

MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL?

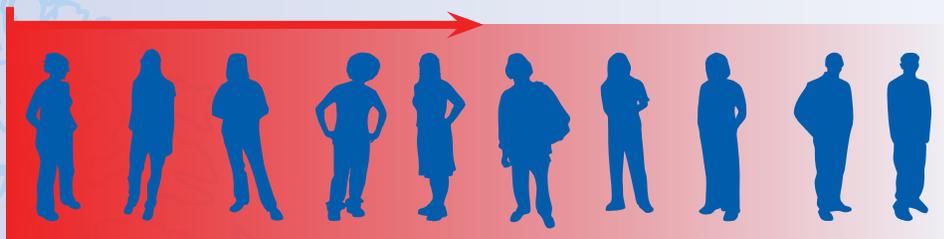
WE NEED TO START TALKING ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IN CANADA

On Wednesday, February 29, 2012, 10 organizations in 8 Canadian cities completed a snapshot survey¹ of the homeless young people they worked with that day. This snapshot by the National Learning Community on Homeless Youth, is the first national survey of its kind with this focus.

- Homeless youth in Canada are coping with mental health issues at a rate of 2.5–5 times higher than the national average for youth².
- Many existing services do not meet their needs.
- Communities are struggling to support these homeless young people who need mental health programs and services.

SO MANY YOUTH

751 YOUTH —————
405 are struggling with their mental health **54%**



84% of the 405 youth require additional mental health services and supports beyond those currently available to them

79% of the youth requiring additional supports have experienced barriers to securing housing because of their mental health issues

BARRIERS TO HELP

271 YOUTH OF THE **405** —————
experienced barriers to receiving necessary supports **79%**

68% No FORMAL DIAGNOSIS Because they have no formal diagnosis services may not be available

56% SUBSTANCE USE Because of their substance use services may not be available

55% UNSTABLE HOUSING Not having a permanent address makes it harder to stay connected to services

76% WAITLIST IS TOO LONG Long waitlists make it harder to get connected to services

¹This survey incorporated 35 programs in 10 organizations (members of the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness). Each agency completed this survey based on case files, knowledge and history of the youth worked with on that day.

²The Canadian Mental Health Association indicates that 10-20% of adolescents in Canada experience mental health concerns. On February 29, 2012, 54% of youth in the snapshot survey were identified as having mental health concerns.

WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

Homeless youth with unmet mental health needs will be homeless longer.

The lack of appropriate mental health resources affects more than just those youth needing additional services. Of the programs surveyed, 77% indicated that the number of youth with unmet mental health needs had a “substantial impact” or “very significant impact” on the frontline staff within their agencies.

Suicide is the second highest cause of death in Canada for people aged 15-24, accounting for 24% of all deaths for people in that age group³. For homeless youth, suicide, overdose and unintentional injury were the leading causes of death⁴. In another survey of 208 homeless youth, 46% had attempted suicide at some point. This same study found the social stigma associated with being homeless was linked to low self-esteem, loneliness and suicidal ideation⁵.

³Canadian Mental Health Association “Mental Health for All”, April 2012

⁴Roy, E., Haley, N., Leclerc, P., Sochanski, B., Bourdreau, J. & Boivin, J. “Mortality in a cohort of street youth in Montreal”. Journal of the American Medical Association, 292(5) (2004): 569-574.

⁵Kidd, S. A. “Youth homelessness and social stigma”. Journal of Youth Adolescence 36, 2007: 291-299.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND CITIES

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- Broadway Youth Resource Centre, Vancouver, BC
 - Boys and Girls Club, Calgary, AB
 - The Doorway, Calgary, AB
 - Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming Inc., Saskatoon, SK
 - Resource Assistance for Youth, Winnipeg, MB
 - YMCA of Greater Toronto, Toronto, ON
 - Eva's Initiatives, Toronto, ON
 - Dans La Rue, Montreal, QC
 - Phoenix, Halifax, NS
 - Choices for Youth, St. John's, NL

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