

# **BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS**

Prepared for:  
**United Way of Greater Toronto**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2004, the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) adopted Setting Youth on Pathways to Success as one of its priorities for the following five years. To this end, UWGT commissioned research into practices that develop the full potential of youth and improve their chances of making a successful transition to adulthood.

This report summarizes the findings from this research, based on an extensive literature review of over 80 academic and community sector studies and reports, interviews with over 40 key informants, a focus group with youth leaders and outreach workers, and profiles of 12 programs demonstrating best practices in action.

This study offers a loose chronological definition of the term “youth” – encompassing the ages of 12 or 13 to the early twenties. The term reflects both a period (being a youth) and a process (making the transition to a adulthood) – youth programs need to have regard for both of these elements.

Three broad themes emerged from the literature: (1) an asset-based approach, promoting the strengths and skills of youth, where youth are viewed as *assets in the making*; (2) the importance of a caring, supportive adult in making a difference in the life of a youth; (3) an emphasis on effective implementation, including a reliance on measurement for the sake of learning and improvement, as quality implementation often depends on organizations that embrace constant learning.

The literature review focuses on seven topics, as follows:

*Youth employment and training*, which requires a dual emphasis on workforce development and youth development, and the delivery capacity to deliver both effectively;

*Services for newcomer youth*, a field with relatively limited literature, but whose findings emphasize strategies for engaging youth through schools, social activities and peer mentoring;

*Youth violence prevention*, examining general violence prevention, school-based violence prevention programs, bullying prevention, sexual abuse prevention and gang prevention;

*Youth social recreation*, exploring both the barriers that stand in the way of youth participation in social recreation activities as well as proven strategies for increasing their participation and enhancing the benefits that they derive from these programs;

*Youth engagement*, a very specialized area of social recreation, promoting youth leadership (including youth-led initiatives) and facilitating the involvement of youth in community organizing, social activism and civic engagement;

*Youth mentoring*, outlining the development and maintenance of the mentoring relationship, the importance of partnerships to recruit mentors, and the staff skills required to deliver a mentorship program;

*Engaging at-risk and marginalized youth in low-income neighbourhoods*, a topic that leads to a discussion of broader conceptual frameworks and strategic approaches to engaging youth, as well as specific tactics for undertaking outreach to at-risk youth.

The interviews with key informants and the focus group with youth gave rise to further learnings, reflecting a “front-line” or “in the field” perspective, on such issues as outreach to youth, youth-led initiatives, diversity of youth, program outcomes relevant to youth, involving parents in youth programs, addressing the challenges posed by popular culture and other practical considerations.

The 12 illustrative examples represent a mix of topics, geographic variety, and a sampling of practices cited in the report. Key elements of these successful programs include a clear mission focus, a critical mass of impact within a defined geographic area, provision of a range of services, and the mobilization of many community partners.

The report emphasizes the importance of taking a conceptual view of the challenge posed in creating and implementing appropriate youth development programs, because these programs often require community-wide scale and involvement, given the need for holistic and integrated approaches. Communities need to step back and determine how stakeholders can collectively set goals for the development of their youth, as well as how they will achieve these goals.

Finally, the report encourages generating a learning culture across the community sector, including making it easier to access learnings and share best practices broadly, to enhance program design and effective implementation among more agencies.

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# **BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS**

## **PART I: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Context**

In 2004, the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) adopted Setting Youth on Pathways to Success as one of its priorities for the following five years. To this end, UWGT commissioned research into program practices that develop the full potential of youth and improve their chances of making a successful transition to adulthood. The findings from this research are intended to help UWGT develop an implementation plan for this priority area.

In seeking to understand the best models for developing programs and services for youth, the UWGT identified five key topics for exploration:

- Training and employment for youth
- Integrating newcomer youth
- Enhanced youth social recreation
- Youth violence prevention
- Engaging at-risk and marginalized youth in low-income neighbourhoods

This report summarizes the findings from the research and is based on four major research activities. These activities and the underlying methodology are described in next section.

### **Methodology**

Firstly, searches were carrying out using academic databases, Internet search engines and reviews of specific Internet resource sites, primarily the publications pages of relevant foundations, advocacy organizations, and practice-based networks. (The actual search sites and search terms are noted in Appendix A of this report.) In a few cases, reports were also suggested by UWGT or by key informants who were interviewed for this study. Each report or study was first scanned for relevance, identification of best practices, and the rigour of the assessment or analysis. A minimum target of at least 10 appropriate studies in each of the five topic areas was established, as a way to ensure proper representation of each field. During the course of the literature review, two further crosscutting topics were identified, namely mentoring and youth engagement. In the end, over 80 studies and reports were identified, drawn from both academic and community

sector research. Each of these publications was abstracted, resulting in an overview of the report, an elaboration of its key discussion points, and a listing of key learnings and best practices.

Secondly, interviews were conducted with nearly 40 informants, representing service deliverers, funders and experts in the youth development field, largely from Toronto but including respondents from across Canada and the United States. These key informants were primarily identified by UWGT, on the basis of their familiarity with practitioners and experts in Toronto and elsewhere, with additional candidates provided by the consultants. The purpose of these interviews was to complement the findings from the literature with a more practice-based experience, as well as to test the learnings that emerged from the literature. Key informants from other jurisdictions were sought to ensure that perspectives from outside Toronto were included in the scan.

Thirdly, a focus group was held with eight youth leaders and youth outreach workers in Toronto, to test further some of the findings and to include a youth perspective on the research.

Fourthly, profiles of a dozen illustrative programs or projects were developed, to provide concrete examples of the learnings in actual practice. These case studies were chosen after a review of many projects and programs, which had been cited in the various studies reviewed or mentioned by the key informants. An attempt was made to ensure a mix that represented each of the subject topics, that reflected geographic variety, and that provided a good sampling of the best practices cited in this report.

This work was further informed by UWGT, through on-going exchanges, feedback on draft reports and presentations to, and deliberations with, staff and volunteer committees.

Two further comments need to be emphasized: firstly, there are a limited number of rigorous evaluation studies on these topics, largely because quasi-experimental evaluations cost a lot of money and would require an extended time frame to measure outcomes properly – few funders are willing or able to invest the necessary resources. Secondly, much of the literature in the youth development field emanates from the United States. The range of programs and projects, the capacity of funders (not only governments but foundations) and a social science and public sector culture committed to program evaluation in that country all contribute to a breath of relevant studies. While there are effective initiatives in the youth programming sector to be found in Canada, they are rarely subject to the same study as their counterparts south of the border.

### **Outline of report**

This report is organized in the following way:

Part II presents some initial considerations, such as how we define youth and the meaning of best practices, to provide the opening context for this report.



Part III highlights three overarching themes common to all topics: an asset-based approach to youth development; the importance of a caring, supportive adult; and the need to emphasize quality implementation. Regardless of the topic, these themes emerge with regularity and deserve special elaboration.

Part IV reviews findings relevant to each of the five topics, as well as the crosscutting topics, youth engagement and mentoring. Each of these discussions summarizes the findings from a scan of the literature for that particular topic, at times complemented with insights from the key informant interviews.

Part V provides a summary of the interviews and focus group. These offer a different perspective from that of the literature, identifying practical challenges relating to implementation of youth programs.

Finally, Part VI discusses how the findings of this report can be used by funders and providers of youth services.

Appendix A identifies the search strategy, noting search sites and search terms used.

Appendix B provides the bibliography of studies and reports relied upon for this report.

Appendix C lists the names and affiliations of the key informants.

Appendix D provides further elaboration of two conceptual frameworks for youth development, offering concrete illustrations that represent all-encompassing frameworks for structuring youth programs.

Appendix E highlights the twelve illustrative examples of best practices in action.

## PART II: SOME INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### What do we mean by the term “youth?”

One obvious way to define youth is by chronological age. Most people consulted in this study defined youth in this way: “youth” starts at around 12 or 13 years of age, and ends either at the end of, or soon after, the teen years (19, 20 or 21 years old). In the view of some, it extends further, to 24 years of age.

But defining youth by a set age range limits one’s understanding of what we mean by youth. Both in interviews and in the literature, youth was often characterized as a transition period, going from a life stage when one is cared for, to one where the person is living independently. This transition is defined by such milestones as acquiring education and moving into the workforce, leaving the family home and forming significant relationships with others (including possibly starting a family), and assuming the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen and a member of a community.

Embedded in this long transition stage are two significant times of transition:

- (1) At age 12 or 13 years, an important development moment, when youth have emerged from elementary school and the upper reaches of programs for children, and;
- (2) At the end of the teen years, when youth may be entering college, university or the workforce; thus, at the cusp of adulthood, yet where adult programs may not quite meet the developmental needs of the maturing youth.

There is pressure to push the starting years of youth downward, arising from two tendencies. Firstly, the desire to promote early intervention and prevention encourages eligibility to be set younger than 12 or 13 years old. Secondly, youth are exhibiting adolescent behaviours at an earlier age. By and large, practitioners have resisted these tendencies, with those 11 years and younger continuing to be classified as children.

There is another aspect to the definition one applies to youth that bears elaboration: youth is not only a time of transition to something else (that is, *becoming an adult*), it is also its own distinct period of life, that of *being a youth*. Youth seek to be engaged and listened to *on their terms*, as individuals and as a group that have perspectives that are unique and different from children and from adults. Yet many approaches to programs directed at youth focus on the developmental aspect of youth – their evolution into adulthood, and how to support that transition.

Part of the challenge in designing youth programs involves reconciling these sometimes divergent perspectives, that is, recognizing this period of being a youth as a special and distinct experience, and supporting a positive transition toward adulthood. This requires creating the space for a youth to be a youth, including allowing for that intensely personal

journey of self-exploration and self-definition to take place, while at the same time supporting the emergence of an independent and capable mature adult.

### **What should youth programs seek to accomplish?**

If one's definition of youth encompasses both the state of being a youth and the process of becoming an adult, then programs directed at youth should consider how these elements are to be addressed.

Recognizing this time of being a youth as a separate, integral stage in life means giving youth their due – respecting and acknowledging their views of what it means to be a youth, of what they find interesting, stimulating and important, and giving them the space and capacity to act on these interests and preferences.

Seeking to support the development of youth means being clear about what one hopes to accomplish – what are the goals of a youth program, what outcomes will demonstrate that these goals have been being achieved, and what activities are most likely to produce those outcomes?

In short, one needs to listen to youth, to understand and have regard for their needs and aspirations, and at the same time adopt a conceptual framework that will serve as a roadmap for the goals and outcomes guiding one's activities.

### **How should “best practices” be regarded?**

Over the last decade, the non-profit sector in Canada has been transforming how it operates. Drawing on changing business practices in the private sector and pressed by the expectations of public and philanthropic funders to demonstrate “value for money,” community agencies and social service deliverers have been adopting planning and implementation processes designed to establish the relevance and effectiveness of their programs.

Part of this retooling has involved an increasing emphasis on outcomes, establishing that an agency's initiatives have resulted in positive, measurable impacts. In devising appropriate programs, funders and agencies have sought to understand what has worked in other instances, as a guide to program design and implementation.

But to establish conclusively what are best practices, empirical evaluations are required and preferably experimental designs (that is, comparison of the target population to some form of control group). However, only a limited number of such studies exist in the literature, largely because they are quite expensive to carry out and because the timelines for some impacts can be quite far into the future.

Moreover, even where such best practices are validated by rigorous, evidence-based research, a further question arises as to the replicability of those practices – were there

circumstances unique to a particular community, or specific organizational capacities, which made the resulting success far more likely?

The applicability of a best practice requires the exercise of judgment. It involves making assessments, such as:

- What is the strength of the evidence?
- What are relevant contextual circumstances that need to be taken into account?
- Would a proposed practice be appropriate for the community at hand?
- How might an agency's capacity or organizational culture fit with the model example?

Agencies that are effective are those engaged in dialogue with their communities, which seek to develop the competencies of their staff and volunteers, which survey other jurisdictions for learnings, and which improve their programs, through consultation with their constituencies, the exercise of professional judgment and the application of a certain amount of intuition. Best practices are one element, oftentimes a very compelling one, in the process of designing programs or projects, but agencies need to be informed consumers of the relative merits of any given practice, while at the same time being in tune with the communities they serve. At the very least, a best practice can be a useful addition to the mix of options to be considered, an illustrative example of how others have sought to achieve the same goal.

## PART III: COMMON THEMES

Reviewing the literature on youth development programs, results in two immediate observations:

- (1) There is a marked degree of consensus across studies – it is hardly the case that there are raging debates pitting one school of thought against another; such differences that exist relate not to fundamental disagreements on what youth need, but rather to variations in approaches and practices;
- (2) That overall consensus can be summarized by way of three broad themes:
  - (i) An asset-based approach;
  - (ii) The importance of a caring, supportive adult;
  - (iii) Effective implementation.

### **An asset-based approach**

Language reflects the evolution of ideas – new paradigms bring with them new terms that then become the common parlance of practice. One such concept is the asset-based approach to community development – the view that effective community building depends on enhancing existing strengths and opportunities within communities, rather than defining interventions in terms of deficiencies or needs. An asset-based approach seeks to avoid “pathologizing” target populations by defining them exclusively on the basis of what they lack or what requires fixing.

This new emphasis is becoming central to the youth development field as well, where the current emphasis is on promoting the strengths and skills of youth, and where youth are viewed as *assets in the making*. One is now hard-pressed to find such terms as “juvenile delinquent” or “deviant behaviour” in discussions about youth – a new paradigm not only brings its own language, it extinguishes its predecessor.

Adopting an asset-based approach has several important consequences when formulating strategies for supporting youth:

From one issue to a holistic approach. Moving from “fixing” a singular problem in a young person, to helping a youth develop his or her capabilities means broadening the scope of issues to be addressed, including, for example, emotional, social, educational and physical development. It means moving from a narrow focus on one aspect of a youth to dealing with the youth as a whole.

From one youth or a category of youth to all youth. Not singling out one youth or a category of youth requiring attention means considering the development of all youth.

When each youth is an asset in the making, *all* youth become the target of youth programs.

Holistic approaches aimed at all youth means community mobilization. With an emphasis on holistic approaches and reaching all youth in a variety of activities and locations, there is a need to mobilize a range of community resources in order to deliver the breadth of needed services and supports.

Youth as active agents in the solution. If youth are themselves assets, then they are a necessary part of the solution, requiring their input and active participation in the planning, design and implementation of programs.

Supporting the capacity of youth to play their part. Engaging youth in the design and implementation of programs requires developing their capacity to take on such roles. Training that allows youth to participate in a meaningful way both enhances their skills and contributes to programs that are effective and relevant to their needs and aspirations.

### **The importance of a caring, supportive adult**

Throughout the literature, a predominant theme is the importance of a caring, supportive adult in making a difference in the life of a youth. That adult could be a parent, a teacher, a coach, a staff person or volunteer at a community centre or service agency, or some adult who simply took the time to take a personal interest in a youth. The development of the relationship can be intentional, as the case of a formal mentorship, or the by-product of a less explicitly defined role.

Communities wishing to support the development of youth must therefore not only devise appropriate programs for youth themselves, but also seek to increase the involvement of adults. This requires recognizing the numerous settings in which adult-youth relationships take place, engaging adults and providing them with the necessary resources.

Support can take many forms: in the case of parents it includes workshops on parenting skills, as well as helping them address the challenges and barriers in other parts of their lives which interfere with their capacity to fulfil their roles as parents; for program staff and volunteers, it means enhancing their knowledge of the development issues which youth face; for mentors it involves providing them with the training, structure and supervision that will produce a successful mentorship.

Being a supportive adult is not solely defined by active interventions in the life of a youth. It includes listening to youth, validating their viewpoints and providing them with opportunities to explore their evolving roles. A supportive adult is not only one who can step forward when needed and but also one who can step back when necessary. Youth require the space to make decisions and to take on responsibility for themselves, and for others. This requires cultivating their leadership and organizational skills and ensuring that they exercise these emerging abilities in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them.

## **Effective implementation**

The best conceived project will not amount to much if it is poorly implemented. The literature identifies a number of features that contribute to effective implementation:

Adhere to a clear mission. Organizations that deliver high-quality, high impact programs have a sharply defined sense of purpose, one that finds its expression in the ready ability of its staff and volunteers to articulate the goals of the organization and each individual's specific role in accomplishing those goals. A high performance organization is easily recognized – one can feel the positive energy, staff is “on message” and walk the talk with confidence.

Undertake measurement for the sake of learning and improvement. Organizations that perform well are constantly improving. That improvement comes through innovation and learning, which in turn is predicated on constant tracking, monitoring and evaluation of performance. Measurement is used to find out what works, and change what does not work. A corollary of this principle is that funders need to support measurement, both with resources and a belief that measurement is a learning tool, and not a potential reason for reducing funding. Thus, organizations that embrace measurement as a means towards improving their programs should not be made to feel that their funding may be at risk if they do not meet anticipated outcomes. Instead, evaluations should be viewed as opportunities for learning on the part of both the program deliverer and the program funder.

Strengthen organizational capacity. The emphasis on constant learning involves investment in staff and volunteers, through training and professional development, and through effective management support and supervision. It also requires creating the time for learning to occur, and developing the capacity and securing the resources for proper evaluation to be undertaken.

Build partnerships and collaborations. In many instances, the mix of resources and expertise required to advance the development of youth depends on the involvement of a range of stakeholders, from specialized social services to employers in the community. However, in addition to attracting resources, mobilizing a broad spectrum of stakeholders results in a heightened community sense of what may be possible to achieve, which itself can be self-fulfilling. Finally, creating linkages and networks enhances the social capital of a community, making possible more systemic strategies, such as comprehensive, integrated programs or broad coalitions advocating for changes in government policies.

Rely on schools. The most important institution in the lives of youth is their school, making it an essential access point for reaching youth. Conducting outreach through schools, engaging schools as partners, consulting with and involving principals and teachers, and locating programs in schools, are all ways to take advantage of the seminal position that schools occupy. But community agencies are not the only ones to benefit from such partnerships – schools which serve as access points for other services benefit

from this enrichment of activities, and find that the better their communities are served in this way, the easier it is for schools to fulfill their roles as centres of education and as important institutions in the lives of their students and their families.

Recognize the diversity of youth. Youth are a heterogeneous population and programs for youth must be cognizant of this diversity. In some instances, this means segmented programs, having regard to age or gender (notably female only, either to increase the participation of girls in physical activities or to create “safe” zones where they can discuss issues of relevance to them). It may also include outreach strategies to attract certain youth populations, as well as proper training for staff to ensure that programs are culturally sensitive.

Reduce barriers. Programs are of little use if they are not accessed by their target populations. Locations and times that are convenient to participants, charging minimal or no fee, and space that is youth appropriate, are primary considerations when it comes to offering programs or services to youth.



## PART IV: LEARNINGS RELEVANT TO SPECIFIC TOPICS

This section presents the learnings and practices relevant to the specific topics. For the most part, these learnings have been drawn from the literature review, however the key informant interviews also provided further insights.

### Youth employment and training

Employment is a significant milestone in the transition from youth to adulthood, comparable to coming of age as a citizen or becoming a parent. Indeed, the ability to live independently, to support a family, to feel socially included, all depend on the ability to earn a living wage.

Context. Youth unemployment rose dramatically among industrialized countries in the 1970s as the baby boom generation started entering the workforce. Since that time, youth unemployment has remained high in all of these countries, on average twice the rate of adult unemployment. For 2003, the comparative figures for Canada, Ontario and Toronto are:

#### **Comparison of unemployment rates between youth and total population, 2003<sup>1</sup>**

	Canada	Ontario	Toronto
All, 15 years+	7.6	7.0	8.6
Youth, 15-24 years	13.8	14.5	16.4

Overall, the best approach to enhancing a youth's employment future is for youth to stay in school. Employment programs for out-of-school youth are essentially "second chance" attempts to increase a youth's employability. In Canada, youth employment programs place a far larger effort on increasing a youth's ability to find a job. At their most basic, they consist of self-directed services, where youth can learn about available jobs (through job boards) or about training opportunities. A higher level of assistance involves teaching youth how to secure employment through job search tips, assistance with resume writing and advice regarding job interviews. A still higher level of service involves assessments of the youth, providing career counselling advice and assistance in developing an action plan for finding work, and direct support in identifying suitable employment placements (sometimes made more attractive for an employer through the provision of a wage subsidy).

However, for youth with multiple barriers to employment, access to such services will likely not be sufficient. These youth will require both preparation for employment as well as support to address personal development needs (such as life skills).

<sup>1</sup> Sources: *Statistics Canada, Vital Signs 2004*, Toronto Community Foundation.

The development of youth training and employment programs in the United States has been shaped by government evaluations, which initially reported lacklustre results in the 1990s, resulting in a significant push for more robust programs and further research. There are no Canadian studies that match the range and depth of the American approaches to measurement and evaluation in the youth employment field; thus, to identify relevant learnings, one must look to the U.S. experience.

The following insights speak most specifically to youth with multiple barriers to employment. Projects seeking to serve these youth need to address three issues simultaneously:

- Workforce Development – preparing the youth for the workplace;
- Youth Development – supporting the youth in their transition to adulthood;
- Delivery Agency Capacity – ensuring that the agency taking on this task has the staff skills and organizational systems in place to implement the program effectively.

Workforce development. The literature on workforce development identifies learnings and promising practices for preparing youth for the workplace, drawing largely on workforce development programs for adults with barriers to employment. The key elements of success identified in the literature include:

- Early employer engagement;
- Upfront screening and assessment;
- Career awareness and planning;
- Work and learning connection;
- Key job readiness competencies;
- Early placement in paid work;
- Employee retention and advancement;
- Extended follow-up and support;
- Youth entrepreneurship.

Youth development. If workforce development prepares a youth to become a worker, youth development seeks to support a youth's transition into adulthood. There are obvious overlaps between the expectations one has of a worker and the mature norms and attitudes one seeks in an adult. But youth development is a necessary, not merely complementary, component of workforce development in a youth employment program, in part to ensure that challenges relating to the transition to maturity do not become barriers to a successful transition to employment. Elements supporting success include:

- Focusing on each youth as an individual;
- Supporting each youth's sense of belonging;
- Building youth responsibility;
- Using youth as resources;
- Providing appropriately supportive services;
- Structuring additional help through peer support.

Delivery agency capacity. To achieve successful workforce development and youth development requires focused implementation, relying on delivery agencies with the necessary skill set and the appropriate mindset to tackle these tasks in tandem. Some of these have been outlined in the common themes section but bear repeating:

- Focused mission;
- Skilled staff;
- Commitment to monitoring and evaluation;
- Collaborations and partnerships;
- High quality implementation;
- Sufficient, consistent, predictable funding.

### **Services for newcomer youth**

Context. Almost half of the population of the City of Toronto was born outside of Canada and one in nine Toronto residents immigrated to Canada in the last five years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Toronto District School Board describes itself as the most multilingual and most multicultural school board in the world, and that services for newcomers are a pressing concern throughout the city, in particular in those neighbourhoods serving as initial settlement areas for new immigrants.

This subsection relates some of the specific challenges faced by newcomer youth, as well as some of the findings from the limited literature on promising practices in this field.

Challenges. Newcomer children and youth face a number of challenges:

- In their first few months, difficulty with speaking and understanding English is their foremost problem;
- They are more likely to live in lower-income households – more than one-third of immigrants who have been in Canada for less than 10 years report annual household incomes of under \$20,000;
- Racism and discrimination is a significant obstacle to success, in terms of education, employment and social integration;
- Newcomer youth and their families are often unaware of services available to them;
- Newcomer youth aged 16-19 may “fall through the cracks,” being too young for adult services, too old for services to children and too old to enjoy a slower integration to a new society;
- Challenges are particularly pronounced for male newcomer youth, who tend to adapt more slowly to new education systems, have less social capital (for example, less likely to seek out individuals or resources for support), and encounter more risk factors (such as street-involvement and substance abuse) than female youth.

Promising practices. Much of the current literature focuses on the needs of newcomer youth and the gaps in existing services to meet those needs. While some studies point to emerging promising practices, there is little in the way of proven practices from

established programs. That being said, the literature promotes the following program elements or approaches:

- Programs which facilitate social opportunities and peer support for newcomer youth, such as free recreational activities and social outings that provide opportunities for immigrant youth to form friendships with other immigrant youth, to practice English or French, and to familiarize themselves with Canadian society;
- Peer mentoring programs, frequently recommended as a best practice in integrating newcomer youth;
- Schools as a key location for delivering services to newcomer youth, as well as school-community partnerships as ways to provide drop-in centres, after-school programs, and homework clubs, where newcomer youth can congregate and socialize;
- Inclusive school curricula that reflect a more global as well as a more multicultural perspective (for example, accounts of Canadian history that acknowledge diversity) and teach all youth the significance of Canada's multicultural reality;
- Community services for newcomer youth that provide information and support to all members of the family; any solutions to address the issues of newcomer youth must involve their families;
- A need in some cases for intergenerational programming and counselling to help resolve issues between immigrant parents and their youth;
- Development of "cultural competencies" for teachers and community agency staff, as well as sensitizing the media;
- Recruitment of volunteers and staff from the target communities to conduct outreach and provide a sense of connection.

### **Youth violence prevention**

Context. While overall crime rates, including crime rates for youth, have been decreasing in Toronto, rates for youth involvement in violent crime have been increasing, as have gang activity. In addition, youth are becoming involved in violence and in gang activity at an earlier age, and there has been an increase in the participation of girls. Indicators for youth at high risk of gang involvement include: level of association with negative peers, poor academic histories, and prior involvement in illegal and delinquent activities.

A recent City of Toronto Youth safety study<sup>2</sup> found that youth in various neighbourhoods rank their personal safety concerns (e.g. gang activity, drug activity, harassment or weapons) differently. Drug activity, however, was the risk factor with the strongest impact on perceptions of personal and community safety.

The following five categories of safety and security issues emerged from the literature review on youth violence prevention:

- General violence prevention;

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<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto, *Speak Up: Toronto Youth Talk about Safety in their Community* (2002). Youth Safety Sub-committee, City of Toronto Community Safety Task Force.  
[http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/community\\_safetytf/tfsafety\\_reports.htm](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/community_safetytf/tfsafety_reports.htm)

- School-based violence prevention programs;
- Bullying prevention;
- Sexual abuse prevention;
- Gang prevention.

General violence prevention. One theme, consistent with the asset-based approach, has been the shift from a focus on vulnerability factors (why youth turn to violence) to an emphasis on protective factors (why they don't). These protective factors include:

- Warm, supportive *relationships with adults*;
- Recognition for involvement in *positive activities*;
- *Parental supervision*;
- Living in a *strong community*; and
- Commitment to *school*.

Programs need to:

- *Be relevant* to community norms as well as suited to individual needs;
- *Focus early* on changeable behaviours before they develop into problem behaviours;
- *Be holistic*, as at-risk children and youth often are susceptible to multiple challenges, arising in relation to their families, neighbourhoods, schools and peer relationships.

Specific strategies, across the age continuum, include:

- *Frequent home visiting by health professionals during pregnancy and infancy*;
- *Education in parenting*;
- *High quality nursery education*;
- *Training children to “stop and think”* of the consequences of anti-social behaviour;
- *Peer influence strategies* that offer young people advice on resisting peer pressure to engage in antisocial behaviour;
- *Classroom management* and other training to help teachers.

School-based violence prevention programs. School-based strategies should aim to affect the social climate of the school as a whole, rather than be offered as stand-alone programs or add-ons to the curriculum; such an approach must involve all stakeholders, including students, educators, school staff, parents and the broader community, and not just children and youth. In addition, the asset-based approach enhances positive student behaviour, attendance, and academic achievement through rewards and monitoring, and reduces reliance on coercive and punitive measures.

Specific initiatives include:

- *Using peer education*, especially with respect to gender-based violence;
- Providing both gender-specific and mixed-gender discussion groups, especially for adolescents;

- *Taking gender into account*, by considering who perpetrates and who is victimized by violence and assessing the differential impact of violence prevention programs on boys as compared to girls;
- *Ensuring continuity* of school-based programs by beginning early and repeating interventions regularly throughout the stages of child development;
- *Using interactive learning techniques* to promote conflict resolution and communication skills;
- *Teaching media literacy* to help children deconstruct the violent scenarios they see on television, watch in movies, and hear in song lyrics.

Bullying prevention. Bullying prevention forms a subset of school-based strategies, and incorporates many of the same principles, including:

- *A multi-dimensional approach* – a combination of individual, classroom, school-wide, and community initiatives with students, teachers, school staff, and parents, supplemented with individual interventions for bullies and victims;
- *Changes in school policies and procedures* dealing with violent incidences;
- *Starting prevention programs early*, before adolescence;
- *Continuity over grade levels and programs of a longer duration*;
- *Incorporating cognitive, affective, and behavioural components*;
- Promoting skill building and active participation in *non-violent conflict resolution* by all students and school staff.

Sexual abuse prevention. The strongest beneficial effects of abuse prevention programming are for children aged seven to twelve years old. Comprehensive school-based sexual abuse prevention programs should communicate the idea that abuse is never the child's fault. As well, such programs should:

- *Tailor content to age group*;
- *Repeat information over more than one session*, and offer a follow-up session;
- *Provide parents with background knowledge*;
- *Provide teacher and volunteer training* on abuse and how to handle disclosures.

Gang prevention. Effective programs seek to give youth the same things they find through gangs – supportive adults, challenging activities, a place where youth feel they belong. Programs should also consider the following:

- High-risk youth and teens can be drawn in by programming and opportunities that are not particularly specialized, such as *recreational activities, or simply a place to hang out*;
- There are *advantages to building these initiatives within existing organizations*. Established organizations can achieve the goals of gang prevention initiatives at a reasonable, incremental cost per youth, because they can build on their existing resources, including facilities, staff, management and infrastructure;
- Effective programs include *consistent, direct outreach* by agency staff on school grounds, in neighbourhood parks, on the streets and other gang hangouts;
- *Hiring new staff from the youth's communities* helps build a tie to the youth and draws them in;

- *Establishing relationships with police and probation*, and with other agencies;
- *Comprehensive case management documentation*, although time-consuming, leads to increased contact with youth and greater knowledge about their activities in different domains of their lives;
- Similarly, *case-level collaboration* between agencies working with high-risk youth has been a hallmark of successful programs;
- Effective interventions focus on the *outcome of youth wellness, rather than law enforcement*;
- Peer mentoring programs, non-competitive sporting activities, and team learning are all effective ways to *facilitate the development of friendships and strong positive peer relations*;
- Staff burnout is high; therefore *staff supports* are vital to success.

### **Youth social recreation**

Context. Social recreation essentially refers to after-school programs, typically involving, but not limited to, physical recreation. Most of the studies, however, relate to physical recreation.

In terms of physical activity, almost half (49%) of Canadian children aged 5 to 12 years are not active enough to receive health benefits,<sup>3</sup> while the rate of physical activity in Toronto is even lower than national figures.<sup>4</sup>

This subsection identifies both the barriers that stand in the way of youth participation in social recreation activities as well as proven strategies for increasing their participation and enhancing the benefits that they derive from these programs.

Barriers. Major barriers to participation in social recreation activities include:

- *Age:* Older youth are less likely to participate in organized recreation activities, and they are more difficult to recruit;
- *Gender:* Compared to boys, girls are less drawn to team sports and competition, and are more likely to participate in cultural and interpersonal activities;
- *Socio-economic status:* Lower income status results in less access to and lowered use of recreational opportunities;
- *Ethnicity/minorities:* Young immigrants, Aboriginal youth, and youth with disabilities face additional barriers to participation in structured recreation;
- *Infrastructural barriers:* the presence of good parks, playgrounds, and play spaces in a neighbourhood is strongly associated with increased rates of participation in supervised sports and, to a lesser extent, in unsupervised sports and the arts;

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<sup>3</sup> Data from the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Community Health Survey, 2000/01.

- *Service delivery:* Organizational constraints include program rigidity, lack of coordination among the agencies responsible for providing youth recreational services, or lowered appreciation of young people's needs and wants;
- *Transportation:* Lack of transportation was the most cited barrier to participation in recreation. It affects the hours of programming, who is able to participate and the cost of the program;
- *Other barriers:* User fees, limited facilities, high equipment costs, and lack of volunteers.

Benefits. A number of studies cite various benefits associated with physical activity (some of which apply to broader after-school programs as well), including: improved self-esteem, acceptance among peers, and self-empowerment; a significantly reduced risk for tobacco use; improved academic performance (though more likely with frequent attendance over extended period of time); and lowered risk of dropping out of school. Participation in structured recreation reduces boredom, a factor which contributes to unhealthy behaviours, and at the same time is associated with higher levels of volunteering and community service.

The benefits do not only accrue to youth. One study (which served as the rationale for one of the illustrative practices cited in the Appendix E to this report) demonstrated that with enhanced recreation for youth, single mothers on social assistance were more likely to move off benefits than single moms whose children did not receive such programs.<sup>5</sup>

Effective strategies. Some suggestions arising from the literature include:

- *Employ well-trained, dedicated staff or volunteers with whom youth can identify*, who may have lived in a similar environment as the participants and have had similar experiences; “3C” approach to volunteer/staff recruitment: Competence, Character, and Commitment;
- *Use positive approaches*, encouraging youth to build on their strengths and improve their skills in a wide range of areas, as opposed to characterizing programs as targeting negative behaviours, such as crime or drug use;
- *Offer a variety of activities*, such as sports, homework help, the arts, or community service, to attract a diverse group of participants, to reduce boredom and encourage regular attendance;
- *Offer activities that tend to be missing from the school day*, such as arts activities that have been eliminated from the traditional school curriculum;
- *Conduct direct outreach to youth, as well as their parents*, through phone calls and home visits; street outreach has proven to be particularly effective for recruiting teens; youth participants are often a program's most effective recruiters or ambassadors; hire dedicated youth outreach staff if possible;
- *Involve youth*, for multiple benefits: youth can best identify what interests them and

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<sup>5</sup> The illustrative practice is Youth Serving Agencies Network GROW Program (YSAN GROW). The study is Browne, Gina et al., (May 31, 2000). *When the Bough Breaks: Provider-Initiated Comprehensive Care is More Effective and Less Expensive for Sole-Support Parents on Social Assistance: Four Year Follow-up*. System-Linked Research Unit Working Paper 00-02. Hamilton: McMaster University.



attracts them; youth can serve as outreach staff; and involvement in the planning and implementation of these programs offers opportunities to develop leadership skills, as well as earn some income, all of which serve to attract youth as well as provide them with tangible benefits;

- *Offer youth the chance “to be of service, rather than just to be served”* (for example, social activism and community service initiatives);
- *Incorporate physicality*, through athletics, dance, drama, camping, and even building trades projects, where responsible self-care and health-promoting behaviours are a natural part of the skills to be mastered;
- *Address barriers*, with low or no fee; an accessible location that is welcoming and youth-friendly; and a convenient schedule;
- *Include literacy programs*, strengthening young people’s motivation to read and write by linking reading and writing with explorations of identity and self, integrating literacy activities with other activities, such as cooking and field trips to the theatre, and by fostering a sense of playfulness about reading and writing.

### **Youth engagement**

Context. Youth engagement is a very specialized area of social recreation, promoting youth leadership (including youth-led initiatives) and facilitating the involvement of youth in community organizing, social activism and civic engagement. To date, little evaluation data exists relating to youth engagement initiatives, in part because the field is relatively new, but also because the civic goals of youth programs have rarely been evaluated.

Initiatives promoting youth engagement require an acceptance of youth as partners in the process, such that youth development is an integral part of the strategic vision and plan of the organization. Youth need to have a legitimate place in the governance of the organization or program, and in turn the organization or program must be able to develop and invest in the necessary structures and strategies to engage youth in its governance.

This subsection address the following topics:

- *Essential practices*, practical considerations when designing and implementing youth engagement projects;
- The need for *youth training and support*;
- Specific suggestions regarding *recruitment*.

#### Essential practices.

- *Create clear pathways*: to be effective, strategies to engage youth should not be hit and miss, or isolated opportunities; opportunities need to be *ongoing* so that youth see that they will make a difference to someone; *youth need to see the paths that others have taken*;
- *Establish relevant roles for youth*, especially for older youth;

- *Be responsive to youth time horizons*; unlike adults, youth may see “short-term” as days and weeks, and “long-term” as months; youth have an interest in immediate action – they may have limited tolerance for long planning processes;
- *Avoid tokenism*; if youth are to be represented in predominantly adult organizations, three or four places at the table may be necessary to avoid tokenism and give youth the support of a peer group;
- *Clarify expectations regarding the nature and scope of youth involvement in decision-making*, such as whether youth are at the table as representatives of other youth constituents served by the organization – if so, ensure communication and accountability structures are in place between representatives and constituents; clarify scope of youth decision-making powers;
- *Tailor the time and place to youth needs*: consider constraints on youth time due to school, part-time jobs, etc.; meetings should be held at a time and location convenient to youth, and easily accessible by public transit; avoid formal or intimidating environments;
- *Teach adults to step back without tuning out*: adults must learn to provide a high level of support to youth decision makers without taking over and usurping their authority;
- *Recognize the contribution of youth*: youth should receive public recognition of their efforts; youth are most likely to become involved if there is an incentive to their participation (e.g., travel to a conference to represent their organization).

#### Youth training and support.

- *Provide effective orientation and learning opportunities*; youth may need an orientation to “the way organizations work” and adults may need an orientation to “what youth think” and how they develop. Youth need opportunities to develop planning, communications, priority-setting skills, etc.; youth orientation and training is an ongoing investment in light of high turn-over among youth leaders;
- *Provide ongoing staff support*; dedicated staff support is essential to provide continuity, mentoring, and experienced support for organizations; ideally, staff should be relatively young, or demonstrate a strong capacity to relate to youth; staff should have a high comfort level in enabling youth to take safe risks;
- *Avoid school hours or school conflicts* (such as exam periods or mid-term breaks);
- Ensure that training involves lots of *hands-on activity*, not just talking heads;
- *Include youth as co-facilitators* as much as possible;
- *Don’t start too early in the morning*, and always *serve food*.

#### Recruitment.

- *Clearly describe the project, emphasizing benefits to youth*: make sure your recruitment materials specify the project’s goals and expectations in straightforward, youth-friendly language; indicate how many hours a week/month it will take and what level of commitment you expect;
- *Offer stipends and/or hourly pay for youth in leadership positions to help with recruitment and retention of youth*: stipends, or hourly pay, help legitimize the role of young people within the organization, create a basis for the organization to hold youth accountable, formally recognize the value of young people’s time and commitment,

broaden the economic diversity of your participants, and increase the visibility of youth leaders;

- *Target a cross-section of youth:* include those from different ethnic, socio-economic, and academic backgrounds. Do not just recruit academic achievers or traditional youth leaders (student council reps, club presidents, etc.);
- *Partner with other organizations and schools:* recruit youth through other community organizations, such as schools, churches/mosques/temples, social services providers, parks and recreation departments, elected officials, or even local businesses. Whenever possible, send your information to staff members who work directly with youth;
- *Use adult nominators:* one way to increase the number of applications, as well as the involvement of supportive adults, is by asking adults to nominate youth; adult nominators often spot students who would be good participants, but who might not necessarily apply on their own;
- *Use youth editors:* ask youth to review recruitment materials before distributing them, to assess if the materials are youth-friendly and appealing;
- *Be persistent:* follow up recruitment announcements with phone calls to each person on your mailing or email list.

## **Youth mentoring**

Context. Use of mentoring in youth programs has increased substantially in recent years, and for good reason: mentoring relationships produce favourable effects across all youth demographics and backgrounds, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity and family structure. The benefits to the young person depend on the frequency of the interaction, the length of the relationship, and emotional closeness. The literature shows that poorly implemented programs can have adverse effects on at-risk youth, such as those who have experienced neglect or abuse, so careful regard for established practices is particularly important.

The following learnings speak to the development and maintenance of the mentoring relationship, the importance of partnerships to recruit mentors, and the staff skills required to deliver a mentorship program.

### Practices relating to the beginning of the mentorship relationship:

- *Orientation and ongoing training for mentors;*
- *Structured joint activities for youth and mentors* (this can include initial training and orientation for mentors and mentees);
- *Effective screening of mentors*, ensuring that the mentor is a safe adult, can commit to the expectations of the relationship, and understands that the goal is to build a trusting friendship, not to transform the youth;
- *Matching youth with mentors on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity, or mutual interests;*
- *Defined expectations* for frequency of contact and duration of the mentoring relationship;

- *Ongoing support for mentors and mentees* throughout the mentoring relationship;
- *Ongoing monitoring* of relationships and overall program implementation;
- *Mechanisms for involving and supporting parents*;
- *Recruiting mentors experienced in helping roles* or professions, such as teachers;
- *Flexibility*: allowing mentors and youth to interact in a range of different community settings.

Practices relating to the on-going mentorship relationship:

- At a minimum, *mentors and mentees should meet regularly at least four hours per month for at least a year*; exceptions include school-based mentoring, which coincides with the school year;
- Consider a “*two-by-two*” *mentoring approach* to increase program consistency and reduce program liability; mentors and youth are matched individually, but they participate in mentoring activities on a two-by-two basis (two mentors and two youth); a second adult lessens security concerns for parents, and provides a fall-back if one mentor is unable to attend;
- *Adequate supervision of mentoring relationships* was a major factor in reducing the fail rates of mentor/mentee matches, preferably through face-to-face contact;
- *Help mentors and mentees reach closure* through private, confidential interviews with mentors and mentees;
- *Effective measurement and evaluation*: program evaluations should focus on measurable indicators reflecting tangible benefits, not simply satisfaction surveys;

Partnerships:

- *Develop community partnerships and networking relationships* (for example, with school staff and administrators, businesses, service clubs, and so on). Collaborations can provide mentors, staff support for mentoring programs, training and monitoring support;
- *Seek out champions to support the program*; an advisory committee of high-profile community leaders or seasoned mentors can be invaluable in providing role models for other mentors;
- *Seek and secure organizational commitment* from businesses or other partners to ensure program sustainability;
- *Provide recognition to host organizations* (for example, businesses that provide mentors and support);
- *Network with other community mentoring programs* either individually or as part of a coalition (for purposes of education, support, sharing resources, exploring funding opportunities, and so on).

Program staff:

- Mentoring staff should participate in *professional development and knowledge sharing activities*;
- *Ensure adequate staff to mentor/mentee ratio*: a well-trained staff person can handle most of the program administration and supervise about 30 to 50 matches.

### **Engaging at-risk and marginalized youth in low-income neighbourhoods**

Context. It is striking the degree to which the current literature about engaging at-risk youth reveals, not practices for attracting their involvement in programs, but instead discussions about broader concepts and approaches. This emphasis reflects the fact that the field of youth development is undergoing a paradigm shift in the way the programs are being conceptualized and designed.

In part, the change reflects the asset-based approach discussed earlier, the view that youth programs should seek to build on the strengths and skills of youth, rather than focus on deficiencies. The literature points to three further reasons for this new emphasis:

- Many youth judged most “at-risk,” on the basis of their family circumstances and neighbourhood environment, actually overcome these odds to become productive and well-adjusted adults. Research is now focusing on why these youth succeed, and how that success can be replicated more broadly among at-risk youth;
- The changing labour market means that youth face far greater challenges securing a living wage for themselves and, as adults, for their families. How to assist them to access education and training and adopt life skills that enable them to compete in a more competitive economy requiring higher credentials and greater adaptability has become a critically important concern;
- The sobering fact that in the early 1990s there was limited evidence that youth programs were achieving what they set out to do, that few programs were rigorously evaluated, and even among those that were, few were showing much success, resulted in the resigned view that nothing could be done for high-risk youth. This has prompted a search for a new approach for addressing the needs of at-risk youth.

Therefore, this subsection will firstly explain some of the terms that have emerged. Secondly, findings relating to broad strategies for achieving more effective youth programs are discussed. Finally, some specific tactics for recruiting at-risk youth into programs are reviewed.

Broader concepts. Successful youth programs now use an asset-based approach. This has been expressed through a number of concepts and terms which themselves reflect the evolution of this change in thinking. These terms arise from time to time in the literature, and their meanings are not always explained or self-evident, and so short descriptions of these concepts are provided, as follows:

- *Youth development:* the term “youth development” has often been used as a generic term for activities that support the development of youth. In the recent literature, however, “youth development” has also come to mean a specific type of approach to programming, that is, asset-based, centred on influencing in a positive way the developmental stages in the transition of youth to adulthood. That is, when people now talk of “youth development” they mean not just the development of youth, but a specific approach to the development of youth, one that takes a holistic view, seeking to strengthen the range of supports and opportunities coming from family, community and other institutions that have an impact on youth. Some related concepts include *community youth development* and *developmental assets*;

- *Resiliency*: much like the term “youth development,” resiliency refers not only to a characteristic of individuals or communities, but also reflects an approach, one that seeks to enhance that characteristic. Thus, practitioners who believe that resiliency is an essential feature of at-risk youth who make successful transitions to adulthood will propose strengthening the capacity of individuals and systems (families, groups and communities) to cope with adversity or risk; relevant protective factors include higher self-esteem, bonding with positive individuals and institutions, and clear and healthy standards from family and support systems;
- *Social development strategy*: adds the notion of reducing risk factors to the resiliency approach of enhancing protective factors, thus tackling such issues as: low commitment to school, low neighbourhood attachment, family conflict, and poverty;
- *Community development approach*: the traditional community development approach (grass-roots, participative, empowering) applies its well-established processes to engage youth to come together to work on addressing their common problems.

Appendix D to this report provides a further discussion of broad frameworks that emerge from these concepts, highlighting the youth development and developmental assets approaches.

Strategic approaches. Taking a “big picture” view of youth development also means adopting more strategic approaches for promoting the development of youth. If the question is no longer how to support one specific youth but rather how to mobilize communities to help all youth, then ways need to be developed for making this task manageable. This is not to say that *every* organization undertaking youth development programs *must* embark on broad strategies, however it does mean that some thought needs to be given to a broader, strategic vision for a community, so that each stakeholder can play their role, however small or large, in realizing that vision.

Does this involve too much theorizing, too much conceptualizing, for any given youth initiative? Perhaps a useful analogy is one drawn from the environmental sector and the advice, “think globally, act locally” – the notion being that one should frame one’s programs having regard to a broader view of one’s goals and objectives, then apply them in a way that is relevant to one’s immediate circumstances.

Some generic advice, drawn from the literature, for implementing such an approach includes:

- Concentrate resources geographically to maximize impact;
- Promote holistic approaches, emphasizing coordination and integration of services and supports;
- Work with local officials to develop clear, compelling goals;
- Develop and test demonstration ideas to address unmet needs and service gaps and increase knowledge about programs that work;
- Be clear with youth about what is being offered;
- Involve governments right from the start.

Two examples of ways to mobilize the resources and partnerships required to deliver more holistic approaches to the development of youth in a community are:

- *Intermediary organizations*: The comprehensive and integrated strategies proposed by the youth development approach may require different ways of coordinating resources and service delivery. One innovation has been the emergence of intermediary organizations, which provide coordination and help fill gaps in the following ways:
  - Engaging, convening and supporting key constituencies;
  - Establishing quality standards and promoting accountability;
  - Brokering and leveraging community resources;
  - Promoting effective policy.
- *Beacon school-based community centres*: Beacons are the generic term applied to an approach championed in New York City to promote youth development and resiliency by improving school-community linkages, increasing involvement of parents in the lives and education of their children, and building safer, more supportive neighbourhoods for children and youth. Beacon school-based community centres offer children, youth and families a wide range of services and activities during the after-school evening and weekend hours. The approach focuses on individual developmental opportunities within the context of broad, community-wide support.

Specific tactics for reaching at-risk youth. Even with a conceptual understanding of the developmental needs of youth, and even where broader strategic approaches are put into place, one still needs to reach youth and engage them in programs. The literature offers the following useful ideas:

- Provide youth with a feeling of connection, in particular through the presence of caring, committed adults, through opportunities to engage with other youth (to feel part of a group) and through the creation of a personal, youth-friendly atmosphere;
- Meet the needs of youth, with work experience, financial incentives (honoraria, stipends), practical experience and support for personal growth;
- Acknowledge the life circumstances of at-risk youth, with accessible staff, hours of operation, location, and by being sensitive to their various needs;
- Locate programs in schools or other facilities within low-income neighbourhoods;
- Provided drop-in programs for older youth which offer flexibility, greater freedom and more opportunities to take responsibility and make decisions;
- Offer free transportation, snacks, and access to resources;
- Allocate program slots for at-risk youth.

In the case of mentorship programs, the following findings were highlighted for high-risk youth, and some of these learnings have applicability to programs other than mentorship:

- Use intensive case management as the key to success in developing mentoring relationships with high-risk youth;
- Adapt mentor training to respond to the needs of high-risk youth: at minimum, this

should involve describing the barriers to successful development that youth might experience; role-playing and educational videos about urban youth culture are among the techniques mentors found particularly helpful;

- Hire professional social workers to monitor mentoring relationships; youth found this support particularly useful as a sounding board and alternate venue for feedback on the mentoring relationship;
- Draw from a diverse network of support for high-risk youth in order to help address the more significant needs of the youth, including psychological problems, drug addiction and education deficiencies;
- Provide ongoing training and support for mentors;
- Consider adapting the focus of the mentoring relationship to better suit the needs of the youth (e.g. specific educational or employment-related problems);
- Recognize that mentorship relationships with older youth are more challenging and less likely to last than with younger youth, and so need more attention and support.

Summary. The literature on reaching at-risk youth approaches the topic on several levels: at a conceptual level, identifying what youth need to make a successful transition to adulthood; at a strategic level, demonstrating how best to mobilize the range of resources and actors needed to implement holistic, community-wide approaches to youth development; and at a tactical level, describing how to conduct outreach and engage individual youth.



## **PART V: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND OTHER ISSUES FROM THE FIELD**

This section summarizes the learnings from key informant interviews and the focus group with youth leaders and outreach workers. While these discussions centred on the same substantive issues as the literature review, other topics emerged, relating to the challenges faced in the field for those seeking to advance the development of youth. The following is a summary of the themes raised in these conversations.

### **Outreach to youth**

A common topic was how to attract and engage youth in programs. While this theme cut across all topics, there were specific insights on reaching youth who are “at-risk” or facing numerous barriers and challenges in their lives. These two types of outreach are discussed in turn.

General outreach strategies. A number of suggestions emerged regarding outreach to youth:

- Get youth involved in outreach, in order to reach other youth;
- Be enthusiastic and upbeat;
- Validate the opinions of youth – describe how the programs have changed in response to youth views;
- Make contact on their time, not your time; go at peak times to places of high youth concentration;
- Schools are important venues for reaching youth; connect with the principal for permission to promote events through the school; establish relationships with teachers;
- Target the communications – for example, posters in a men’s washroom can speak to the issues of young males;
- Connect with youth one-on-one; encourage them to talk to their friends, ask them to bring a friend;
- Start with a small group, find out their interests and address them; if they’re pleased with the result, they’ll bring friends; repeat the process with the larger group, keep building on your success;
- When youth attend a program or event, get their phone numbers or e-mail when they sign in, and use that for follow-up;
- To attract youth to an event, free food really works, or free T-shirts or honoraria;
- Involve youth who have been through a program as volunteers and eventually as staff; not only will they be able to relate to other youth, but youth will see that there can be other benefits (such as employment) to becoming involved.

Outreach to at-risk youth. At-risk youth were acknowledged to be more difficult to reach. A youth outreach worker recounted the advice of one such youth: “Forget about the town hall meeting – come talk to me on the street corner, cause that’s where I am, or come into the crack house and see what I’m dealing with.” In addition to the general outreach strategies outlined above, the following tips are particularly relevant:

- Go to where they hang out, be it a recreation centre, coffee shop, street corner;
- Take a subtle approach – if it appears that you’re targeting them for some reason, they’ll wonder what you’re up to;
- Make sure you don’t give the impression that you’re doing them a favour, or that you feel they need you; don’t give the impression that you know what they need;
- Try to reach everyone – it can happen that an organization is only reaching a certain group (e.g. black youth), so others feel excluded. Make a special effort to reach out beyond the usual constituency;
- Don’t worry if the number of youth one is reaching is small – if it is a “high needs” group, it will be a slower process; one needs to build relationships one-on-one, and those youth will attract more people;
- Hire youth as outreach workers, particularly those who have gone through a similar experience as the youth one is trying to reach – they are the ones who have the credibility with other youth;
- Stay current about the target population, network with other organizations, as well as youth who are recognized “leaders;” get a sense of the “scene,” where youth are congregating, which programs or agencies they trust, or don’t trust.

In spite of best efforts, engaging hard-to-reach youth can be extremely challenging. Some practitioners feel that certain youth may be too difficult to reach, requiring so much time, effort and persistence that it is beyond what programs can provide. In other instances, some practitioners believe that the most hard-to-reach youth will only be drawn into a program after a personal epiphany on their part, usually some critical event in their lives that makes them rethink the direction they are heading in. In such a circumstance, the issue is not so much the type of outreach as providing a program that these youth can relate to and which can engage their trust once they have made the decision to change their lives.

### **Youth-led initiatives**

There is a growing interest among funders and community agencies in youth-led initiatives, where project design, development and implementation rest entirely in the hands of youth. This is in contrast to “youth-involved initiatives,” where youth provide input, but are not the decision-makers.

There are few evaluations of such approaches, in part because interest in youth-led initiatives is so recent. Another reason relates to a measurement challenge – what outcomes should be measured, using what yardstick? How can one determine that a youth-led process is more effective? Does one measure the increase in the youth’s feeling of empowerment, or the actual degree to which youth were heard by others? And over

what time should one assess an increase in civic participation, enhanced group and civic skills, or leadership abilities?

As a result, the issue of youth-led programs is informed more by the views of youth and practitioners in the field than by quantitative program evaluations. The following summarizes these views.

The value of youth-led initiatives. Youth report that they feel empowered through youth-led initiatives. The following are comments from the focus group:

- “Youth-led gives youth a different perspective – in society as a whole, youth often feel they have a certain role and they’re to behave in a certain way, whereas in a youth environment they can try on different roles;”
- “Don’t feel like adults are watching over us when it’s youth-led; youth can relate better to each other – some adults can understand some, but not all, of what a youth is feeling and communicating;”
- “Youth-led gives youth power;”
- “If it’s for youth/by youth, that’s the best; if it’s peer to peer, that is also empowering; we worry that ‘youth-involved’ is tokenistic, it allows adults to feel good about themselves.”

Practitioners involved in youth-led activities added:

- “Youth who really want to do something want to do it their own way;”
- “In youth violence prevention programs, unless youth are involved in the solution, there won’t be a solution; relational problems require relational solutions, and this requires youth-to-youth communications; it is empowering for youth to be service providers.”

Concerns about youth-involved approaches. Youth were wary of projects developed by adults that targeted youth:

- “We see youth-involved as a bunch of adults getting together and talking about what they should do as a youth program – they need to get the youth voice into that discussion; could not imagine adults agreeing to a program which was set up only by youths for adults;”
- “Youth will always look at adults as authority figures, and a lot of people and especially a lot of youths don’t like authority figures;”
- “A lot of adults, depending on their own experiences, will have their own prejudices about youth;”
- “Need youth input, and it has to be real input – can’t get the youth to simply rubberstamp something the adults have come up with; sometimes adults do this just so that they can get the label ‘youth-involved’ on their project.”

Adult-partnered, youth-led initiatives. Youth as well as adult advocates of youth-led projects acknowledge a role for adults in youth-led projects. While youth have the energy, the drive and the understanding of their circumstances, adults are needed as

resources, not to drive the initiative, but to support youth on their terms. Youth can draw on the experience and knowledge of adults for writing proposals, drawing up budgets, and learning how decisions are made. Even in youth-led programs, adults often act as full-time staff, contributing both expertise and continuity to what is often a changing youth constituency.

What youth-led projects and organizations require. To improve their chances of success, youth-led initiatives require:

- Access to resources;
- Capacity building (through training and mentoring);
- Adults who can add value, by:
  - Sharing their knowledge and experience (for example, how to write a grant proposal or how to manage a project through its various phases);
  - Providing advice, but not leadership;
  - Providing structure;
  - Maintaining respect toward youth and giving them their space.

Both youth and adult practitioners regularly stressed that adults need to learn from youth to be effective aides, in the same way that youth need to learn from adults.

## **Diversity**

As in the literature, key informants stressed awareness of, and sensitivity to, the diversity of youth. This diversity comes in numerous forms:

- *Age*: programs and activities need to be age-appropriate, in particular, offering older youth increased responsibilities and opportunities to make decisions and assume leadership;
- *Gender*: both mixed gender and gender-specific activities are required, the latter almost always involving female-only groups. There are various reasons for this:
  - Where certain sports or recreational activities are dominated by males – providing separate opportunities for females gives them an equal chance to participate;
  - For the exploration of issues such as violence or sexual relations, it is important to provide safe spaces for open discussion, given the different ways each gender experiences these issues and the different power dynamics;
  - For some newcomer and religious groups, it may be necessary to provide female-only gathering spaces, in deference to different norms regarding co-ed interaction;

At the same time, few advocate a constant segregation of genders. Many issues or activities benefit from discussion and interaction between women and men;

- *Race/ethnicity*: in the US literature, race is a constant theme, primarily the circumstance of black youth, with the Hispanic population receiving growing attention. The Canadian view (from the key informant interviews and the focus group) places more emphasis on ethnicity, particularly in the context of newcomers; thus, for example, one would more likely distinguish between youth of Caribbean

origin and youth of African origin, than subsume these different populations under the one label “black;”

- *Newcomers*: the newcomer category receives much attention, reflecting Toronto’s multicultural character; its sub-categories include: varying English language abilities, different cultural values and norms, and the different experiences of refugees as opposed to other immigrants; (one distinct issue noted was the challenge faced by youth coming from countries experiencing significant conflict, and whether that background warranted special study and some customized programs);
- *Sexuality*: youth expect that differences in sexual orientation will be acknowledged with respect and support;
- *Scene*: youth said that traditional categories of diversity (such as those listed here) have less relevance for understanding sub-populations of youth than do the various “scenes” to which each belongs, which reflect their interests and values (for example, “the hip-hops,” “the skaters,” “the rockers,” “the churchies”).

Ultimately, the underlying message is the same: to work with your community you need to know your community, including its various sub-groups.

## **Outcomes**

Youth as well as practitioners echoed a number of the desirable outcomes identified in the literature. For example:

- Involve youth, from beginning to end, through initial consultation, design and implementation, and seek input throughout;
- Give youth a sense of ownership, by making them responsible for activities and tasks (e.g. even in terms of getting the pizza for an event, or renting the video for a movie night);
- Give youth a chance to better themselves, as well as to better their community.

These ideas were expressed in more subjective terms (how the youth feel) as opposed to objective indicators. Youth gave several examples, including: feeling that they have gotten something out of a program, feeling that a program is the highlight of their day, or receiving honest, positive feedback.

Some of these subjective outcomes can be articulated as part of a program’s objectives and tracked through evaluation tools. Youth can be consulted individually about their personal goals and desired outcomes at the start of a program and these can be tracked over time. In this way, the activity becomes personalized for each youth and the outcomes are likely to be of greater relevance for each youth, contributing both to a positive evaluation of the program as well as to an individual sense of accomplishment on the part of the youth.

Youth also sought experiences that put them on other paths, such as:

- Offering job opportunities for youth, so that even in youth-led projects, all the positions are not volunteer positions;
- Ensuring that even in the case of volunteer positions, the experience is validated (for example, by a letter of recommendation), contributing to future job possibilities;
- Not restricting qualifications for a paid position (for example, requiring a university degree where substantial volunteer experience could be just as relevant) – that is, recognizing through hiring processes the relevance of volunteer experiences.

### **Involving parents**

Practitioners agreed on the value of involving parents in the design or promotion of programs for youth. Involving parents not only provides greater access to youth, it can also be a means of building broader support for a program. Outreach to parents is especially important in programs for younger youth, where parents are responsible for enrolling their children. It is also advisable where, for cultural reasons, programs may need to secure the trust and buy-in of parents before they will allow their children to participate (for example, parents in some cultures may not permit their daughters to attend community activities without their permission).

In general, parents wish to know who is interacting with their children; making these connections provides comfort to parents. As well, keeping parents informed of the progress of their children, through presentations and/or talent displays, not only reassures them further, but also builds support for the program – a relevant factor when negotiating with funders.

As desirable as it may be to involve parents, practitioners agreed that it can be challenging; program staff need to create time in the program to communicate with parents, recognizing as well that parents are busy, and may need help to attend an information session (for example, child care during the meeting). It may be necessary to allocate specific funds in a program budget to support outreach to and involvement of parents.

Practitioners also pointed to circumstances where it is not advisable to engage parents. Many older youth, youth no longer in the school system, or youth involved in the criminal justice system will often not want their parents involved.

### **The challenge of popular culture**

Both key informants and focus group participants felt that programs involving features of urban culture are an effective way to entice youth into youth development initiatives. This could involve activities like: graphics, photography, music concerts, dance, fashion design, fashion shows, art displays, magazines, on-line publishing, recording music, or designing and producing compact discs.

At the same time, some informants felt that certain messages in popular culture make positive youth development more difficult, notably that:

- Some music, videos and electronic games condone or celebrate violence, or convey misogynist messages;
- Success, especially in music or sports, depends as much on “being discovered” as on hard work and determination.

To overcome these influences, informants proposed the following:

- To address the themes of violence and misogyny:
  - Work with youth to deconstruct popular culture – give them the tools to analyze and assess the messages conveyed through media, advertising and entertainment;
  - Facilitate discussions among youth to develop criteria regarding what music or videos may be played in a drop-in or during a youth evening, having regard to principles that promote respect, anti-oppression and inclusion;
- To debunk the myth of easy success:
  - Help youth to focus on concrete, immediate goals that are relevant and achievable in their circumstances;
  - Connect youth with tangible opportunities such as volunteer, internship or job shadowing opportunities, or employment, to demonstrate pathways of success arising from the activities they are involved in.

### **Practical considerations**

Finally, participants in the interviews and focus group gave practical suggestions to complement the lessons learned from the literature, including:

- *Longer term funding*: much of youth development work requires a considerable investment of time, particularly in developing trust and relationships with hard-to-reach populations, thus, projects require funding for more than one year;
- *Program continuity*: youth want programs that have proven themselves; they feel “used” when popular programs disappear because the funding ends, only to be followed by a new initiative seeking their involvement;
- *Proper planning, not reacting to headlines*: practitioners noted that when some issues attract broader publicity and funders react, there is a tendency to push the money out the door too quickly, bypassing the consultation, planning and development needed to ensure that programs are properly targeted and structured;
- *Standards of quality*: even when programs are free, youth care about the quality of the program, its space and the equipment; those who cannot afford to pay for programs should not receive second-class treatment, inferior facilities or hand-me-down resources;
- *Appropriate space*: access to space that is appropriate to youth was consistently mentioned as a challenge; nevertheless, it was also noted that a good program in a bad space was better than a poor program in a great space;
- *Partnerships*: while practitioners highlighted the importance of partnerships, it was felt that the expectation of a partnership is sometimes the goal itself, rather than a means to a goal; practitioners stressed the need for time and resources to allow for the appropriate partnerships to emerge.





## **PART VI: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The United Way of Greater Toronto commissioned this research in order to identify best practices for developing the full potential of youth and improving their chances of making a successful transition into adulthood.

This report encompasses broad learnings in seven topic areas, distilled from more than 80 studies, over 40 key informants, focus group participants and 12 illustrative “best practices” programs or projects. This information can help both funders and practitioners become familiar with the most current findings and resources, available in particular studies or demonstrated through specific programs.

Several findings of this work warrant particular emphasis.

### **An asset-based approach and a caring, supportive adult**

Two themes were consistently noted across the literature, namely, an asset-based approach and the importance of a caring, supportive adult.

The first theme, an asset-based approach, represents an entire mindset, for it speaks to both how one considers youth, as well as the entire range of a program’s activities: how it is designed (with youth), how interventions are conceptualized (holistic rather than narrow), how outcomes are defined (in positive, developmental terms) and so on. Both proponents of projects as well as funders should incorporate such an asset-based philosophy and reorient their thinking and practices to reflect these principles. In many cases the thinking behind the asset-based concept has already permeated programs and projects across Toronto. It would nevertheless be worthwhile to make this an explicit theme, in characterizing programs or projects and in framing funding objectives.

The second theme is a more practically oriented consideration. It stresses a particular program component, namely the importance of a caring, supportive adult in the development of a youth. Again, this was a consistent and widespread finding across all the literature. It strongly suggests that programs and projects should make clear how this consideration is incorporated in their activities.

### **Taking a conceptual view**

This report cites scores of specific practices for improving programs focusing on youth, and has clustered these findings according to topics (such as employment, or newcomer services) or in terms of practical issues (such as outreach, or involving parents). Each of these categories addresses a specific piece of the youth development challenge. It is also necessary, however, to frame a larger, strategic view of this task, one that can provide a basis for mobilizing broad community support and resources.

Such a context can outline a sequence of roles and tasks. It can be framed like a strategic plan, identifying goals and working backwards to the conditions that need to be in place to accomplish those goals, or it can be based on the pursuit of an extended list of developmental indicators. Regardless of approach, however, communities need to step back and determine how stakeholders can collectively set goals for the development of their youth, as well as how they will achieve these goals. In the absence of such a process, individual programs and projects will operate in isolation, denying youth a continuum of services and opportunities, as well as denying various community players a way to direct their resources or activities toward a common set of objectives.

### **The implementation challenge**

Taking a broad, conceptual view of the challenge will result in an action plan that involves many players and a considerable mobilization of effort and resources. In some cases, it may be appropriate to create specific entities to pursue these objectives, thus providing the necessary focus and energy to carry out these activities.

One approach which has emerged from the literature is the use of intermediary organizations. Intermediary organizations are not direct service providers, but act as catalysts and networkers to enable others to perform their tasks more effectively. Intermediary organizations often serve as the “glue” which brings others together, to marshal learnings, resources and funding to achieve collectively what it is difficult for individual organizations to accomplish alone. They do this by:

- Engaging, convening and supporting key constituencies, providing the “table” around which the different stakeholders meet to plan and strategize new initiatives; this can be done on a geographic basis (through neighbourhood-specific initiatives) or on an issue basis (for example, a city-wide focus on youth employment or newcomer services);
- Establishing quality standards and promoting accountability, assembling and disseminating best practices, and promoting tools and measurements that contribute to effective management and program implementation;
- Brokering and leveraging community resources, identifying sources of funding, proposing creative mechanisms for coordinating funding, and supporting the developmental efforts of organizations in designing new initiatives;
- Promoting effective policy, advocating with government officials and program funders.

In short, intermediary organizations can provide the necessary focus as well as economy of scale to assist individual organizations to carry out their functions. In deciding on specific priorities for youth development in any community, it may also be necessary to consider how some intermediary organization (or organizations) can contribute to the fulfillment of those objectives.

### **An emphasis on evaluation and learning**

One final theme of this report relates to the need to strengthen the implementation of youth programs. It was apparent both through the key informant interviews and in researching the illustrative practices that only a limited number of agencies have the time or capacity to familiarize themselves with current learnings and best practices. This is not to say that they are not doing effective work – on the contrary, many good programs and projects are being delivered in Toronto, relying on a high level of professional ability, strong community foundations and genuine involvement of youth. But in many cases this quality work has emerged as a result of good instincts and trial-and-error, not as a result of learning from the experiences of others. Finding ways to generate a learning culture across the community sector, including making it easier to access learnings and share best practices broadly, would enhance program design and effective implementation among more agencies.

In addition, reliance on management systems and practical tools is not as widespread among community agency practitioners as it could be. Effective instruments include screening and assessment tools, tracking and monitoring systems, outcome measurements, evaluation frameworks and computerized case management networks. In many cases, funders determine what information should be tracked, and by narrowly defining what the funding requires (and will pay for), much useful data is not gathered and analyzed which could contribute to better program evaluation and continuous improvement.

Throughout the literature it is apparent that quality implementation often depends on organizations that embrace constant learning. That attitude is typically reflected in their management systems and in how they gather and use data related to their clients.

The commitment to measurement and evaluation evident in other jurisdictions, on the part of both practitioners and funders, accounts for the richness, range and rigour of the worldwide literature on youth development. Hopefully this report, by making accessible these studies, can both bring new learnings to the Canadian youth programming scene, as well as spur further Canadian evaluations and inquiries that can contribute to our understanding of how best to meet the needs and aspirations of youth.

## **APPENDIX A: SEARCH STRATEGY**

### **I. Search sites**

Search sites included:

1. Searches of social science-related databases including:
  - PsycInfo;
  - PubMed;
  - Social Sciences Index;
  - Social Work Abstracts; and
  - Sociological Abstracts;
2. Bibliographies of key reports;
3. Websites of key sources such as:
  - Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
  - City of Toronto Children's Services;
  - Health Canada;
  - Human Resources and Skills Development Canada;
  - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI);
  - 211 in Toronto;
  - Statistics Canada; and
  - United Ways/Centraide in Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, and Montréal;
4. Websites of key foundations and research organizations (particularly publications, resources and links pages) such as:
  - American Youth Policy Forum;
  - Annie E. Casey Foundation;
  - Canadian Council on Social Development;
  - CERIS;
  - Joseph Roundtree Foundation;
  - Laidlaw Foundation;
  - Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC);
  - Mentoring Australia;
  - Mott Foundation;
  - National Crime Prevention Council;
  - National Youth Employment Coalition;
  - PEPNet;
  - Public/Private Ventures; and
  - Settlement.org.

5. Google and Yahoo search engines. This included: search of actual titles of programs; research papers or reports that had been identified from the above sources; and general key word searches.

## **II. Search terms**

Search terms included:

- Bullying and prevention and youth and/or school
- Girls and recreation
- (Newcomer and/or immigrant) and (youth and/or adolescent)
- Social exclusion and youth
- (Violence prevention) and (program and/or intervention) and (youth and/or adolescent)
- Youth and community development
- (Youth) and (transition to adulthood)
- Youth at risk and/or youth at-risk and/or high-risk youth and/or low income youth
- Youth development
- Youth employment and/or training
- Youth involvement and/or youth decision-making and/or youth engagement
- Youth mentorship and/or mentorship and/or mentor programs and/or peer strategies and/or peer mentoring
- (Youth programs and/or practices and/or services) and (evaluation and/or best practices)
- (Youth programs and/or practices and/or services) and family and/or family involvement
- Youth recreation and/or youth social recreation

## **APPENDIX B: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

This bibliography is organized according to topic area. Where available, Internet links are provided for accessing a copy of the report cited. Such links can become inoperable when sites are reorganized or materials get moved. If the link does not work, try a search engine inquiry (such as Google), using the author's name or the title of the report. The report can sometimes be found in the Google cache.

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## **APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANTS**

### **Toronto informants**

1. Shoba Adore, Executive Director, Braeburn Neighbourhood Place, Etobicoke.
2. Kehinde Bah, Children and Youth Program Associate, Laidlaw Foundation.
3. Ed Castro, Manager, Scarborough Addiction Services Partnership, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Former Executive Director, West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre.
4. Tony Diniz, Executive Director, Child Development Institute, Earl's Court Family Centre.
5. Cutty Duncan, Coordinator, Rathburn Area Youth project.
6. Sue Forrester, Manager, Employment Preparation (Toronto), Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
7. June Fox-Casey, Operations Manager, Employment Preparation, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
8. Jean Faulds, Executive Director, Counselling Foundation of Canada.
9. Nathan Gilbert, Executive Director, Laidlaw Foundation.
10. Lew Golding, Manager, Substance Abuse Program for African Canadian & Caribbean Youth (SAPACCY), CAMH
11. Nasir Haginur, Program Manager, Dixon Neighbourhood Youth Centre.
12. Scott Haldane, President and Chief Executive Officer, YMCA of Greater Toronto.
13. Violetta Ilkiw, Manager, Youth Engagement Programme, Laidlaw Foundation.
14. Kemi Jacobs, Manager, Youth Services, Toronto Community Housing Corporation.
15. Steve Jordan, Recreationist, East District South Region, Parks & Recreation, City of Toronto.
16. Ange Kinnear, Diversity and Community Engagement Consultant, Chief Administrative Officer's Office, City of Toronto. Former Staff Coordinator, Toronto Youth Cabinet.



17. Linda McGrath, Community Development Officer and Coordinator, Youth Employment Job Development Initiative, Community and Neighbourhood Services, City of Toronto.
18. Justice Roy McMurtry, Ontario Court of Appeal.
19. Margarita Mendez, Executive Director, Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre.
20. Leigh Moore, Program Manager, Community Development, East Metro Youth Services; Cynthia Booth, Supervisor, Violence Intervention Project; Likwa Nkala, Coordinator, Violence Intervention Project; Michelle Moran, Coordinator, RISE Program, VIP; Jessica Weiser, Coordinator, RISE Program, VIP.
21. Jennifer Morris, Manager, Eva's Initiatives.
22. Laura Palmer-Korn, Vice President, Employment and Community Services, YMCA of Greater Toronto.
23. Girmalla Persaud, Executive Director, and Neethan Shan, Youth Program Manager, Malvern Family Resource Centre.
24. David Reid, Director of Education; Jackie Drew, Coordinator, Cooperative and Career Education; Lorna McPherson, Guidance Coordinator, School Services/Program Department; Bruce Cameron, Coordinating Principal, Safe Schools and Alternative Programs; Paula Markus, District-wide Coordinator, ESL/ELD; David Rowan, Coordinator, Special Education and Support Services; Lloyd McKell, Coordinator, Community Services, Toronto District School Board.
25. Ted Richmond, Inclusive Communities for Children, Youth and Families Pilot Program Coordinator, Laidlaw Foundation.
26. Shahina Sayani, Executive Director, For Youth Initiative.
27. Janice Simmons, Program Manager, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club.
28. Sally Spencer, Executive Director, Youth Assisting Youth.
29. Vathany Uthayasundaram, Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre.
30. Zenia Wadhvani, Manager, Youth and GenNext Markets, United Way of Greater Toronto.

## **Canadian and international informants**

31. Danielle Angéline Bélanger, Planning Consultant, Centraide Montréal.
32. Andres Dominguez, Director, Education, Ewing Marion Kauffmann Foundation, Kansas City, USA.
33. Rasouli Lewis, Director, Harlem Peacemakers; Betina Jean-Louis, Director of Evaluations, Harlem Children's Zone Inc. (USA).
34. Ben Kerman, Director of Research, Casey Family Services.
35. Carol Oliver and Barbara Schliffer, Community Investments and Partnerships Associates, United Way of Calgary and Area; Jane Skeams, Associate, Calgary Children's Initiative.
36. Patricia Soung, Program Director, Outreach and Education, Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing, New York.
37. Linda Western, Planner, Agency Community Services, United Way of Lower Mainland, Vancouver B.C.
38. Marisha Wignaraja, Program Officer; Girls, Young Women and Leadership, Ms. Foundation for Women, New York.
39. Dr. Robin Wright, Professor, School of Social Work, McGill University, Montréal PQ.

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## **APPENDIX D: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

One of the notable findings emerging from the literature review was the importance of a conceptual framework when designing youth programs, not because each initiative must be comprehensive and holistic in scope and scale, but rather so that each initiative could be considered in the context of the broader goals a community is seeking to achieve. In order to provide more depth to what such concepts might look like, two particular approaches are profiled in this section, namely:

- The youth development framework;
- The developmental assets approach.

The youth development framework suggests a form of strategic planning to fashion the range of services, supports and partnerships that need to be in place to ensure that communities can support the development of all of their youth. To some extent, this approach places its emphasis on process and implementation.

The developmental asset approach advocates a specific set of indicators that should guide program design and implementation. Thus, it is very prescriptive in proposing definitive outcomes.

Each of these approaches relies on studies and evaluations to substantiate the proposed framework. Each provides an illustration of a broader framework for conceptualizing a community-wide strategy to support the development of youth.

### **The youth development framework**

The youth development approach takes the view that young people are “assets in the making,” and that their development is dependent on a range of supports and opportunities coming from family, community and other institutions that touch them. To design appropriate youth development strategies on a community-wide basis, one needs to address the following questions:

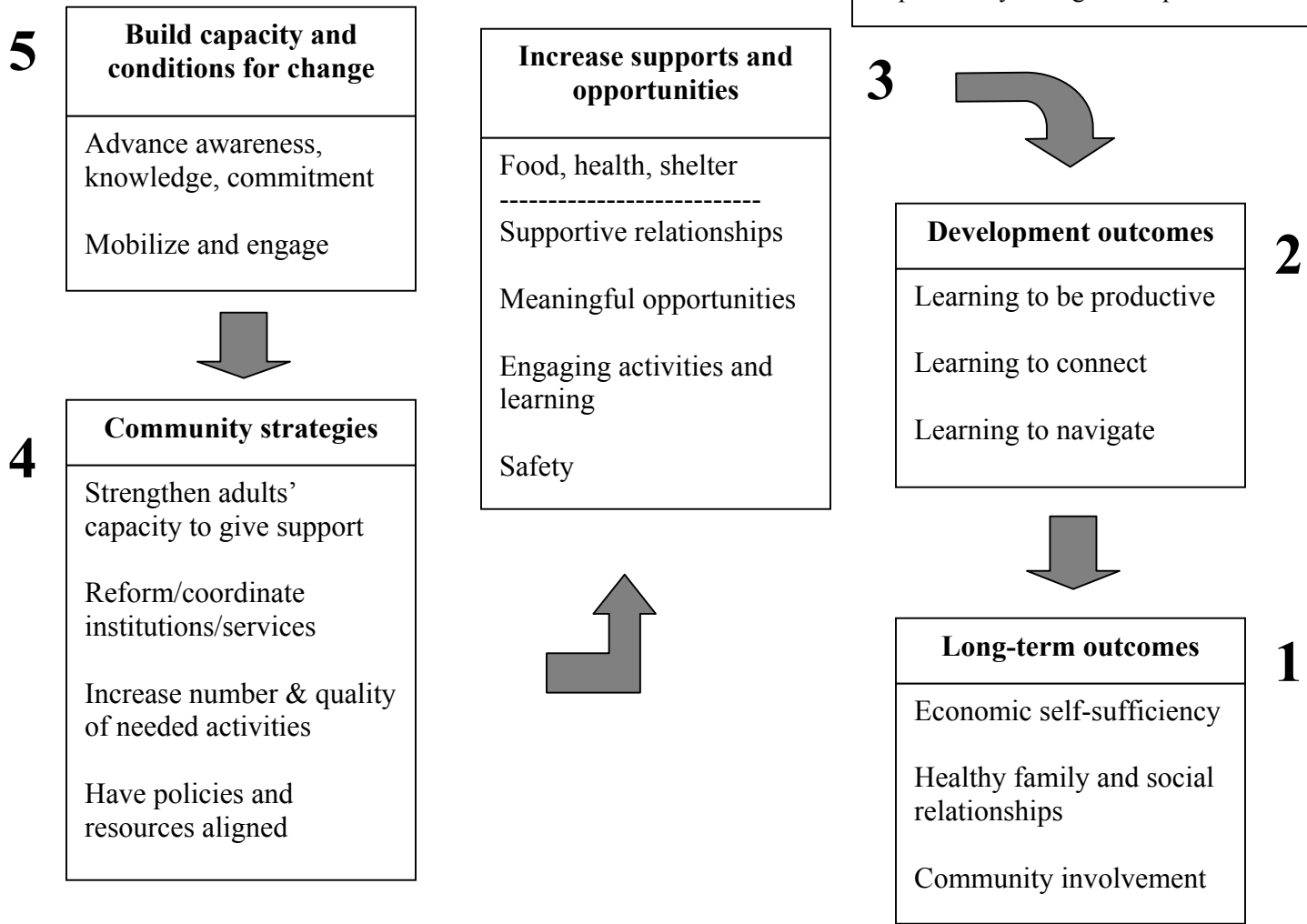
- (1) What are the fundamental long-term goals for youth?
- (2) What are the developmental milestones or markers that tell us young people are progressing toward these goals successfully?
- (3) What do young people need to reach these developmental milestones?
- (4) What must change in communities so that there are enough supports and opportunities for all youth?
- (5) How do we create the conditions and capacity in communities to make these changes possible?

Answering these questions results in a plan of action that puts the responses into effect in reverse order, starting with the answer to last question (the conditions that need to be in

place) then moving backwards to the first question (the long-term goals). This is illustrated by the diagram on the following page.

# Youth development framework

Adopted from: Gambone, M.A., A.M. Klern and J.P. Connell (2002). *Finding Out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development*, Youth Development Strategies, Inc. and Institute for Research and Reform in Education, p. 5 <http://www.ydsi.org/YDSI/pdf/WhatMatters.pdf>



## The developmental assets approach

The developmental asset approach is a product of the US-based Search Institute, which proposes a list of indicators or building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible. These blocks are equally divided into external and internal assets, comprising a total of 40 assets, grouped into eight categories, listed below:

External assets: The following four categories point to the positive experiences young people need to receive from the world around them.

Support: Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate and accept them.

1. *Family Support:* Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. *Positive Family Communication:* Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. *Other Adult Relationships:* Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. *Caring Neighbourhood:* Young person experiences caring neighbours.
5. *Caring School Climate:* School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. *Parent Involvement in Schooling:* Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment: Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.

7. *Community Values Youth:* Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. *Youth as Resources:* Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. *Service to Others:* Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. *Safety:* Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighbourhood.

Boundaries and Expectations: Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.

11. *Family Boundaries:* Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. *School Boundaries:* School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. *Neighbourhood Boundaries:* Neighbours take responsibility for monitoring young people's behaviour.
14. *Adult Role Models:* Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behaviour.
15. *Positive Peer Influence:* Young person's best friends model responsible behaviour.
16. *High Expectations:* Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time: Young people need opportunities – outside of school – to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.

17. *Creative Activities:* Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre, or other arts.

18. *Youth Programs:* Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.

19. *Religious Community:* Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.

20. *Time at Home:* Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Internal assets: These next four categories reflect internal values, skills and beliefs that young people also need to fully engage and function in the world.

Commitment to Learning: Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.

21. *Achievement Motivation:* Young person is motivated to do well in school.

22. *School Engagement:* Young person is actively engaged in learning.

23. *Homework:* Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.

24. *Bonding to School:* Young person cares about her or his school.

25. *Reading for Pleasure:* Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values: Young people need to develop strong guiding values or principles to help them make healthy life choices.

26. *Caring:* Young person places high value on helping other people.

27. *Equality and Social Justice:* Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.

28. *Integrity:* Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.

29. *Honesty:* Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."

30. *Responsibility:* Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.

31. *Restraint:* Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies: Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions and to cope with new situations.

32. *Planning and Decision Making:* Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.

33. *Interpersonal Competence:* Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.

34. *Cultural Competence:* Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.

35. *Resistance Skills:* Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.

36. *Peaceful Conflict Resolution*: Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.

*Positive Identity*: Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them.

37. *Personal Power*: Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."

38. *Self-Esteem*: Young person reports having a high self-esteem.

39. *Sense of Purpose*: Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."

40. *Positive View of Personal Future*: Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.



## APPENDIX E: ILLUSTRATIVE PRACTICES

The following profiles highlight twelve illustrative examples of best practices in action. These examples were chosen after a review of many projects and programs. An attempt was made to ensure a mix that represented each of topic areas, geographic variety, as well as a good sampling of the practices cited in this report. In addition, many of the programs cited have tended to be mentioned often, either in the literature review or in the key informant interviews. In short, these illustrative practices reflect a cross-section of activities, by topic, geography and type of practices.

Each of these profiles is structured in the same way, with the following sequence of headings:

- Program/project name:** The name usually attached to the program or project;
- Program/project delivery organization:** Often these programs or projects are housed in an organization;
- Relevant websites:** Web resources that can provide further information about the program or project;
- Target group:** What youth population group is targeted by the initiative;
- Location:** Where is the project or program located;
- Program budget:** Where available, a sense of the most recent financial information;
- Numbers served:** How many youth are involved in the program;
- Participant profile:** Characteristics of the population served;
- Program description:** A description of what the program or project seeks to accomplish;
- Program components:** An overview of the different elements of the initiatives;
- Program effectiveness:** A description and assessment of the program's impact, in terms of actual evaluation results, external reviews or its replicability elsewhere;
- Some relevant findings:** Where available, highlights of evaluation results, or other examples of the impact of the program;
- Critical success factors:** An identification, where possible, of circumstances that have contributed to the program's success.

Under the heading *Program effectiveness*, a rating scale was used, to identify the level of verification or rigour associated with the publication or evaluation describing the program. The numbers in the profile relate to the following rating scale, with higher numbers reflecting higher levels of rigour.

**Rating Scale to Assess a Program's Effectiveness or a Study's Rigour**

	Rating	Explanation
<b>Possible</b>	1	The project, program or intervention is publicized or described by the proponent. The simple act of drawing attention to their initiative suggests that the proponent feels that their activity has some merit.
	2	The project, program or intervention is publicized or described by a third party, but there is no expert assessment or quantitative analysis involved.
<b>Probable</b>	3	The project, program or intervention has received some special recognition, mention or award.
<b>Affirmed</b>	4	The project, program or intervention has been part of a qualitative assessment or review by an expert or peer or panel.
	5	The project, program or intervention has been reviewed in a refereed journal.
<b>Confirmed</b>	6	The project, program or intervention has been subject to a quantitative, experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation.
	7	The project, program or intervention has been successfully replicated elsewhere.

**Program/project name: BladeRunners**

**Program/project delivery organization:** BladeRunners began as a pilot project in 1994 in Vancouver. In 1996, the provincial government started administering the program and through community partners it was delivered in seven communities across British Columbia. The program attracted much attention, including recognition from PePNet, the Promising and Effective Practices Network of the National Youth Employment Coalition in the United States. In 2002, the administration of the program was transferred to ACCESS (Aboriginal Community Career and Employment Services Society), and the program was scaled back to four locations (Vancouver, Kamloops, Nanaimo and Victoria). This profile will focus on the Vancouver operation, which is also delivered by ACCESS. ACCESS is a non-profit co-operative venture of the off-reserve aboriginal community of the Great Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), providing counselling and support services to help members of the Aboriginal community overcome employment barriers through the acquisition of appropriate skills.

**Relevant website(s):**

ACCESS BladeRunner: <http://www.buildingfuturestoday.com/programs.php?page=6>

Government of British Columbia case study:

<http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/sustainability/casestudies/bladerunners.htm>

PepNet 1999 Awardee for effective practice in youth employment/development:

<http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/awardees/brp.htm>

2001 evaluation of BladeRunners:

<http://www.srdc.org/english/publications/eyouth.pdf>

**Target group:** At-risk youth, often severely-employment disadvantaged, between the ages of 19 and 30.

**Location:** Vancouver, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Victoria

**Program budget:** \$7,700 per youth

**Number served:** Since 1994, over 1000 youth have participated in the program; in fiscal year 2004, the program served 72 youth.

**Participant profile:** Significant proportion of Aboriginal youth (this has always been the case with this program, even before it was being delivered by ACCESS), street-involved youth, youth receiving social assistance, with little or no employment experience. The proportion of women varies: Vancouver, 25%; Kamloops, 20%; Victoria, 10%.

**Program description:** Youth are required to complete a pre-employment program and, after receiving a limited amount of training (primarily with respect to health and safety), are placed to work on construction sites. The youth are supported throughout the program, with the goal being a permanent career in the construction industry.

**Program components:**

- *Six-week employment readiness program*, which includes basic computer skills, critical thinking skills, life skills, workplace literacy and math, the ability to use basic hand tools and to identify construction materials, and a step-by-step introduction into the different stages of construction sites;
- *Health and safety training*, basic first aid and WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System);
- *Program coordinators*, who provide support both to the participants and to the employers;
- *A training subsidy to employers*, of up to \$3.00 per hour;
- *Informal mentorship/follow-up*, by maintaining links with program graduates and using them as peer mentors for new participants.

**Program effectiveness:** 3, 4, 7

The program has been assessed by PePNet according to its criteria, has undergone a case study third-party qualitative evaluation, and has been replicated in a number of communities across British Columbia.

**Some relevant findings:**

The program boasts an 80% success rate (employed or returning to school). 30% of graduates become certified construction tradespersons.

**Critical success factors:**

- The coordinators play a critical role and much of the program depends on their effectiveness; they must act as counsellors, mentors, case managers, job coaches and job developers for the youth, as well as mediate with the employers; coordinators are hired based on their knowledge of the construction industry and their experience of working with youth at risk;
- Active involvement and contribution of several partners, including government funders, a community-based program deliverer, unions (who provide the training and waive a training fee of \$3.00 per hour), and construction sector employers;
- Effective combination of youth preparation and development (pre-employment program and counselling from coordinators) and engagement in early hands-on, paid work.

**Program/project name: Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth**

**Program/project delivery organization:** The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth is a United Way funded agency.

**Relevant website(s):**

[www.education.ualberta.ca/educ/research/tri-fac/enviro/sec2b-4.html](http://www.education.ualberta.ca/educ/research/tri-fac/enviro/sec2b-4.html)  
[http://www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca/members/ms\\_detail.asp?mid=246](http://www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca/members/ms_detail.asp?mid=246)

**Target group:** Newcomer Youth; Mentoring; Social Recreation.

**Location:** Calgary

**Program budget:** \$450,000/year. The Bridge Foundation programs are funded by the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, and by the United Way of Calgary and Area.

**Number served:** Operating since 1991, the Foundation serves approximately 1000 newcomer youth each year.

**Participant profile:** Newly arrived immigrant junior high school students. Many of these youth arrive in Canadian schools with limited educational backgrounds. They are struggling to attain literacy in English and to learn academic concepts with age-peers in a Canadian setting. Many suffer from feelings of alienation and depression, exhibit low self-esteem, and often have difficulty making any progress in school.

**Program description:** The Foundation assists immigrant youth to overcome language and cultural barriers that restrict their access and contribution to society. Older immigrant youth (typically university students) act as role models and mentors for younger, newly arrived immigrant youth from the same language group or ethnic background. The agency hires youth to act as mentors for particular communities; it also accepts services from volunteer mentors. The goal of the Foundation is to bridge the gap between the mainstream and immigrant populations.

**Program components:** Programs offered include:

- *Homework Club* - The Homework Club helps students with various school subjects including math, science, ESL and social studies. It runs for an hour and a half every week and is supervised by bilingual assistants and volunteers. It is located in three junior high schools and two public libraries.
- *Canadian Integration Activities* - This program helps students and their families become more familiar with Canadian culture and learn about resources available in their communities. The program operates in three different schools. Activities include: using the public library, transit system, phone book, learning the meaning of Canadian holidays, the Canadian legal system, banking, food and proper diet,

- volunteer opportunities and career exploration.
- *Summer Literacy Program* - This summer camp helps improve students' use of the English language and operates in two city schools. Activities include vocabulary and spelling, writing, reading club, recreational activities, arts & crafts, field trips and guest speakers who describe various aspects of Canadian culture.
  - *Prenatal Classes* - The purpose of these sessions is to teach immigrant parents and expectant couples about the Canadian medical system, proper pre-natal care and diet, and to develop peer support groups and build strong families.

**Program effectiveness: 3**

Recent recognition includes a Citizenship Citation Award from CIC for outstanding service to newcomer youth (2002), and a Merit Canada Achievement Award in 2000. The Bridge Foundation has helped other agencies (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs) in Alberta develop programs for newcomer youth. Although their expertise has been solicited from as far away as Vancouver, they have not had funds to share their best practices. The director of the program has expressed a need for funds for ongoing tracking of long-term youth outcomes.

**Some relevant findings:**

- In a recent evaluation of the Bridge Foundation's homework club, 90% of student participants showed an increase in their grades;
- In a survey conducted in 2000 of participant outcomes "ten years after," eight of twelve youth had completed high school, four of twelve were in post-secondary education, and all twelve were "productive citizens" in school or in the work-force;
- Many staff and volunteers are former youth participants;
- Although peer mentoring is a focus of this program, the agency has been able to dedicate few resources to training youth mentors. Volunteers and youth mentors receive guidance from a volunteer coordinator, but no rigorous system of training for youth mentors is in place.

**Key success factors:**

- Hiring youth from the same ethnic background, with language abilities to act as role models for younger newcomer youth from the same language group/ethnic background;
- Developing cultural understanding and an understanding of issues within the acculturation process (e.g., issues specific to refugee youth) among staff and volunteers;
- "Staff adapt to youth, rather than youth having to adapt to staff;"
- Partnerships with police, schools and recreational facilities are key to program success;
- Agency is unique in its focus on newcomer immigrant youth.

**Program/project name: Communities that Care**

**Program/project delivery organization:** CtC (UK), a national organization licensed to provide Communities that Care services throughout the United Kingdom.

**Relevant website(s):** <http://www.communitiesthatcare.org.uk/>

**Target group:** Youth Violence Prevention

**Location:** 26 sites in the UK (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales). In addition, there are several programs in the Netherlands and over 500 in the United States, where it was originally started.

**Program budget:** Total budget unknown. CtC (UK) receives core funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to provide the training and technical support for local CtC programs. In the US, program budget estimates are approximately US \$0.18 million per program.

**Number served:** Unknown.

**Participant profile:** Children and youth.

**Program description:** Communities that Care (CtC) is a long-term program for building safer neighbourhoods by valuing children and youth. The program establishes a working partnership between local people, agencies and organizations to promote healthy personal and social development among young people, while reducing the risks of different problem behaviours. Local action plans developed through CtC share goals of:

- Supporting and strengthening families;
- Promoting school commitment and success;
- Encouraging responsible sexual behaviour; and
- Achieving a safer, more cohesive community.

Described as “a risk and protection focused programme,” CtC is based on a social development strategy that can be tailored to the specific needs of a neighbourhood, district or city. By mobilizing whole communities behind a holistic, multi-agency approach, Communities that Care ensures that prevention ceases to be the responsibility of a few specialist organizations.

**Program components:** The programme works in four main stages: (i) Community involvement; (ii) Risk and resources audit; (iii) Action planning and implementation; and (iv) Monitoring and evaluation.

*Risk and resources audit:* Management boards oversee a detailed assessment of the main risk and protective factors influencing the lives of children and young people in the community. CtC provides specialist technical support and training in compiling a risk

profile for the neighbourhood. Their unique auditing tool makes use of:

- Indicators from official data that can be used to compare the situation in the community with circumstances at district and national level;
- A confidential questionnaire for completion by secondary school students that delivers information on attitudes to family, school and community as well as comparisons with nationally reported levels of youth crime and other problem behaviours.

Using the risk profile, community boards are encouraged to select between two and five priority risks for action. This is followed by a comparison audit of existing preventive services in the neighbourhood that are relevant to reducing those risks. This serves to pinpoint gaps in services and identify opportunities where existing work can be made more effective.

*Action Planning and Implementation:* Community boards prepare their final strategy in light of the evidence gathered during the risk and resources audit. The overall aim of their action plan is to increase the level of protective factors in children and young people's lives and to reduce the level of risk. Plans normally combine two different components:

- A re-direction of existing services to tackle the priority risks identified;
- The introduction of new, focused interventions.

On reaching the all-important planning stage, boards are not left to re-invent the wheel. CtC uses a menu of best practice examples to help boards re-organize existing services and develop new interventions. The "promising approaches" that it describes are existing prevention programs that have a track record of success in reducing risk and increasing protection.

*Monitoring and Evaluation:* programs are assessed in two different ways:

- Process evaluation - continuous monitoring to ensure that key leaders, management boards and task forces are achieving the goals they set for themselves at each stage of the program;
- Outcomes evaluation - collecting follow-up data in the community ensures the program's effectiveness and its continuing success. Outcome evaluation shows what change has been achieved in reducing the targeted risk.

### **Program effectiveness: 7**

Six demonstration programs are currently being implemented and evaluated in England, Scotland and Wales. The independent evaluations are being undertaken by the Universities of Sheffield and Glasgow.

### **Some relevant findings:**

CtC is designed to strengthen social behaviour in the four domains of family, school, community and individuals/peers. The major risk factors that it targets are:

- Family risk factors: Poor parental supervision and discipline; family conflict; a family history of problem behaviour; parental involvement/attitudes condoning problem behaviour; low income and poor housing;
- School risk factors: Low achievement beginning in primary school; aggressive behaviour, including bullying; lack of commitment, including truancy; school



- disorganization;
- Community risk factors: Disadvantaged neighbourhood; community disorganization and neglect; availability of drugs; high turnover and lack of neighbourhood attachment; and
- Risk factors relating to individuals/peers: Alienation and lack of social commitment; attitudes that condone problem behaviour; early involvement in problem behaviour; friends involved in problem behaviour.

**Critical success factors:**

CtC draws from principles of “prevention science,” a theory of social development that aims to identify and reduce anti-social behaviours among young people, while simultaneously promoting healthy and positive behaviours. Prevention science takes a two-pronged approach: the identification of risk and protective factors and the development and implementation of effective strategies to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors.

CtC supports children and young people by enhancing protective factors shown by research to act as a buffer against risk in otherwise adverse circumstances:

- *Social bonding* - strengthening children’s bonds with family members, friends, teachers and other social responsible adults;
- *Healthy standards* - having parents, teachers, community leaders and others who lead by example, holding clearly-stated expectations for children’s behaviour;
- *Opportunities for involvement* - affording children opportunities to feel involved and valued in their families, schools and communities;
- *Social and learning skills* - equipping children with the social, reasoning and practical skills they need to take full advantage of the opportunities on offer;
- *Recognition and praise* - ensuring that children’s contributions and positive behaviour are recognized, thus giving them an incentive to continue.

**Program/project name: Eva's Phoenix**

**Program/project delivery organization:** Eva's Initiatives, comprising: three shelters – Eva's Place, a 32-bed emergency shelter for homeless youth; Eva's Satellite, a 40-bed shelter for drug and alcohol-involved youth, and Eva's Phoenix, a longer term shelter and training facility; and Eva's National Initiative, a project to help other communities to develop their own housing and employment programs for homeless youth

**Relevant website(s):**

Eva's Initiatives: <http://www.evasinitiatives.com>

Eva's Phoenix: <http://www.evasinitiatives.com/phoenix/phoenix-home.htm>

**Target group:** Training and employment for youth

**Location:** Toronto

**Program budget:** \$3 million (includes shelter component); receives support from United Way of Greater Toronto through the Toronto Enterprise Fund.

**Number served:** Eva's Phoenix provides housing for 50 youth for up to a full year (it houses more than this number each year, due to turnover), and up to 160 youth each year in its training and employment programs.

**Participant profile:** Homeless and at-risk youth; for the shelter and employment program, youth aged 16 to 24; for the employment program, youth aged 16 to 29.

**Program context:** Eva's Phoenix draws youth from across Toronto; it is the only youth shelter offering extended stays for youth.

**Program description:** Youth at Eva's Phoenix live in shared townhouse-style units with access to commons areas; they develop the skills to live independently through counselling, goal-setting exercises, workshops and hands-on experience. Working with business, labour and community partners, Eva's Phoenix provides youth with life skills, training and employment opportunities.

**Program components:**

*Housing:* shared living accommodations, together with counselling, support programs and workshops, including: admission processes involving goal-setting; cooking classes and shopping expeditions; budgeting and financial literacy; conflict resolution; accessing community resources; health education; youth involvement in residence governance, community events and leadership opportunities; housing search support; housing maintenance education; follow-up;

*Training and employment:* Career development, pre-employment skills, job search skills, job development, work experience (placements between 13 and 26 weeks); opportunities include: Cisco Systems Local Area Academy for network administration; web design program; film trainee program (with National

Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians); an active print shop (with links to graphics communications industry); construction program (with links to unions and contractors); programs related to cooking, pet-grooming, hairstyling, child and youth work; fundraising. In total, links with over 200 employers in the last three years;

*Mentoring*: a coordinated and supervised mentorship program, both one-on-one and peer mentoring.

**Program effectiveness:** 1, 3, 4

Eva's Initiatives not only provides a range of information about its work, but has also instigated a project to respond to numerous requests regarding how to replicate its work in other communities across Canada. Eva's has garnered much recognition as a model approach, from such sources as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Associations of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Hostels and the Toronto Board of Trade. Eva's Phoenix has also conducted a quantitative evaluation of its program, however, this did not involve any quasi-experimental design features. Under its funding, Eva's Phoenix is only able to conduct limited follow-up and tracking of youth after they leave its program.

**Some relevant findings:**

According to the Eva's Phoenix evaluation:

- 84% of the youth had stayed in a shelter prior to coming to Eva's Phoenix; after graduating, that number dropped to 32%;
- 4% of the youth had lived in their own or shared accommodation prior to move-in; at move-out, 35% lived in their own or shared accommodation;
- With regards to employment outcomes, 160 youth were served in the first year of their HRDC funding; of the 110 youth who graduated and could be found after 3 months: 51% were employed or in school; 25% were unemployed and looking for work; 16% were unemployed and not looking for work due to health or other reasons; 8% were engaged in volunteer work or community service;
- Of youth interviewed as part of the evaluation, 28% said they had a good job at some point prior to their involvement at Eva's Phoenix and 49% said they had a good job after graduating from the program;
- For those youth interviewed for whom it had been three or more years since they had dropped out of school, which are the youth the literature describes as the hardest to help, notably 100% enrolled in school or a training program after Eva's Phoenix;
- 97% of youth interviewed said they would recommend Eva's Phoenix to a friend;
- About a third of residents of Eva's Phoenix are discharged, of which about half are discharged within the first three months; a review of files indicated that there was a strong correlation between the number of risk factors experienced by the youth (high number of employment barriers; involvement with the law; drugs/alcohol abuse; mental health issues; and/or problems in family relations) and the likelihood they would be discharged;

- Before the program, 23% of the youth interviewed said they had contact often/regularly with their family; this number doubled to 46% after the program; before the program, 36% of the youth interviewed said they had non-existent contact with their family; that number dropped to 9% after the program.

**Critical success factors:**

- Longer-term transitional housing allows for extensive and extended support;
- Integrated model of housing, employment, mentorship and related services and supports addresses a range of youth needs;
- Strong partnerships with employers ensures effective work placements, providing experience and contacts for further employment;
- A very high performance, mission-focused organization, with strong community partnerships and effective staff, always striving for innovation and improvement;
- Very effective fundraising.

**Program/project name: Harlem Children's Zone**

**Program/project delivery organization:** Harlem Children's Zone, Inc. (formerly known as Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families).

**Relevant website(s):** <http://www.hcz.org>

**Target group:** Reaching at-risk youth in marginalized neighbourhoods

**Location:** New York City

**Program budget:** FY 2003 US\$ 16 million; over 650 staff

**Number served:** FY 2004: 8400 children and youth; 3500 adults

**Participant profile:** The program targets all children, youth and families in a 24-block area of Harlem. At present, 88% of the roughly 3400 children who reside inside the 24-block catchment area are served by at least one of this initiative's programs.

**Program context:** HCZ describes its neighbourhood as one of the most devastated ones on the United States. When HCZ first began conceptualizing its community-wide strategy in the 1990s, the area was beset by drug dealing, violence and high levels of homelessness.

**Program description:** This project seeks to concentrate its interventions in a defined, geographic area, seeking to accomplish two goals:

- To develop a critical mass of adults who are well versed in the techniques of effective parenting, and are engaged in local educational, social, and religious activities with their children;
- To provide early and progressive intervention in children's development, with a mix of effective services, particularly at earlier ages, but also adjusting as the person progresses through the various stages of youth.

**Program components:**

Programs:

*The Baby College*, a 9-week Saturday series of workshops for parents and other caregivers on early childhood development and parenting;

*Harlem Gems*, a universal pre-kindergarten program preparing four-year-olds for kindergarten;

*Family Support Center*, a walk-in, storefront social services facility that provides families in crisis with immediate access to social services including foster care prevention, domestic violence workshops, parenting skills classes, and group and individual counseling;

*Parents Help Center*, a drop-out prevention program for children with severe academic and attendance problems; individual and group counseling for children, and training for parents;

*Harlem Peacemakers/SMART*, Peacemakers has college-aged interns offering in-classroom support, supervising transitional periods during the school day, providing after-school programming, and coordinating outreach to parents and parent involvement activities; SMART (Shaping Minds Around Reading and Technology) is a computer-based literacy program designed to significantly improve the reading skills of each participating student;

*5<sup>th</sup> Grade Institute*: Until 2009, when the original kindergarten class reaches the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the Promise Academy must enroll a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class directly from local elementary schools each year – this program provides eight 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms with daily after-school academic help, with a certified teacher and three assistants;

*TRUCE (The Renaissance University for Community Education)*, a comprehensive leadership program for adolescents, promoting academic growth and career readiness using the arts, media literacy, health and multimedia technology. Participating students work on Harlem Overheard, a community newspaper; the Real Deal, a cable television show; HOTWorks, a theater program, and/or Umoja Media Project, a violence prevention initiative;

*The TRUCE Fitness and Nutrition Center* offers a free, 8,000 square foot exercise facility to youth and the broader Harlem community. The program promotes academic growth and helps youth develop marketable skills in nutrition, fitness, presentation, and advocacy;

*Harlem Children's Zone's Employment and Technology Center* offers a job readiness-training program for young people, aged 14 –18 who are enrolled and attending school full time. The center also provides free use of computers and participation in computer-training classes to neighborhood residents;

*Community Pride* is a resident- and community-driven neighborhood revitalization and community-building program. The program organizes community beautification projects, helps tenants become homeowners through the city's TIL program, and works with tenant and block associations.

Initiatives:

*HCZ Asthma Initiative*, in collaboration with Harlem Hospital, administers an asthma survey to parents of 0-12 year old children; those with a child diagnosed with asthma are offered medical, educational, and environmental assistance;

*Breathe Free Initiative*, a smoking cessation program to support the Asthma Initiative;

*Tax Filing Assistance* helps residents file their taxes and apply for tax credits, providing trained staff, software, and extensive outreach to help eligible families file for the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit;

Beacon/Preventive programs:

*Countee Cullen Community Center* is operated out of PS 194 in upper Harlem; the building is open early in the morning and into the evening Monday through Saturday in order to provide comprehensive after-school youth development, drop-out prevention, adult and evening social activities, and group counseling;

*Family Development Program* is co-located with the Countee Cullen Beacon and provides clients with educational, recreational, and social supports in addition to providing preventive foster care services and counseling;

*Booker T. Washington Beacon*, another Beacon school offering the full-line of comprehensive youth development services: academic, recreational, and counseling services for clients;

*Project CLASS [Clean Living And Staying Sober]* serves clients with substance abuse issues by addressing treatment in the context of family strengthening;

*Truancy Prevention* provides family strengthening support and counseling to children and their families, as well as recreational and educational opportunities for children;

*Midtown Family Place* is a neighborhood based, comprehensive, foster-care prevention program that provides preventive services to families;

Three new programs and one new initiative slated to begin:

*Head Start*, to address the need for childcare and infant development services;

*The Promise Academy K-12*, a charter public elementary and high school (grades K-12 across two sites); the school will include Peacemakers in every classroom, an extended school day and after school program, a summer program, a modern library, a state of the art technology center, a gymnasium, and a cafeteria;

*Promise Academy Charter school Beacon-like program*, within the new school, a full Beacon-type program centered in that facility;

*Medical and dental clinic initiative*, in partnership with another CBO or health provider, will open a medical and dental clinic; the clinic will provide comprehensive health services including dental care, immunizations, physical examinations, and educational workshops regardless of a family's ability to pay.

**Program effectiveness: 3, 4**

The program has received considerable funder and media attention; it also carries out continuous tracking and evaluation of its activities.

**Some relevant findings:**

Using surveys and other data (such as test scores), the program has created logic models for each program and determined appropriate indicators to measure interim and longer-term outcomes. Its performance measures include:

*Operational milestones*, tracking what activities have been executed by the organization to deliver its services and fulfill its mission. These would include such activities as hiring staff, training personnel, developing a strategy for the integration of services, and investing in new technology;

*Outputs*, measuring what services have been provided, the number of people served, the launch of a new program, increasing public funding for a certain program, increasing the integration of services, and so on;

*Long-term outcomes*, signifying how the program has actually changed the lives of those it serves. These outcomes include sustained changes in behavior or life circumstance, such as increased employment or decreased child abuse.

On all these counts, the program is producing impressive results, including:

- Over 3,000 children have been screened for asthma. 315 families have enrolled in the Asthma Initiative. Children who participate become progressively less likely to visit the Emergency Room or have unscheduled visits with their doctors, are less likely to miss school due to asthma, and are less likely to wheeze or experience tightness in the chests;
- 410 Baby College graduates from Cycles 1 through 9 were pre-tested and post-tested using Philliber-Designed surveys. Key findings of the cumulative report include:
  - The proportion of parents reading to their children showed a significant increase;
  - Significantly more children's immunizations were up-to-date at post-test;
  - Significantly more parents had health insurance for their children;
  - Significantly more parents reported use of or access to safety and emergency measures at home.
- HCZ staff members completed tax returns for 1,479 individuals in 2004; 637 of those individuals were eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit and/or the Earned Income Child Credit, receiving \$1,048,463 in credits; they also received additional refund money as a result of doing their taxes with HCZ assistance;
- TRUCE Fitness participants have attended 8 national martial arts tournaments, with their performances improved over last year;
- HCZ's chess team at PS 242 tied for 4<sup>th</sup> place in the K-6 under-1000 division in the national championship. Additionally, chess students have won 61 trophies this year, vastly exceeding last year's yield of 25 trophies;
- 86% of 2003-2004 high school seniors (36 of 42) have been accepted to at least one college. In contrast, in 2003, only 70% of New York City High School graduates planned to go to college.

**Critical success factors:**

- While many multi-purpose program have a range of services, this program has tightly targeted its work to create a critical mass effect;
- Being geographically tightly focused, the program can undertake very targeted outreach and follow-up – many of the services include regular home visits;
- The program engages in extensive tracking, monitoring and evaluation, which allows it to ensure not only that its interventions are making a difference (and modify its activities accordingly) but also to demonstrate to funders its effectiveness;
- The program has deliberately recruited Wall Street financiers and C.E.O.s to its board, greatly enhancing its fundraising capacity as well as its performance-driven practices, including revamping its management structure, developing a business plan and investing in information and communication technology.



**Program/project name: Pathways to Education™**

**Program/project delivery organization:** Regent Park Community Health Centre

**Relevant website(s):** <http://www.p2e.ca>

**Target group:** Reaching at-risk youth in marginalized neighbourhoods

**Location and description of target community:** Toronto

**Program resources:** revenues: Fiscal 2002/3: \$1.4 million; 2003/4: \$1.87 million; Fundraising goal for 2004/5: \$2.53 million. 30 staff; 200+ volunteers. Partnerships with York University and University of Toronto, securing student volunteers to act as mentors and tutors; extensive partnerships with local elementary schools and the many secondary schools which Regent Park students attend – these partnerships result in career orientation tours, special projects for students, communication between project and school board staff, and facilitating meetings between the schools and parents.

**Number served:** 600 students

**Participant profile:** The project target is to serve all high school youth in Regent Park; in each of the program, more than 95% of eligible students register with the project.

**Program context:** The program operates only in Regent Park neighbourhood, Canada's largest concentration of social housing, with a population of over 11,000 people in 4,000 households. 68% of families fall into the category of low-income families (compared to Toronto average of 19%), as do 62% of singles (compared to Toronto average of 38%).

**Program description:** The project's mission is to break the cycle of poverty and unemployment in Regent Park by getting kids to high school, keeping kids in high school and inspiring them to move on to post-secondary programs.

**Program components:**

*Academic support*, through tutoring offered four nights per week in five core subjects at three locations in the community by volunteer tutors;

*Mentoring*, through one-on-one and group mentoring with volunteer adults who have been successful academically (particularly at a post-secondary level);

*Financial support*, through public transit (TTC) tickets to assist students to attend school (there are no high schools in Regent Park, students from Regent Park attend over 34 different high schools outside of the community); the program also places \$1,000 per student per year in a bursary that they can use towards post-secondary education;

*Student/Parent Support Workers*, who work with the students in the program and their parents, the mentors, the tutors, program staff, teachers and school administrators

to develop communication between all parties and ensure that the student is progressing in the program and at school; these support workers provide accountability in:

- Distribution of TTC tickets;
- The monitoring of attendance;
- Supporting students to attend tutoring, mentoring and other program activities;
- Providing a continuing presence of support and advocacy between home and school.

**Program effectiveness: 4**

The project conducts monitoring of its own indicators, in large part comparing its results to comparable ratings for Regent Park youth prior to the introduction of the program, or to peers in their schools not from Regent Park.

**Some relevant findings:**

The program relies on extensive data collection, working in close collaboration with the school boards. In terms of quantifiable data, it focuses on four main indicators to determine the success of the program: participation levels, absenteeism, credit accumulation and subject credit attainment. Results to date:

- Over 98% of eligible students have enrolled and reenrolled in the program in every year of operation;
- Absenteeism has been reduced by 50% among the students with the most serious attendance problems;
- In academic credits earned, Pathways students are outperforming their peers at all 34 different high schools, and the proportion of students who are academically at risk has also been reduced by 50%;
- 61.3% of the grade nine students from Regent Park before Pathways achieved their Math credit compared to 82% after participating in the program (2003-04 school year), with similar significant jumps in attainments of Science and English credits.

**Critical success factors:**

- Highly targeted, focused initiative, in terms of its geographic neighbourhood and the objectives it seeks to accomplish;
- Community mobilization effort, seeking to reach all youth in the target area, as well as their parents and their teachers;
- Partnerships involving schools (elementary and secondary school), school board staff and supportive institutions, such as universities, from which they recruit volunteers;
- Use of mentors for the youth;
- Effective fundraising which ensures there are sufficient resources for the initiative.

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**Program/project name: Settlement Workers in the Schools (SWIS)**

**Program/project delivery organization(s):**

- *Hamilton Settlement Workers in Schools Hamilton (SWISH)*. Partners: Settlement and Integration Services Organization, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- *Kitchener Settlement and Education Partnerships in Waterloo Region (SEPWR)*. Partners: Kitchener Waterloo YMCA, Waterloo Region District School Board, Waterloo Catholic School Board, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- *Ottawa Multicultural Liaison Officers MLO Program*. English Partners: Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, Ottawa Carleton District School Board, Citizenship and Immigration Canada. French Partners: Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario, Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien, Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- *Peel Multicultural Settlement and Educational Partnership (MSEP)*. Region Partners: Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services, Peel District School Board, Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board, Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- *Toronto Settlement and Education Partnerships in Toronto (SEPT)*. Partners: Catholic Cross Cultural Services - Cluster 1, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office - Cluster 2, Centre for Information and Community Services – Cluster 3, Culturelink - Cluster 5, North York Community House - Cluster 6, Jewish Family and Child Services - Cluster 7, Rexdale Women's Centre - Cluster 8, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- *Toronto Travailleuse en établissement dans les écoles (PIDEF)*. French Partner: Centre francophone de Toronto, Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest, Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud, Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- *York Settlement and Education Partnership in York Region (SEPYR)*. Region Partners: Catholic Community Services of York Region, York Region District School Board, York Catholic District School Board.

**Relevant website(s):**

<http://www.settlement.org/atwork/PSR/swis.asp>

[http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork\\_library\\_detail.asp?doc\\_id=1003365](http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1003365)

SWIS has developed guides for parents of elementary and secondary level newcomer youth. The guides are available at: <http://www.settlement.org/edguide>

**Target group:** Newcomer youth.

**Location:** Six communities in Ontario (Hamilton-Wentworth, Kitchener-Waterloo, Peel Region, York Region, Toronto, and Ottawa).

**Program budget:** Approximately \$5 million province-wide, half of which goes to SEPT (Toronto). Majority of funding provided by the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS).

**Number served:** Province-wide, 36,525 individual service sessions were delivered to newcomer youth and parents in 2004. This number does not represent individual users (some may have been repeat users). In Toronto, 48 School Settlement Workers work in 74 schools to improve access to settlement services.

**Participant profile:** The SWIS program focuses on newcomer students and their families that are in their first few years in Canada, and on newcomers that have unresolved first year settlement needs. Families with long term settlement issues or who need intensive support are referred to settlement agencies and other community services. In elementary schools, SWIS workers meet with parents and guardians. In secondary schools, SWIS workers meet with students, parents and guardians. Of all the clients seen in 2004, 38% arrived in Canada in that year and 64% arrived in 2003-4. There is an emphasis on outreach and about half of all services were to clients who were seen for the first time.

**Program context:** Schools are selected based on the percentage of newcomer youth they serve, and the year of arrival of their students (students in their first or second year of arrival are prioritized).

**Program description:**

Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) provides initial settlement services to newly arrived parents and children through systematic contact with them at their local school. SWIS connects newly arrived families to services and resources in the school and the community in order to promote settlement and foster student achievement. With the cooperation of the school, the SWIS worker systematically contacts all newcomer families to orient them to school and community resources and to refer them to specific services. The program is a partnership between the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS), Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the various school boards and settlement service provider organizations. SWIS is an entry point to a broad range of settlement services offered by settlement agencies.

**Program components:**

Services are comprised largely of information and referral. Clients include newcomer students, parents, school staff, and other youth-serving agencies.

Settlement workers (SWs) reach out to **newcomer students and their parents** to:

- Provide information to students as part of the school welcome routine; in collaboration with the school, the SW develops a set of key messages for newcomer students about school and community topics;

- Meet with individual students about specific issues;
- Deliver workshops on key topics, such as school policies and employment.

They work with **school staff** to:

- Respond to staff questions about newcomer issues;
- Facilitate newcomer student involvement in the life of the school;
- Distribute relevant information about newcomer issues (e.g. school demographics).

Finally, they work with **Youth Serving Organizations** to:

- Link the school to newcomer youth-serving organizations in the community;
- Orient youth-serving organizations to the specific needs of newcomer youth.

Students' activities in the summer months are also important. SWIS works with public libraries to facilitate outreach and engagement of newcomer youth over the summer, to make them aware of programs and employment opportunities.

Publications that facilitate this work include:

- An **orientation video** for newcomer youth when they first arrive at schools, to introduce them to the Canadian school system and let them know how they can ask for help;
- A **welcome package in 15 languages** for elementary and secondary students and their families (packages are tailored to Catholic and non-Catholic boards in the English and French systems);
- "**Best Practices for Settlement Workers**," a guide for SWIS School Settlement Workers to enhance their effectiveness in schools.

**Program effectiveness:** 7.

The program has been successfully replicated in six Ontario communities (using the Ottawa MLO model), and has been the subject of annual external evaluations. It has been reviewed in two recent articles: in *Education Today* (Fall 2004) and the fall 2004 issue of *The Register*, the Ontario Principals' Council magazine.

SWIS has not yet been replicated in other jurisdictions, nor have its successes been discussed in a peer-reviewed journal. With its school-based approach and noted success in Ontario, however, it remains one of the few illustrative practices available for documenting best practices for newcomer youth.

**Some relevant findings:**

- Newcomer students and their families receive systemic, proactive settlement services to facilitate their integration into Canadian society;
- Increased awareness and linkages between newcomer families, schools and the community;
- School staff, settlement staff and newcomer families collaborate and share information about each other's needs and resources;

- Parents/guardians better understand how to become actively and effectively involved in their children's education;
- Parents/guardians and school staff have access to cultural interpretation services;
- School staff are better informed about the needs of the newcomer population;
- Newcomer students are engaged in social activities or employment during the summer months.

**Key success factors:**

- As a program for newcomer youth, SWIS places its *services where clients are congregated*: in schools (rather than, like an agency-based approach, being dependent upon attracting clients to another location). SWIS works directly with service providers (teachers and schools) to help them understand and communicate with newcomer youth clients;
- *Focus on youth as the client*, rather than reaching youth through their parents, as traditional settlement programs have done;
- *Recognition of education issues as settlement issues*. Traditionally, schools and school boards have provided information to newcomer students. SWIS is unique in delivering settlement services to youth within the school environment;
- *Building relationships with institutions*. Beyond schools, SWIS has focused over the last four years on forging connections with public libraries as a site to reach out to newcomer youth in the summer months (partly in response to tendency for newcomer youth to stay home in the summer and lose language and integration skills gained in the school year);
- SWIS practices are *based on a successful program* in Ottawa called "Multicultural Liaison Officers" (MLO), a partnership between the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), the Ottawa School Board (now Ottawa Carlton District School Board) and the United Way with a mandate to deliver long term integration support to all immigrants, facilitate the involvement of all immigrant parents in their children's education, promote positive race relations among students and provide cross cultural sensitization to school staff. There are a total of 18 MLOs (9.5 fte funded by CIC), 14 in the English speaking schools and 4 MLOs in the French speaking schools;
- *Recognition that the settlement needs of elementary school age children are best met by providing outreach and services to their parents or guardians, and that the settlement needs of youth are best met by providing outreach and services directly to them*;
- Service delivery information for each client visit is entered into the Online Tracking Information System (OTIS) to *track client characteristics and the type of services* delivered to newcomers;
- SWIS has found that clients are most responsive to meeting with the settlement worker during their first few months in the community.

**Program/project name: Sketch: Working Arts Studio for Street-involved and Homeless Youth**

**Program/project delivery organization:** Sketch operates under the umbrella of *Imago*, with leadership from Phyllis Novak. Not a UWGT member agency, but receives funding through Toronto Enterprise Fund.

**Relevant website(s):**  
[www.sketch.ca](http://www.sketch.ca)

**Target group:** Youth Social Recreation

**Location:** Toronto

**Program budget:** Annual budget \$610,000. Diverse funders, largely foundations (Metcalf Foundation, Counselling Foundation, Trillium Foundation, World Vision, Kensington Foundation, Maple Leafs, Raptors, Bickle Foundation, Hisslop Family Foundation); Toronto Arts Council; City Drug Prevention Grants; Federal National Crime Prevention grant; Toronto Enterprise Fund. No provincial funding, and no core funding. Some corporate funding from CIBC, TD Bank, and an anonymous donor from the Toronto Community Foundation.

**Number served:** 400 youth/year. Sketch is in its ninth year of operation. The organization moved recently from a 900 square foot space to a 6000 square foot space. As a result, the number of youth served has tripled to 400 youth in 2004.

**Participant profile:** Youth aged 15-29 who are street-involved, homeless, or at risk of being homeless. Approximately 80% homeless youth (youth living on the streets, in the shelter system, or “couch-surfing” with friends), and 20% youth at risk of homelessness (many of whom are living in subsidized housing units where they are vulnerable to eviction). About 40% of youth are referred by partnering agencies; 60% come by word of mouth. Sketch is in the process of building its referral base.

**Program context:** Sketch draws youth from across Toronto.

**Program description:** Incorporated in 2002, Sketch is a downtown Toronto arts studio and registered non-profit which provides job and life skills training to homeless and street involved youth aged 15-29. Sketch’s multi-studio art space includes a dark room, multi-media lab, painting studio, sculpting, woodworking workshop, open studio room, and a gallery that will soon be open to the general public. SKETCH uses the arts as a vehicle to restore self-worth, build resilience, and develop skills among young people. Its goal is to enhance the quality of life of homeless or street-involved young people by offering art-making tools, a safe space to express and explore, and opportunities to creatively engage in community life.

**Program components:**

- *Job and Life Skills Training*: programming integrates job and life skill developments with the arts. Workshops and studio time are available in a range of artistic disciplines, including: painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, theatre, music, creative writing and dance;
- *The Drug Project*, a 12 week drug prevention program for young women;
- *FIX*, a bi-annual street arts festival;
- *Wide Open*, a travelling art show;
- *CED Self-Employment Project*;
- Ongoing *skill building workshops* in printmaking, bookbinding, and other artistic skills.
- In the past, Sketch's *Mentoring and Apprenticeship* program has paired youth with art organizations or professional artists to provide youth with tangible employment experiences. This program is currently being redeveloped.

**Program effectiveness: 3**

- Sketch is evaluated annually with assistance from an external facilitator; Sketch's 2004 evaluation will be available in January;
- The Drug Project recently received an award of recognition for excellence in addictions prevention from the Mayor of Toronto (2004).

**Some relevant findings:**

- In 2004, 7 youth went back to post-secondary education; 11 youth finished their high school credits; 40 youth worked through CED Future Options program, acquiring various technical and related skills to give them a leg up for employment, or to help them go back to school;
- Despite known transience of homeless youth population, program sees youth returning each year.

**Critical success factors:**

- Sketch is the only arts program working with homeless/street-involved population in Canada (a few similar programs exist in the US, for example, Philadelphia, but most are larger, and run after-school programs as well as street youth programs); the program draws in youth by focusing on something which appeals to the youth, and then uses the relationship that is developed to reach the youth on other issues;
- Program provides an opportunity for youth to spend a day "in peace," away from the stress of the street, and an opportunity to engage in artistic process;
- Program framework meets youth at different levels and helps them to move through a continuum of addressing housing, health, school, employment.



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**Program/project name: Violence Intervention Project (VIP)**

**Program/project delivery organization:** VIP is a project of East Metro Youth Services, an accredited mental health centre for adolescents aged 12-24 located in East Toronto, providing a wide range of mental health and community development services to the East Toronto community of Scarborough.

**Relevant website(s):** VIP: <http://www.violenceinterventionproject.com>  
East Metro Youth Services: <http://www.emys.on.ca>

**Target group:** Youth aged 12-24

**Location:** Scarborough, with some activities in rest of GTA

**Program budget:** VIP no core funding, but relies on project funding, fee-for-service and donations, and so its annual budget varies. For FY 2004/5, VIP has received \$108,000 in grant funding, as well as specific project funding for RISE of \$120,000.

**Number served:** Youth are reached through various vehicles. From 1997 to 2004, the Project provided anti-violence programming and services to more than 17,000 youth. As well, 63 at-risk youth had worked with the Project to deliver these prevention services as youth participants (sponsored by HRDC) and more than 100 youth participated in the Project's youth volunteer program. In 2004, youth-led workshops on violence prevention reached over 2500.

**Participant profile:** Youth who actively are involved in the delivery of the program, as staff or as volunteers, are primarily youth who have been perpetrators or victims of violence; youth who participate in the programs, in particular the workshops, are part of the general youth population, many of whom may have had some encounter, as perpetrators, victims or witnesses of violence.

**Program description:** The Violence Intervention Project seeks to engage and mobilize youth to contribute their ideas, energy and solutions to address growing concerns regarding school and community safety. It provides youth with skills in the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the opportunity and capacity to effect positive change in their schools and communities. The goals of the project are:

- To reduce/prevent youth violence in the community by providing youth and their community with information, skills and training which promote alternatives to youth violence;
- To engage youth in the creation and delivery of violence prevention services;
- To strengthen and develop partnerships with community groups and organizations in order to reduce/prevent youth violence;
- To give youth greater 'ownership' for the creation of safe communities, and encourage youth to 'make a difference' through civic participation;

- To increase the sense of safety in the target communities.

**Program components:** The Project's work can be described under several headings:

Services:

*Youth internship program for high-risk young adults:* HRSDC Youth Service Canada has funded a number of *VIP* youth programs targeting high-risk youth who are struggling with multiple employment barriers. Through this program, youth between the ages of 17 and 26 gain employment and life skills in preparation to enter the workforce and/or re-enter the school system. These youth work full-time with the Project as violence prevention trainers and mentors, and use their own experiences with violence to help other youth gain the skills necessary for the peaceful resolution of conflicts;

*School and Community Based Violence Prevention Services:* The Project provides targeted violence prevention programming for school and community settings. Project staff work with youth and staff to assess violence prevention needs and to develop and deliver effective violence prevention programming within schools and community locations. Services vary from single session workshops for small groups to intensive interventions targeting the entire school community;

*RISE (Respect In Schools Everywhere):* The RISE program offers an intensive three-year bullying and dating violence prevention program in three Scarborough schools. RISE offers a youth-led youth engagement model to violence prevention;

*Youth Volunteer Program:* The Project provides opportunities for youth to volunteer on various aspects of the program;

*Consultation and Training for Professionals:* The Project offers training for professionals in developing and implementing violence prevention strategies in their own schools and programs.

Workshops and presentations:

- Has provided violence prevention programming (workshops and training) to more than 14,000 youth in schools and community settings across Toronto; topics include: Bullying, Gang Violence, Dating Violence/ Healthy Relationships, Diversity (including Anti-Racism and Homophobia), Anger Management, Conflict Resolution, Boys and Violence, and Girls and Violence;
- Has presented at numerous conferences and forums in Toronto and elsewhere.

Training:

- Provided Bullying training for professional staff from up to 450 youth agencies in four cities across Ontario;
- Provided Bullying training for First Nation community workers in Northern Ontario.

Conference organization:

- Co-hosted *Banking on Youth* conference for 39 schools city-wide in partnership with Students Commission, Toronto Police Services, Correctional Service Canada, and the Esteem Team;
- Hosted three citywide youth anti-violence conferences - *Y PEACE – Youth Promoting Equity And Change Everywhere* - organized by and for youth; more than 400 youth have participated in these conferences since the first Y. P.E.A.C.E. event in 2000.

Program development:

- Developed the *Expelled Students Program*, a therapeutic school program funded by the Ministry of Education for youth fully expelled from the school system for serious infractions;
- Developed the RISE program, an intensive peer-lead Bullying and Dating Violence prevention program in three schools in partnership with Toronto District School Board, Centennial College's Child & Youth Worker program, and Hospital for Sick Children;

Research:

- Participating in research project on Bullying and Dating Violence in partnership with LaMarsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution (York University), University of Winnipeg, and Hospital for Sick Children;
- Published an article on the Project in 'Canada's Children' professional journal;
- Conducted Community Safety Surveys in Scarborough to determine the views of youth about violence in their community;
- Conducting an outcome evaluation research project on the effectiveness of the Bullying and Dating Violence prevention program in partnership with Hospital for Sick Children and the LaMarsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution.

**Other activities:**

- Launched website designed by and for youth:  
[www.violenceinterventionproject.com](http://www.violenceinterventionproject.com);
- Produced several videos about violence prevention;
- Trained in Community Conferencing, a restorative justice extra-judicial measure under the Youth Criminal Justice Act which helps reconcile victims and offenders.

**Program effectiveness:** 1, 3

The Project has not been subject to an extensive evaluation. Youth do complete evaluation forms after workshops, and there is substantial qualitative feedback from youth and staff. However, there is limited quantitative evaluation, particularly in terms of broader impacts in the community.

**Some relevant findings:**

- Roughly 81% of workshop participants believe that they have learned from the Violence Intervention Project workshops, and plan to apply this knowledge in their lives;
- In a similar vein, attendees to the annual *Youth Promoting Equity and Change Everywhere (Y. P.E.A.C.E.)* conference also demonstrate positive impacts from their participation: 27% of conference survey respondents indicated that they would work to promote peace in their schools and communities by trying to prevent violence and not being violent themselves. A further 26% suggested that they would promote

peace by teaching others and communicating and 17% indicated that they would work to treat others well and be respectful.

**Critical success factors:**

- Reliance on a youth engagement philosophy and youth-led approaches, through program design and program implementation, has meant that the Project has very high relevance to and a strong ability to communicate effectively with youth;
- Moreover, youth-to-youth communication, and empowering youth to be the service providers, particularly through youth-led workshops and other activities, allows the Project to have reach and impact;
- Adults play supportive role, in project management and in providing strong research to underpin the approaches and strategies employed;
- Strong partnerships, with youth organizations, schools, Centennial College, YMCA, the police and the relevant research community.

**Program/project name: Youth Assisting Youth**

**Program/project delivery organization:** Youth Assisting Youth  
\*United Way Member Agency

**Relevant website(s):** [www.yay.org](http://www.yay.org)

**Target group:** Mentoring

**Location:** Toronto

**Program budget:** Funding from a diverse range of public and private sources, including: City of Toronto, Dr. Scholl Foundation, Enbridge Gas, HRSDC, Ontario Trillium Foundation, CIC's HOST program (for work with newcomer children), Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (annual grant), Levi Strauss Foundation, TDSB and TCDSB, UWGT.

**Number served:** Program has been operating for 28 years. 13,000 children served since 1976.

**Participant profile:** At-risk children aged 6-15; youth volunteer mentors aged 16-29. A large number of children may have experienced physical or sexual abuse; 80% live in low-income housing, and 85% are from single parent families.

**Program context:** Children are referred to YAY from community resources such as schools, social workers, doctors, community groups and child protection agencies. Youth volunteers are recruited from high schools, colleges, universities, churches and the work place.

**Program description:**

Youth Assisting Youth (YAY) is a community-based program that matches youth volunteers, aged 16-29, in a one-on-one relationship with "at risk" children, aged 6 - 15. These children are experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or cultural adjustment problems. The goal of the organization is to provide a positive role model through a "special friend" relationship. Since 1976, YAY's unique service has helped more than 13,000 children and youth.

A home assessment is completed for each referral received to determine the needs of the child and family, in order to find an appropriate volunteer. After an initial application, orientation and training sessions are held. An in-depth interview by a Match Coordinator, followed by thorough reference and police checks, complete the application process. Matches are made according to common interests, needs and geographic location. The program matches male to male, female to female, and female volunteers with male children. When a suitable volunteer is found for a child, arrangements are made for the

child, family and volunteer to meet. The match continues with monthly supervision by Coordinators and the Parent Support Worker. Consultations with other agencies and professionals are arranged when necessary.

**Program components:**

YAY provides programs designed to benefit both the children at risk referred to their program and the volunteers working with them:

*Peer Mentoring Program:* YAY promotes a “special friend” relationship by matching youth mentors aged 16 - 29, who volunteer on a one-to-one basis, with “at risk” children aged 6 - 15. These children may be experiencing emotional, behavioural, cultural and/or social difficulties. The goal is to provide a positive role model through participation in social and recreational activities. Volunteers spend approximately three hours per week with the child, for a period of no less than one year.

*Pre-match Program:* Established to focus the positive energy of children on the waiting list and provide them with skill and esteem building activities while the search for an appropriate one-on-one mentor takes place. Pre-match children are able to take part in many of YAY's events, except those which involve a lot of supervision. Some Pre-match events are designated as family events, so that a child's family can see what YAY is all about. The goal of the Pre-match program is to get at risk children involved as soon as possible. It provides free activities, a chance to meet other YAY children and volunteers, as well as something constructive to do with their time.

*Tri-mentoring Program:* An opportunity for adults to transfer their wealth of knowledge and experience to a younger generation, through a loosely structured “triangle” of mentorship. This program was developed to help young people to maximize their skills with the assistance of a corporate mentor. A Tri-mentoring relationship focuses on the youth volunteer and a compatible corporate mentor. Individuals need extra support to convert their caring, capabilities, and contributions to society into successful careers.

*GAP Program:* GAP has been designed to offer an alternative to the core mentoring program, allowing for volunteers who do not have the time and/or ability to participate in a long-term one-on-one match with a child. GAP volunteers must be between the ages of 16 - 29, which is the same age bracket as that of peer mentors. To be recognized as a GAP volunteer, an individual must complete between 20 and 40 hours of community service for YAY. GAP volunteers participate in a variety of tasks, such as helping to facilitate monthly events, to mentoring an at risk Pre-match child at a certain event. Volunteers in this program must complete the same workshops as our peer mentors, and after their volunteer hours are completed they can, if they choose, become a peer mentor.

*Saddle-Up for Success (SUFSS):* Young offenders and at risk children participate in therapeutic horseback-riding lessons at two facilities in Toronto and York Region, building self-esteem, self-confidence, and learning the importance of following directions. This project is based on the “City Slickers” program for youth offenders in the US and is delivered in partnership with the Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF).

Delivered with support from Toronto Police divisions, and with financial support from ProAction Cops and Kids: officers from three Toronto Police divisions pick children up and take them to the stables, where both child and officer learn to ride together. Officers from the Mounted Unit of the Toronto Police, based at the Horse Palace, help teach stable management. Funding for first three years: Trillium Foundation, \$176,000; equipment (boots and helmets) provided by OEF. Program currently seeking long-term funding.

*Tamil Focus Groups:* Developed in conjunction with the Toronto Tamil community, who recognized that sexual harassment of female youth was an issue in their community. YAY structured a 20-week program in schools specifically geared for Tamil community, with translation, parent involvement, etc. This resulted in new mentors and child participants from the Tamil community.

*Mentoring Training Program:* Youth volunteers receive on-going support before and during their mentoring matches, including some specialized training.

*Scholarships for youth mentors:* YAY offers scholarships to youth volunteers to further their post-secondary goals. Criteria are not based solely on academic achievement, but rather on various attributes, i.e. volunteer skills, career goals, etc. In order to qualify for a scholarship, a volunteer must have completed a minimum of one year's service to Youth Assisting Youth and be enrolled in a recognized educational institution.

**Program effectiveness: 7**

Agency awards include: Ruth Atkinson Hindmarsh Award; City of Toronto - Safe City Award; The Outstanding Achievement Awards for Volunteerism in Ontario; Rotary Club International Youth Impact Award.

The program is endorsed by: Diana Princess of Wales Foundation; National Crime Prevention Council; Alberta's Youth Justice Program; Toronto District School Board; Toronto District Catholic School Board; Mayors of Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill; Police Chief of Toronto.

**Some findings:**

- 98% success rate for children. Academic achievement one outcome;
- Average length of mentor commitment: 5 years;
- 30% retention of youth mentors from initial orientation. Home visit, two references requirement weeds out many volunteers;
- Program replicated in Vancouver (Vancouver School Board), Australia, England. YAY has developed a franchising operation for other areas in southern Ontario. YAY provides manuals and staff training. Programs established in Kitchener and Brantford; in development in Sudbury and North Bay.

**Key success factors:**

- *Ongoing support for youth mentors.* Consideration of “two client bases”: children and volunteers.
- *Training for mentors.* 20 hours plus three mandatory workshops, with a choice of topics: child management, child abuse awareness, cross-cultural diversity, etc.
- *Family involvement.* YAY staff conduct a home visit with families of participating children; they also do a home visit with families of youth mentors;
- *Flexibility and change in outreach to youth:* YAY constantly assesses the effectiveness of their outreach to potential youth volunteers:
- *Close involvement of school boards* facilitates project success;
- YAY has a standing *youth leadership committee* on their board of directors.



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**Program/project name:** Youth Serving Agencies Network GROW Program (YSAN GROW); formerly, the Youth Servicing Agencies Network National Child Benefit Recreation Program "Investment in Health and Wellness for Youth Through Recreation".

**Program/project delivery organization:** 16 member agencies; program administered by YMCA.

YSAN members: Big Brothers Association of Hamilton/Wentworth; Big Sisters Youth Services; Bridge: From Prison to Community; Catholic Youth Organization; Wesley Urban Ministries; Ministry of Citizenship; City of Hamilton Culture and Recreation Department; Diverse Community Achievement Centre; Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls' Club; City of Hamilton Social and Public Health Services; Living Rock Ministries; STAR of Hamilton-Wentworth; John Howard Society; YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington; YWCA of Hamilton.

Service Providers: YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington membership; Hamilton YWCA membership; Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Club membership; STAR of Hamilton programs; City of Hamilton recreation membership; Catholic Youth Organization – Camp.

**Relevant website(s):**

<http://www.ymcahb.on.ca/>

<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.com/nca/pubs/2002/roundtable/e/sld001.htm>

**Target group:** Youth Social Recreation

**Location:** Hamilton, ON

**Program budget:** Proposed budget for 2005 is \$480,000.00. Funding provided by the City of Hamilton, Social and Public Health Services Division, through the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategies.

**Number served:** YSAN has received referrals for 880 families and about 2100 children in the past 3 years (2001-2004). Currently serving 730 families and 1750 children. Children have been registered in over 7500 programs between 2001 and 2004. The City of Hamilton will continue to fund the program for the fourth year (2005), and is looking at providing funding to service an additional 200 families, for a total of 930 families. The program will hire more coordinators to service the additional families.

**Participant profile:** Children and youth aged six to nineteen. Referrals for the program come through the City of Hamilton to the lead coordinator. Referrals are allocated to a coordinator who contacts families and arranges for a home visit.

**Program context:** This program is only offered to families on social assistance in Hamilton that have children.

**Program description:** YSAN GROW acts as a broker to provide subsidized cultural/recreation programs for children and youth whose families are on social assistance in Hamilton. It's goals are two-fold: to help prevent and reduce the impact on children of living in poverty and to promote attachment to the work force for their parents.

One full-time Lead Coordinator leads all aspects of the program. A number of local coordinators contact families and arrange for home visits. Program objectives are to reduce the depth of child poverty by providing quality subsidized recreation programs that have been found to improve parents' economic adjustment.

**Program components:**

- *Home visits.* Involving families is critical to program success. Coordinators visit families in their homes to facilitate parental involvement in having their children participate in subsidized cultural/recreation programs and to establish a relationship with the family;
- *Follow-up phone calls and letters* keep parents informed of upcoming sessions and contribute to an ongoing relationship with families;
- *Assistance and guidance for families:* coordinators provide information on programs available, assistance with registration, transportation costs when needed, and payment for uniforms and sports equipment, to ensure there are no barriers in accessing recreation programs.

Service Model:

1. One point of access, self referral and need for verification of participation in Ontario Works or ODSSP;
2. "Service broker" model of delivery access programs existing in the community;
3. Co-coordinator facilitates placement of families/children, including home visits, planning, registration and follow-up;
4. Programs selected draw on the interest and aptitudes of the children;
5. Evaluation of the program includes: customer satisfaction survey, Parent/Child Checklist measures the child's social, physical and academic abilities.

Programs for children and youth fall into two categories:

1. Recreation – organized sports, lessons, parent and child activities;
2. Culture and Art – music, dance and art activities.

**Program effectiveness: 4**

Evaluations use the Auchenbach Parent-Child Checklist, which measures a child's academic, social, and physical competence;

**Some relevant findings:**

- Coordinators have negotiated subsidies for children in a variety of cultural and recreation venues including: YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington, Hamilton YWCA,

Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Club, Hamilton Conservatory of the Arts, Steps Dance, Great Big Theatre Company, Stoney Creek Alliance of Music, Regionettes Gym Club, Hamilton School of Music and Waterdown Bowling. New partnerships are negotiated on an ongoing basis;

- Evaluation results show the program is helping the “most needy” children in terms of their academic, social and physical competence. In the first two years of the program, the overall competence scores of participating children has shown improvement;
- As shown by feedback from parents, participation in the YSAN program has helped children and their families develop significantly healthier lifestyles;
- The program is a model for other communities; similar programs have been established with assistance from YSAN in Niagara, Peel and Calgary.

This program arose out of two parallel studies conducted by Gina Browne (McMaster University): “When the Bough Breaks” and “Benefiting all the Beneficiaries of Social Assistance.” In these studies, social assistance mothers with children were divided in a number of groups: those who received no extra treatment; those who received extensive case management, with health promotion, recreation/skills development for children, employment retraining, childcare services; meanwhile, the other groups got one of these interventions. After two years, of those with no extra treatment, 10% had left social assistance; those with full supports, 25% had left; those with just recreation for the children saw 20% leave. In fact, in terms of net cost, the recreation only intervention paid for itself within one year, and results in considerable savings after four years, including the use of other services.

**Critical success factors:**

- *Involving families.* This fits with recommendations from the literature reviews;
- Program was modelled on *rigorously evaluated experimental pilot project*, which established that providing children with quality recreation programs resulted in a greater exit rate from social assistance for their families, improved parents' mental health, improved the academic, social and vocational competence of children for children with disorders, and improved the overall lifestyle of children and their parents;
- *Case management:* the program has a comprehensive database which enables tracking of all families within the program, as well as financial assistance provided to those families.

**Program/project name: YouthBuild**

**Program/project delivery organization:** Founded in 1990, YouthBuild is a national non-profit organization that supports a nationwide network of 200 local YouthBuild programs.

**Relevant website(s):** <http://www.youthbuild.org>  
2003 evaluation: <http://www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/YouthBuild.pdf>

**Target group:** Very low-income high school dropouts aged 16-24 years old (very low income defined as income that does not exceed 50% of the median family income for the area). Up to 25% of the participants may have higher incomes or a high school diploma, but they must have educational needs that justify their inclusion in the program.

**Location:** United States

**Program budget:** US government allocation to YouthBuild FY2003: US\$ 60 million; average cost per participant: approximately US \$ 15,000.

**Number served:** Annually, approximately 200 programs in 44 states; average number of youth in one program: 35. Since 1994, YouthBuild has had over 40,000 participants and has produced over 12,000 units of affordable housing.

**Participant profile:** Average age: 19.3 years old; 72% males, 28% females; on entrance: 85% with GED or high school diploma 29% on public assistance; 18% living in public housing; 13% convicted of a felony. Many have other issues, such as substance abuse and mental health challenges.

**Program context:** Programs are typically located in distressed neighbourhoods. The programs not only target at-risk youth in those neighbourhoods, but the housing that is built is also made available as affordable housing: 80% of YouthBuild housing must be occupied by households earning no more than 60% of the median income in the area.

**Program description:** In YouthBuild programs, unemployed and undereducated young people work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning construction skills by building or renovating affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. Strong emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to success.

**Program components:** Youth participate in a combination of workforce development, youth development and educational activities. Participants are divided into two crews: while one crew works at a construction site for one week, the other is in the classroom, then they switch. Thus, participants attend academic classes for 50% of their program time, preparing for their GED or high school diploma. They earn a living allowance during their full-time participation. Other programs:

- Individual counselling;

- Personal mentoring;
- Peer support groups;
- Driver’s license training;
- Recreation, community service and cultural activities;
- Many programs offer postsecondary educational awards;
- A major emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for youth to develop their leadership ability through program governance and involvement in community life.

**Program effectiveness:** 3, 4, 7

YouthBuild has been independently evaluated, however it was a limited quantitative evaluation (no control group, limited random approach). That being said, the study is a strong qualitative evaluation. The YouthBuild approach is regularly replicated in communities across the United States as well as other countries.

**Some relevant findings:** For the period 1998-2002:

- 60% of participants graduated from the program;
- Approximately 36% of youth who entered the program without their GED or high school diploma obtained it;
- 83% returned to school or found employment.

A survey of YouthBuild graduates conducted in 2002/3 found the following:

Before and after the program (%):

	Before	After
Has a GED or diploma	21.7	59.2
Used hard drugs	29.7	6.4
Arrested	55.6	26.2
Been homeless	26.0	11.7

**Critical success factors:**

- Holistic approach of education, youth development and workforce development;
- The program sets high expectations and high standards;
- Staff seek to create a caring and supportive family-like environment;
- High quality instructors and staff;
- The construction work produces tangible results, which is valued by participants.