in order to access services not available in Ft. Erie. For some of these, new challenges arise. For example, Ft. Erie youth who end up at Nightlight cannot continue their schooling in Ft. Erie, schooling that is expected for Ontario Works eligibility. It is also more challenging for these youth to then find housing in Ft. Erie as the Ft. Erie newspaper's classifieds are not on line and they do not get the paper at Nightlight, plus it is hard to go back and forth to Ft. Erie to find a place. Many stay within Ft. Erie, on friends' couches or with the parents of their friends. Remaining young people will resort to other strategies. Several stories that emerge suggest: living in a car, trying to spend the night in a grocery store, hooking up with an older man (exchanging sex for accommodation).

4) Programs that exist

There are a number of programs that do currently service the Ft. Erie area, many of which may encounter homeless youth in one way or another, although it was mentioned that youth may not know about some of these services. Further, many of these services target very specific populations of youth, are not directly meant for youth, or are only minimally operated in Ft. Erie.

- 1) Crisis line
- 2) Mental health crisis services
- 3) Suicide prevention services in hospital
- 4) PALS
- 5) LEAP: Learning, Earning and Parenting Program for young parents through Ontario Works, helping them to get high school diploma

- 6) Out of the Cold: For youth and adults to sleep in churches during the winter, although this program is only offered a few nights a week and youth do not seem to go.
- 7) Duke of Edinburgh award program (newcomer)
- 8) Matthew House: Provide assistance to refugees and recent immigrants to Canada
- 9) Casa el Norte: Transitional home for new refugees coming to Canada
- 10) Youth Centre at Central Ave Church (younger folks, zero tolerance): Drop in centre for young people, Monday and Friday, 9-19 year olds, including dances, no swearing, touch, smoking or drinking.
- 11) Community Outreach Program
- 12) RAFT: United Way of Niagara Falls provides help with transport for youth from Ft. Erie
- 13) Nightlight ('great resource' Cathy)
- 14) Homelessness Initiative Outreach program: 8 workers, partner with agencies to respond to housing crises for adults and youth, in street, ravines, working with families about to be evicted. There is a Niagara Falls worker who is in Ft. Erie half a day per week and on call. Not many calls from Ft. Erie. PT worker in Ft. Erie not warranted. Linked with Raft and Nightlight

5) Recommendations for Services by key stakeholders

Shelter: Most workers we talked with argued in favour of a youth shelter, although it was also recognized that such a shelter would be difficult to run financially due to the small numbers in the population being served. There was general agreement that a youth-specific shelter was needed and that such a shelter should also serve as a portal for other services. It was argued that such a shelter should address a range of client needs in terms of a spectrum of housing (emergency to supportive transitional). Specific shelter service needs were identified for aboriginal youth and newcomer youth.

Transport: As well as transportation within town, our discussion with Shelley Harcomb at Nightlight suggested that regular transportation back and forth between Nightlight and Ft. Erie would be very useful. They have room for the Ft. Erie youth in Niagara Falls, but it is the transport back and forth for schooling and finding housing that is an issue.

Other services: There are clearly a number of other related services currently available in Ft. Erie and it was argued that information and referral to such services would be best accomplished through a shelter or other crisis service. Advertising for other services that currently exist, such as the suicide prevention program, are also seen to be needed. Other areas of need: on-going counselling for youth (including counselling addressing post-traumatic stress), school programs with independent living schools, a drop-in centre in the school with food, shower, counselling and street outreach, services that are not contingent on zero-tolerance for drugs or touch.

Youth Interviews and Recommendations

In the original planning for this project it was our intention as researchers to assure that youth voice received particular care and attention. It was our feeling that as the potential recipients of service, their voice should be given particular weight in the final recommendations. Similarly, we had said that while the voices of the families of these youth are not the focus of the interviews, the complex nature of these relationships will not be simplistically reduced in our report.

Unfortunately we ran into several significant hurdles in being able to obtain an adequate number of youth interviews for the purposes of drawing general conclusions. The two most significant obstacles were the fact that (as noted in the literature review) rural youth are largely invisible. They do not constitute a visible street presence as in larger urban communities. In fact, the youth we did talk to state that rural homeless youth in Fort Erie are most easily accessed through schools and community programs.

As a result, we focused a good deal of our energy on attempting to access youth through schools and community groups (although we also did a fair amount of street outreach). It was disappointing to us that we ended up having very mixed results in obtaining access to young people through community programs. While initially programs seemed quite willing to have us talk with young people, there was extremely poor follow through in spite of numerous contacts. A notable exception was Dale Hiron who provided us with access to his program and the youth who drop in there. We were able to get very useful interview data from our contact with youth in his program. Another useful contact was with the Fort Erie Native Center. We were able to informally attend a Talking Circle group at Fort Erie Secondary School and talk with a number of young people.

Unfortunately, none of them were homeless, but they did provide very useful information about homeless youth in Fort Erie.

Another significant difficulty in accessing youth was the restrictions placed on our study by the Niagara School Board. In particular the prohibition on being able to meet with young people on school property was a major impediment to our ability to talk with homeless young people. We were told by the school counselors that without this restriction we could have had a number of interviews in both Ridgeway and Fort Erie Secondary Schools. As it turned out, in spite of very strong efforts by our research team and the school counselors, we were unable to conduct any interviews with young people contacted through the schools. This was very unfortunate as we had been told by young people this would be the best avenue for contacting homeless youth.

In spite of these difficulties we held interviews with four homeless youth ages 14-17 and fifteen non-homeless youth who reported that they had information about youth homelessness in Fort Erie. The following report is based on those interviews.

Numbers

The youth that we interviewed were quite vague about numbers of youth who were homeless. A quite common response was “lots.” One youth stated that it was “more than I can count.” The only specific number we heard was from one youth who estimated she knew of 50 homeless youth. Most of the youth we contacted knew of someone who was homeless and all the youth we contacted felt it was a serious problem in Fort Erie.

Causes

In our interviews we found that the most commonly reported reason for being homeless was parental conflict. This seemed to fall into two main categories 1) conflict

with biological parent. This often involved issues of divorce, step-parent or boyfriend conflict, physical abuse in the home, drug or alcohol involvement by parent or other adult in the home, drug or alcohol use by youth, school truancy issues, stress related to unemployment or conflict over rules in the home 2) conflict involving a step-parent or boyfriend. This often had to do with the step-parent or boyfriend either being involved with drugs, not interested in having children in the home, being abusive or a combination of these factors. Examples of these situations include:

Jill age 17:

Left home because of fighting with her mother. She stated that her mother was abusive and that she left to escape the abuse. She still talks with her mother and in fact now she is out of the home gets along better with her than before. She further reports that her mother would like her to come home but she doesn't trust the situation.

Beth age 14

Left home because of significant conflict with her father who is a single parent. She reported that her father has been violent with her in the past and that she left home to escape being abused.

Sue age 13

Is currently out of the home because she was arrested for truancy and was in jail. She reports that her father died six year ago and that her mother has left the area. She has been in and out of various living situations including group homes, foster homes and friend's houses. She states that she has a bad temper and this causes problems in her living situation. Her truancy was caused because she was couch hopping and had lost her clothing. She had no access to clothing and so had to wear the same clothes over and over and became embarrassed and stopped going to school. When she got out of jail she had no stable living situation

Jan age 15

Reports that she cannot live at home because of drug involvement on both her and her mother's part. In addition she is a lesbian whose family cannot accept her sexuality.

Other reasons given to us by youth for homelessness included:

Stealing

Strict parents (parents can't relax)

Hit by parents

Always being home alone led them to seek friend's houses where there more people around.

What they do to cope

The stories told by youth are quite similar to those reported by the service providers. Many stay within Ft. Erie, on friends' couches or with the parents of their friends. Several stories that emerge suggest: living in a car, trying to spend the night in a grocery store, and hooking up with an older man (exchanging sex for accommodation).

Jill age 17:

Reports that she stays with friends and pays them money from a job she has obtained. She reports that she gets limited money from assistance that includes rent and \$10 every two weeks. She complained about difficulty getting her drug card and stated this was very problematic as she has a heart condition. Jill says that is too hard to get a job, go to school, deal with kids in the house, care for two cats, and still have so many people to report to about her situation, such as her worker. She states she does not feel safe home alone and is very stressed out due to a history of losing jobs

Beth age 14

Reports moving between friends and selling drugs for food and clothing.

Sue age 13

Seeks shelter with an adult male "friend" with whom she has a sexual relationship. Otherwise stays with friends.

Jan 15

Seeks shelter with friends and sells drugs for food and clothing.

Perceptions of Programs that exist

Consistent with the service providers report, many youth do not seem to know about programs that do exist. In addition, many of the youth interviewed evidenced

significant suspicion about counselors or therapists and some even voiced considerable hostility. The youth we interviewed had not had good experiences with adults in their lives generally and chose program-contact carefully. There was a general skepticism that anything would be done to help them in Fort Erie.

What is needed

Shelter: Most youth we talked with argued in favour of a youth shelter. There was general agreement that a youth-specific shelter was needed and that such a shelter should also serve as a portal for other services. It was argued that such a shelter should address a range of client needs in terms of a spectrum of housing (emergency to supportive transitional). Many youth were clear that such a shelter should be available for both one night stays and longer visits.

Transport: Most youth identified transportation as a major problem in Fort Erie.

Other services: Consistent with the service provider interviews youth identified need for school programs with independent living schools, a drop-in centre in the school with food, shower, counseling and street outreach, and services that are not contingent on zero-tolerance for drugs or touch. In spite of their aversion to formal counseling they felt that contact with a caring adult was essential. However, they repeatedly stated that the adults would need to be “youth friendly” and know how to work with young people.

Final recommendations

Based on the literature review, interviews with services providers and interviews with homeless and other youth, we recommend the following to the city of Ft. Erie.

A comprehensive shelter: All sources suggest that the best bet would be the introduction of a shelter that is as comprehensive as possible. An ideal shelter would include the following amenities:

- Emergency overnight beds
- Possibilities for longer term, temporary accommodation
- Clothing
- Food
- Medical and legal services
- Trained youth workers/counselors: Many youth expressed a deep cynicism towards adults. It is vital that youth workers be well-trained ones.
- Advocacy for youth, e.g. for dealing with social workers, potential landlords and/or potential employers
- Skills-training
- Laundry and shower
- Links to local service providers
- A crisis phone line

Emergency shelter and transport: If such a comprehensive shelter is not possible, a 'bare bones' shelter would supply

- Emergency overnight beds
- Clothing
- Food
- Laundry and shower
- Trained youth workers/counselors
- Links to local service providers
- A crisis phone line
- Regular transportation links to Nightlight in Niagara Falls for longer term, temporary accommodation.

Preventative services: In addition, preventative services are needed.

- A drop-in youth centre: youth suggested that such a drop-in centre would be best located in school. It would include links to wider community services, laundry and shower, and youth-related counseling.
- A 24-hour crisis-line: if not linked to an emergency shelter, such a phone line could be based in a drop-in youth centre or housed in an office. Youth in Lanark County were particularly interested in such a line, to provide support and information on services.
- Housing advocacy: address ageism through the introduction of education and incentives for landlords to rent to young people. Assistance for young people searching for housing.

A integrated task-force: We were struck by the lack of coordination and knowledge between service-providers related to Ft.Erie. Regular meetings of a task-force, involving representatives from local service agencies, school counselors and youth themselves would be valuable for addressing this situation. Such a task-force would accomplish the following:

- Coordinate services
- Allow for better referral between services
- Increase the awareness and concern among service providers about the hidden homeless youth in Ft. Erie.
- Coordinate an advertising campaign for few youth know about the services that are available.
- Involve youth. Youth-adult dialogue is imperative to address the cynicism towards adults which was evident among the youth.



**Town of
Fort Erie**

MINUTES

**Youth and
Homelessness Meeting**

Meeting Date, Time, and Location	
	Thursday April 7, 2005 3:30 p.m. Conference Room #1 Town Hall

Members	
Members	Staff
Dave Simons, Chair CHW Martha Mason, ED Big Brothers Big Sisters Laurie Mc Dowell, Public Health Nurse – Youth Connection Sylvia Roach, CEO YMCA Fort Erie Catherine Mindorff, Peace Bridge Newcomers Association Dianne Donneff, Women’s Addiction & Recovery Mediation Bishop Mullan, Holy Family Boys Home Tammy Archer, Holy Family Boys Home Constable Steve Ballard, Holy Family Boys Home	Deanna Bryant, CHW Coordinator

1) **Welcome and Introductions**

The group was welcomed and thanked for their attendance. Each member introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

2) **Determination of Need for Youth Homeless Shelter**

The group had a lengthy discussion based on their experiences with homeless youth and asked questions of Bishop Mullan and his Board of

Directors Members with respect to the day-to-day operations of a youth hostel, etc.

The group determined that a clear picture of youth in Fort Erie that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless is needed. In order to determine if there is a need for a youth shelter in Fort Erie the group agreed that contacting Brock University's Youth Lifestyle Choices – Community University Research Alliance (YLC-CURA) would be the best route.

Deanna will contact YLC-CURA to receive a quote from them for completing a quick and accurate study of the youth in our community to determine the extent of the need for a shelter.

Once the quote is received from YLC-CURA a letter will be drafted to the Board of Holy Family Boy's Home to request they pay for the study if it falls within expenditure guidelines established by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

Thursday April 7, 2005 Youth and Homelessness- Page Two

3) **Next Steps**

Contact YLC-CURA for study

Contact Community Gaming Development Corporation to determine if study falls within expenditure guidelines established by AGCO.

If acceptable, send letter to Holy Family Boys Home requesting payment for study.

Update stakeholders on progress

3) **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:45 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by:

Deanna Bryant, Community Health and Wellness Coordinator



Youth and Homelessness
Deanna Bryant
905 871 1600 ext 533

Report from the Meeting of Wednesday May 18, 2005

Conference Room #1 Town Hall, Fort Erie, ON

Attendants:

Name	Organization		Name	Organization
Hans Skott-Myhre	Brock University		Dave Simons	YMCA
Rebecca Raby	Brock University		Annie Mercier-Beaudoin	RCBHS
Deanna Bryant	Coordinator CHW		Carrie Benner	RCBHS
Rick Tarajos	Niagara Region		Kim Cane	FACS
Paul Jones	Fortis			

The goal is to determine a snapshot of what youth and homelessness looks like in Fort Erie. To answer: approximately how many homeless youth are in Fort Erie, why they are homeless, what do homeless youth feel they need, how long they have been homeless, would they use a shelter if one exist?

Professor Skott-Myhre began the discussion by posing two questions of the group. What are the perceptions of the problem (i.e homeless youth in Fort Erie)? What are the points of access for this population in our community? Members responded with their comments.

GROUP COMMENTS:

- School youth/guidance counselors are often the first people that youth with this problem contact, they ask what their options are if there are problems at home and they want to leave

- Youth are often referred to Niagara Regional Social Assistance that visits the school once a week
- If “Blow Ups” at home with parents are the cause the situation may settle within a week, however for that time the youth may be homeless
- Should a youth need to live on their own it is difficult for them to come up with first and last month’s rent, secure references, be rented to
- Access to Community Service or reference letters for apartments is not fast enough
- Difficult to get Social Assistance for youth to assist with maintaining their own household
- Approximately 15 youths on couches that attend RCBHS that the staff know of
- YMCA has approximately 2 youth in the same situation in their PALS program
- Belief that some youth are performing sexual favours in exchange for housing
- Youth often do not want to stay in a hostel
- Mental health issues and abuse are main reason for youth to leave home
- New information from the Niagara Region case workers indicates that housing, lack of mentoring available to youth and lack of access to mental health services are prominent problems
- There are few options for the students they see at Crystal Beach high
- But they know who's in trouble
- Both temporary problems and long-term
- Need temp housing
- 1st and last rent is an issue, as well as non-cooperative parents
- Issue of parent ambivalence preventing youth from getting social assistance
- Furniture
- Needing to quit PT job in order to get welfare
- Reference letters
- 15 kids right now
- Ft Erie Secondary:
- 15 kids in POW project (?), at least four on couches, two doing home schooling
- North End needs investigation (United Church (Duffern))

- Need housing coordinator
- Youth anti-hostel
- Issue of transportation

- SWAT analysis on youth issues: housing, mentorship, mental health services, transportation

- 25 days left of school

- Youth not seeing selves as homeless

NEXT STEPS:

Professor Skott-Myhre and Ms. Raby are to develop proposal to answer the following questions:

Number of homeless youth in Fort Erie

What do homeless youth in Fort Erie believe they need?

Why are they homeless?

What resources are they aware of?

How long have they been homeless for?

What communities have other models that address this problem effectively?

If a shelter was built in Fort Erie would the homeless youth use it?

Is there a need for year-round housing or just during the school year?

What role can local corporations play in addressing this problem?

How many?

Definition of homelessness in Ft Erie: definition by youth, how they define themselves

Why homeless?

For how long?

What do they feel they need?

Knowledge of resources?

If a place existed, would they go? (Avoid word shelter)

When are needs the greatest?

What role is there for corporate citizens? Unions? Mentoring?

NEXT MEETING:

To Be Determined

Thoughts:

- Research
- Need to go to kids, not vice versa
- Go to beach
- North end (outside United Church)
- 21 is upper age limit for youth
- New issue of new immigrant youth

- What they'd like:

- General stuff... in part me brainstorming I think

- Ask social service agencies
- Ask youth
- Demonstrate rationale for something like a hostel
- Comparative programmes: provide range of possibilities

Appendix C

Service worker report

This analysis is drawn from short interviews with:

- 1) David Paulette, Community Services Niagara (for Pat Heidelbrecht)
- 2) Linda Langston, Niagara Child and youth Mental Health Services
- 3) Shelley Bland, Bland's Boxing, Crystal Beach
- 4) Lynda Filbert, Child Protection
- 5) Brenda Laforme, Native Friendship Centre
- 6) Sylvia Roach, PALS program
- 7) Deanna Bryant, Community Health and Wellness
- 8) Catherine Mindorff, Newcomers
- 9) Dale, Director of Youth Centre at Central Ave. Church
- 10) Barb Volzke, Community Outreach Program
- 11) Kevin Rawlings, Coordinator of high risk and research services, St. Catharines
(not really getting contacts from Ft. Erie)
- 12) Cathy Fusco Niagara Falls FT Erie Community Services Department Lead in that
area for youth
- 13) Mary Merry, Housing Help Centre (from Bett Hughes) 871-2532
- 14) Bob Barkman 984-8649, Coordinator of homeless programs in Ft. Erie (not
getting that many calls from Ft. Erie)
- 15) Larry Hiebers, RAFT 905-984-4365
- 16) Bett Hughes, Out of the Cold 905-871-1600, ext 516
- 17) Shelley Harcomb 358-3678, Nightlight Youth Shelter in Niagara Falls

Others

Bill Schoenhals, Regional Police 905-871-2300, ext. 2300: unable to reach after many
phone calls

Appendix D Youth Interview Formats

Questionnaires

A) Questionnaire / Interview guide A

What is a name that we can use to refer to you?

How old are you?

Where are you currently living/sleeping?

How many 'homeless' youth do you think there are in Ft. Erie? Why?

Do you know of anyone else who is transient that we could talk to?

B) Questionnaire / Interview guide B

What is a name that we can use to refer to you?

How old are you?

Where are you currently living/sleeping?

How many 'homeless' youth do you think there are in Ft. Erie? Why?

What are the circumstances that have led to your 'homelessness'?

What kinds of services do you think need to be available for 'homeless' youth?

Do you know of anyone else who is transient that we could talk to?

Recruitment: Verbal script

Hi,

We are talking to young people in Ft. Erie who are homeless, couch-surfing, or between homes to find out what kinds of services they need.

We have a questionnaire that will take between 30 and 45 minutes. We'll ask you about where you're living, how you got there and what you need to help you out. We'll just jot down the answers as you tell them to us. In exchange, we will give you a taxi voucher. Anything you say will be held in total confidentiality and you don't even have to give us your name. You can stop the interview at any time and you can withdraw the information that you give to us.

The City of Ft. Erie is involved in this project as a funder and as a recipient of the results. For more information about this study, you can contact either Rebecca Raby or Hans Skott-Myhre in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock

University. Here is my card. (Give potential interviewee business card). This study (File # **04-436 - SKOTT-MEYER**) has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics, Brock University. For more information please contact the Research Ethics Officer at 905-688-5550, ext. 3035.

Thank you,