Addressing the Needs of Homeless Youth Through Housing, Education, and Career Services in Kingston, Ontario, Canada

by

Sumi Yang

A report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning
In conformity with the requirements for
The degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

April, 2011

Addressing the Needs of Homeless Youth Through Housing,

Education, and Career Services in Kingston, Ontario, Canada

by

Sumi Yang

A report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning
In conformity with the requirements for
The degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

April, 2011

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank the staff and youth in Kingston Youth Shelter, Kingston Youth Employment Services, and Passage House. Without their knowledge and willingness to participate, this project would not have been possible.

I would also like to extended my special thanks to the following persons, who have helped tremendously during my academic career at Queen's University:

My report supervisor, Dr. Patricia Streich from the School of Urban and Regional Planning, Queen's University, my parents, and my friends from China, Canada, and the United States. Without their unconditional support and encouragement, I could not have completed my Master's degree at Queen's University. Thank you all again very much!

Executive Summary

Youth homelessness is experienced by youth between ages of 16-24, where they are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These youth typically lack social structures, stability, and sense of security in their lives. They also face many issues such as drugs, violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy. In the past decade, youth homelessness has become an increasingly important issue in Canada. Many organizations such as Covenant House in Toronto and Crisis House in Calgary are designed specifically to help homeless youth in finding shelter spaces. However, in smaller cities such as Kingston, there is a lack of reports on the conditions of homeless youth. The aim of this master's report is to fill the gaps and provide a research base for future studies. The report provides a detailed literature review on the subject of youth homelessness, and an analysis of how agencies have met the needs of homeless youth in Kingston based on interviews with youth and agencies to identify gaps in services. The agencies interviewed include Kingston Youth Shelter (KYS), Kingston Youth Employment Services, and Passage House.

The interview results show that with the exception of employment needs, all other agencies have addressed the needs of homeless youth in their service areas respectively. From the interview results, it is determined that in Kingston, there is a range of shelters from emergency shelters to longer term housing. Therefore, homeless youth have the opportunity to move along the system from Kingston Youth Shelter to Passage House to Journey House, and living independently. Each stage serves a purpose. For instance, KYS helps youth

establish a daily routine, and provides a sense of stability for homeless youth. Passage House provides life skills and encourages interaction between peers by promoting a shared living environment. Journey House gives youth more space to experience the concept of living independently. These steps allow homeless youth to move through the system as they become more familiar with living independently. The education system including Second Chance and Street Smart offers youth an opportunity to complete high school at their own pace, and increases their chances of receiving post secondary education. Improving their education is expected to improve their life and work opportunities and the chances for success in their lives. Even though KEYS do not currently offer services specifically for homeless youth, it is offering services that homeless youth can take advantage of, such as free job training and career counseling. With these services available to homeless youth in Kingston, it is reasonable to expect that youth who experience homelessness have some opportunities to improve their housing, education and employment opportunities.

Several gaps were identified in the services provided by the agencies. For example, Kingston Youth Shelter is currently lacking daytime programming and extended operational hours for youth to use the facilities on a regular basis. The shared-living model was identified as the top priority in the future improvements of services at Passage House. For KEYS, the gap identified was that the agency currently does not offer services that specifically target homeless youth.

To conclude, several recommendations tailored for the agencies, the City of Kingston as well as general researchers were suggested. The following are a summary of a few key points that should be taken from this research:

1. The city should increase collaboration with the agencies to conduct statisitcal analysis and produce a detailed report with regard to the current conditions of homeless youth in Kingston, and obtain an estimate of the number of youth that needs assistance.

2. The agencies need to conduct needs assessment and feasibility analysis to determine if the current service approach is efficient, and if funding is reaching the area that is most in need.

3. Federal and Provincial Governments should provide necessary fundings to aid the development of a comprehensive program in Canada that focuses on researching the topic of youth homelessness, and providing services to homeless youth.

4. The agenices need to increase outreach and run campaigns to raise awareness within the Kingston community with regard to the homeless youth population.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the past decade, youth homelessness has become an increasingly important issue in Canada. Government reports such as *Street Youth in Canada* (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006) and *Homelessness in Toronto* (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2004) have focused on the needs of young people living on the street or in shelters. Many organizations such as Covenant House in Toronto and Crisis House in Calgary are designed specifically to help homeless youth in finding shelter spaces. However, in smaller cities such as Kingston, there is a lack of reports on the conditions of homeless youth. Between 2001 and 2004, the United Way in Kingston published a yearly report on the homeless population in Kingston and homeless youth was a component of the report. However, no studies have been conducted on homeless youth and agencies that help this population in the past five years.

This master's report is designed to fill the gaps and provide a research base for future studies. The report provides a detailed literature review on the subject of youth homelessness and an analysis of how agencies have met the needs of homeless youth in Kingston based on interviews with youth and agencies to identify gaps in services. The conclusions chapter provides recommendations on how services can be improved.

1.2 Definition of Homeless Youth

Youth homelessness refers to youth who are either homeless, at risk of become homeless, or "caught in a cycle of homelessness for whatever reason" (Raising the Roof, 2009). Definitions of homeless youth vary especially with respect to the age. In Kingston, the Kingston Youth Shelter defines homeless youth as youth between 16 and 24 years of age who may be staying at a shelter or "couch surfing". These youth typically lack social structures, stability, and sense of security in their lives. They also face many issues such as drugs, violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy. Youth who stay at shelters are visible to the public and are most noticeable. Youth who are "couch surfing" experience a condition often referred to as hidden homelessness. They are not visible to the public, and often are not included in statistics. For the purpose of this report, since there are no data on the 'hidden homeless youth', homeless youth are defined as youth between ages 18-24 who currently use shelter services.

1.3 Kingston Community Profile

Kingston is a city located in Eastern Ontario with a population of 117,210 excluding students in post-secondary education institutions (Statistics Canada, 2006). It is centrally located in between Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. City officials, shelter staff and others in Kingston have suggested that, due to its geographic location, homeless individuals migrate from bigger cities to Kingston. Municipal social services staff has also suggested in the past that there may be

some in-migration of youth from Frontenac County and other surrounding rural areas lacking services for youth. However, there is no concrete evidence to support this migration theory. As a result, the homeless population has grown rapidly in recent years. The most up-to-date report card on homelessness published in 2004 suggested that the use of Kingston's emergency shelters increased by 304% compared to 1999 (United Way, 2004). There are currently no data available for the shelter usage of the homeless youth in Kingston. After the recent economic downturn, it might be expected that this trend has continued. However, there are no data available for the period from 2004 to 2011.

According to a survey conducted by Home Based Housing in 2002 on youth homelessness in Kingston, there were approximately 100 youth living on the street or in the youth shelter (Home Base Housing, 2002). While this may not be perceived as a big problem compared to larger cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, it is a major issue for Kingston due to the lack of shelter spaces. In fact, the gap in shelter spaces was estimated to be 20% in 2004 and increasing rather rapidly (The United Way serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, 2004). No detailed studies have been conducted with statistics on homeless youth in Kingston.

The city has a median family income of $67,908 as of 2005, comparable to that of the provincial median income. The 2006 low-income rate was at 10%, also similar to that of the provincial rate (statcan, 2006). However, there is a concentration of low-income families in the area of North Kingston (City of

Kingston, 2011). Kingston has a well-educated population with 22% of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher. However, 19% of the Kingston population in 2006 had not graduated from high school (Statistics Canada, 2006).

In Kingston, 38% of households led by youth aged 25 or younger have very low incomes, in the lowest ten percent of the household income profile (City of Kingston, 2011). This is partly due to their lack of employment opportunities. Low-income households in Kingston face serious problems in finding affordable housing in Kingston because of high rents and the very low vacancy rate for rental units. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in 2006 was $895/month (Statistics Canada, 2006), and according to a United Way report (2009), the average rent in Kingston has increased between 14.6% and 55.9% over the past five years. Therefore, with their low incomes, Kingston youth face increasing difficulties finding housing they can afford and this contributes to the youth homelessness in this area.

1.4 Agency Background

Kingston has various agencies that provide services for homeless youth including three shelters, and employment and education supports. The following section provides brief background information on the agencies that were interviewed for this report.

1.4.1 Kingston Youth Shelter

Kingston Youth Shelter was established in 1999 as a pilot project under the supervision of the Social Planning Council of Kingston and Area. The shelter

was kept running for only 6 months before shutting down. However, after careful consideration, the Kingston Youth Shelter was reopened in 2000 as a not-for-profit organization that provided emergency shelter spaces for youth between the ages of 16 to 24. It became a United Way Member Agency shortly after establishment. The shelter "strives to make a difference in the lives of homeless youth by offering a safe and supportive emergency shelter that encourages their growth and provides them with access to community resources" (Kingston Youth Shelter, 2000). There are currently 15 beds available for youth both male and female. Referrals are not required meaning that any youth can gain access to the services provided by the shelter. In addition to providing shelter spaces for youth, the Kingston Youth Shelter also provides counseling and life skills training to further prepare youth to gain independence when they are over the age limit to use the services of the youth shelter (Kingston Youth Shelter, 2000). According to the director, the shelter is currently planning on expanding and increasing the service threshold in the near future to meet the demand.

1.4.2 KEYS

Kingston Employment Youth Services was founded in 1983 first as a branch of the John Howard Society (KEYS, 2011). The goal of this organization is to assist residents of Kingston and the surrounding areas finding the best job opportunities to realize their full potential (KEYS, 2011). This is achieved by conducting various programs related to job searching, resume writing, and interview preparations. KEYS focuses on helping a diverse population to attain their career goals, including youth, adults, persons with disabilities, students, and

recent immigrants (KEYS, 2011). It has helped many Kingston residents over its 27-year history. Homeless youth utilize the services provided by KEYS to find temporary or permanent employment opportunities. Directors of youth shelters or social workers refer youth to KEYS.

1.4.3 Passage House/ Home Based Housing

Home Base Housing is a not-for-profit organization that provides supportive housing in Kingston. It is a United Way membership agency. It was established in 1987 and is based on a local version of the Housing First principle (Home Base Housing, 2010). Home Base Housing supports people aged 16 and over who are homeless or do not have access to stable housing. Passage House was established under the Youth Service Program run by Home Based Housing (Home Base Housing, 2010). Youth Services believe in positive attitudes and responsibility (Home Base Housing, 2010). Unlike temporary youth shelters, Passage House is a long-term housing option for at risk youth. Youth live in a shared living arrangement with other peers. They are expected to go to school, participate in educational programs, and prepare to live independently after they leave Passage House. There are programs geared toward financial management, job training, relationship building, and community outreach (Home Base Housing, 2010).

1.5 Outline of this Report

This report is organized into five chapters. Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 discusses the methodology used in this research and the

limitations of the research method. Chapter 3 provides a literature review on

youth homelessness. Chapter 4 presents the results of a survey of agencies and

homeless youth conducted in this research. The conclusions and

recommendations from this research are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology utilized to answer the research questions. This chapter describes methods considered and provides rationale for the chosen method and the limitations of the method throughout this chapter and at the end. Basic backgrounds of agencies interviewed are also provided.

2.1 Research Questions

This study investigated the following three questions:

1. How are the existing service networks in Kingston assisting homeless youth in dealing with their needs?

2. What are the existing gaps in the aforementioned service networks?

3. How could current service planning approaches be improved to better meet the needs of homeless youth?

Youth homelessness is a major social issue concerning the planning for and co-ordination of human services. Finding effective ways to address the needs of homeless youth can contribute to increased well-being of communities and their surroundings. The findings of the report provided an inside view for planners on youth homelessness issues in Kingston, and a base for further research.

2.2 Research Method

This research employed a case study method. It allows for in-depth analysis on both homeless youth in Kingston and the agencies serving them. The case study method consists of interviews and a literature review. Interviews were conducted to understand the needs of homeless youth in Kingston, and the procedures that agencies were undertaking to address these needs. The literature review provided a comprehensive background on the topic, and assisted in the analysis of the case study information and formulation of study recommendations. This report also utilized multiple-case holistic designs to fulfill the objective of the research (Yin, 2009). Each case could become a stand-alone research project when separated. However, the main objective of this research was to offer a comprehensive overview of the services provided to meet the needs of homeless youth and identify potential gaps in those services.

The mixed-method approach was another method often employed to conduct analysis on homelessness in general. It involves 'methodological triangulation', which allows for the integration between qualitative and quantitative data to address the research question (Gaber and Gaber, 2007). The design of the mixed-method approach consists of two key strategies, which are the 'within method' and the 'between method' (Gaber and Gaber, 2007). The 'within method' takes one manner of collecting information and utilizes different strategies to obtain it, which is better fitting for the purpose of this study. However, the magnitude of conducting a mixed-method research is too great for the purpose of this report, and cannot be completed within the required time

frame. Therefore, the mixed-method approach was not chosen as the preferred method.

The report focuses on the housing, education, and career needs of homeless youth. The information was gathered through interviews with organizations that serve homeless youth and a sample of homeless youth themselves. Approximately 20 to 25 homeless youth and three key organizations were interviewed. The key organizations included Kingston Youth Shelter, Passage House, and Kingston Youth Employment Service. Most local non-profit organizations are willing to work with students from Queen's University, and to ensure the availability of these organizations, initial contacts were made well in advance. The research involved interviews with underprivileged youth. In compliance with the university policy, an ethical review form was submitted for approval before conducting any interviews. The approval was received on December 20, 2010. All interviews were conducted in controlled environments mostly within the organizations' facilities. This was a preventive measure to ensure the well-being of the interviewees. During the interview process, if the interviewees became emotionally distressed or mentally unstable, a staff member familiar with his/her conditions was readily available to assist.

Kingston is a relatively small city with only a few agencies providing particular types of human services. The agencies involved with services for homeless youth for this paper were selected through online research, and referrals by the report's faculty supervisor and other agencies. The head of each agency helped with the recruitment of homeless youth to participate in the

interview process. Due to the nature of the topic, the ethics approval process only permitted the interviews to be conducted on a limited number of agencies; particularly considering many of these agencies' clients were minors. For example, Street Smart was selected as an agency of choice in initial planning. However, the General Ethics Board requested a formal letter of approval from the Limestone District School Board for Street Smart to participate in the research because Street Smart is an educational institute funded by this Board.   It was determined that it could take 6 weeks or more to obtain a formal letter of approval from the school board. Due to the limited time frame to conduct the research, I decided to eliminate Street Smart as a potential interviewee for this study. Therefore, information related to the educational needs of homeless youth was obtained from the youth themselves and from other agencies that work with these youth. To continue the intended study, the interview questions were modified without compromising the scope of the research for the report.

2.3 Data Analysis

The literature review and initial contact with the Kingston Youth Shelter was used as the basis of the evaluation criteria. The director of the Kingston Youth Shelter had kindly helped to identify issues homeless youth face in Kingston such as difficulties in finding jobs, finding an affordable rental unit, and continuing their education. These issues were incorporated as part of the interview questions to both the agencies and homeless youth. The results from the interviews were then cross-examined to identify possible gaps. Final

recommendations were made based on the gaps identified. The findings and recommendations are outlined in chapter 4 and chapter 5 of this report.

2.4 Generalizations and Validity of the Research

The contributions of this report could have the potential to become useful in the local context. Therefore, the validity, reliability, and generalizability of this report are crucial. Analytic generalization is applicable in this report. Yin (2009), states that analytic generalization uses a developed theory to compare results of the case study. The case study method is a proven method that is frequently used in research on youth homelessness. The results of this study can be easily compared to studies within the same parameters to assess whether services received by youth in Kingston are similar to those received by homeless youth who reside in other cities. At the same time, future research studies in other localities could be conducted utilizing the methods used for this research in Kingston to provide comparable research findings.

However, the current research is specific to the case of homeless youth in Kingston and the recommendations are context specific. The external review process used for this report assisted in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the findings. The external reviewer was someone with a detailed level of knowledge regarding topics relating to homeless youth. The opinion of the reviewer was vital to ensure the reliability of the findings. Furthermore, the reliability of this report could be further tested in the future when other

researchers use the same method to examine the same issue and produce identical results.

2.5 Limitations

There were several limitations when utilizing the case study method for this report. The results generated from the small sample size of the homeless youth interviewed may not be as accurate as data gathered from a larger sample size. However, due to lack of funding and time constraints, the selected sample size was sufficient to investigate the research questions in the study given the scope of the paper.

Limitations may also exist when conducting the interview. When interviews are conducted, there are always potential for bias. The agencies may answer the interview questions one way to address certain needs of the agency. Homeless youth may attempt to answer in other manners beneficial to them. This limitation affects the accuracy of this study to a certain degree.

The other limitation of the method is that the case study is context specific. Although the method is generalizable, the result is specific to Kingston and may not be generalizable to other cities.

However, despite limitations discussed throughout this section, the information gathered provides a comprehensive overview of the issues faced by the youth, and some of the services provided for homeless youth in Kingston, Ontario.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Homelessness has become an exceedingly important issue in Canada. Due to the current economic downturn, the number of homeless has increased dramatically over the past few years (Filteau, 2009). Homeless youth as a special group has grown fast (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). It is reported that more than 150,000 youth are living on the streets in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). They are constantly exposed to problems such as drugs, violence, STDs, and early pregnancy (Kurt D. Johnson, 2005, Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). In addition, homeless youth often face serious challenges in life including lack of education, shelter, medical care, and most importantly the family caring that a typical teenager would receive (Kurt D. Johnson, 2005). This literature review will explore some of the key literature available both in Canada and in the United States regarding homeless youth. The literature denotes academic sources from planning, public health journals, books, and government reports in Canada and the United States.

3.1 Key Terms Clarification

The term 'homeless youth' is often used to include many young people surviving in similar living conditions including runaways, throwaways, unaccompanied, and street youth (Moore, 2005). These terms often overlap each other, thus it is common that homeless youth is used as a general term to reduce confusions. However, it is important to distinguish the differences between each

of the terms when considering the issues they face and their human services needs.

Some confusion in terminology is found in the academic literature between "homeless youth" and "street youth". According to the California Department of Education, "homeless youth" refers to youth who lack permanent, sufficient nighttime housing (California Department of Education, 2010). This definition includes young people who share temporary housing with friends, living in motels, shelters, cars, and other inadequate environments (California Department of Education, 2010). These youth are homeless mostly due to financial hardships. However, homeless youth constitutes only one part of the street youth. The organization Street Connect describes street youth as "diverse, complex and heterogeneous" (Street Connect, 2005). These are young adults between ages 16 and 24 coming from various backgrounds, such as runaways, throwaways, young single moms, and refugees from other countries (Street Connect, 2005).

There is no official definition available for 'throwaway youth'. However, it is generally interpreted as young people who are asked by parents and legal guardians to leave home for at least one night (Street Connect, 2005). The term 'runaways' is defined as young people who leave home without the permission of the parents or a legal guardian (Street Connect, 2005). Youth are more like to emphasize the 'throwaway' aspect of the incidents, where parents are more like to stress the 'runaway' aspect to protect their own rights.

In many cases, the age of the youth is a determining factor in differentiating between the key terms. For example, homeless youth is defined as no more than 21 years old according to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in the United States (42 U.S.C. 5732a.). On the other hand, the same Act defined runaways as someone under 18 years old who is not considered as an adult (42 U.S.C. 5732a.). It can be quite misleading in many ways to define such terms using age as a key determinant. In Canada, homeless youth is interpreted as youth 15 to 24 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006).

3.2 Why Homeless Youth?

The literature has identified several factors as the main causes of youth homelessness. These factors include residential instability, economic problems, and family problems/violence at home (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006; Aratani, 2009).

Family problems are recognized as one of the main predictors of youth homelessness. More than 80% of homeless youth reported experiencing some types of family problems while at home. These often include family violence, parental drug abuse, and divorce (Aratani, 2009). Youth are more likely to leave a dysfunctional home to escape unpleasant living environments, simply because it adds stress in their lives. Others are asked to leave their homes because of the conflicts with their parents related to issues such as the children's sexual orientation, early pregnancy, and drug abuse (Aratani, 2009).

Economic factors often lead to youth homelessness especially in the current economy. Youth rely on parents for economic support. Thus the economic conditions of the parents have direct correlations with whether or not youth becomes homeless. One US study using a sample of 1200 homeless youth showed that over 40% of the youth have come from families that receive government assistance and welfare (Administration for Children and Families, 1995). Many of the youth are asked to leave their own home due to the fact that their parents cannot even support themselves. Studies have also shown that these homeless youth are more likely to come from a single parent family, and most of the families are female headed (Administration for Children and Families, 1995).

Residential instability is another reason that leads to youth homelessness. Stable shelter is often considered as the determining factor of social stability. Youth are still relying on living at home at their age. If the parents cannot afford to keep their family home, the children are also at risk of homelessness. A recent study by U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development pointed out that about 40% of the families with children age 17 or younger have reported themselves as unable to support the cost of the basic housing needs. Literature has repeatedly shown that the majority of homeless youth have at one point lived in a friend's house, homeless shelters, foster homes, or treatment centers for drugs and alcohol because their parents cannot afford for them to live at home (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998). The lack of

stable housing means lacking basic needs, results in insecurity, and most likely influences youth psychologically.

3.3 Youth Homeless Shelter/ Housing Issues

One of the key factors of youth homelessness is residential instability. Lack of affordable housing and shelters are two key contributors to this issue. It is crucial for homeless youth to have stable living arrangements. Ensign (1997) studied the statistical difference between street youth and youth who live in youth shelters. The results showed that youth who live in a shelter are less likely to be involved in high-risk activities such as unprotected sex, alcohol and drug abuse, and street violence. It showed that simply providing stable shelter can change lives. However, due to the current economic downturn, many youth shelters cannot afford to stay open due to funding cuts. That puts more youth on the street of the United States and Canada because homeless youth are afraid to go to adult shelters (Ensign, 1997).

Of the literature reviewed (Ensign, 1997; Hutson, 2000; Straka, 2001; Straka, 2002; Van Leeuwen, 2005), only Hutson (2000) has provided a solution for this issue in the report titled *Community Self-build for Young Homeless People: Problems and Potential*. In this report, Hutson (2000) suggested that a better way to provide youth homeless shelters might just be to teach them how to build one. This concept presents several benefits including good quality housing and job opportunities for the homeless youth. Most importantly, it keeps them occupied so they can stay out of trouble, and gain skills necessary to survive and even find a steady job in the future.

Most research on housing issues of homeless youth is conducted through interviews and review of agency reports. The interviews gather information from the homeless youth themselves. The agency reports on the other hand emphasize collecting data on the agencies. Combining two research methods can often provide a complete and comprehensive report on the issues regarding youth homeless shelters.

3.4 Canadian Context

In Canada, both the federal government and municipal governments have implemented tactics and strategies to resolve the issue of youth homelessness. This section outlines some of the key programs and reports by the federal government and municipal governments of Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Kingston. While Kingston is smaller in size, it shares many of the same problems faced by big cities regarding youth homelessness.

3.4.1 National Homelessness Initiative

To alleviate the homeless problem in Canada, the Canadian Government introduced the National Homelessness Initiative in 1999 (HRSDC, 2006). The initiative called for strategic partnerships that would address needs of the homeless people, reduce homelessness, and increase awareness of homelessness (HRSDC, 2006). The initiative included youth homelessness as a main component and sought to address this component by allocating funds to support the Youth Employment Strategy. The Youth Employment Strategy is intended to help youth make the transiton to the job market (HRSDC, 2006). Addressing the career needs of homeless youth has become a priority of the

Youth Employment Strategy program. In addition to providing career service, the National Homeleness Initiative also pledged to provide funding for additional shelter spaces across Canada (HRSDC, 2006).

3.4.2 Housing First Model

Originally, a concept developed in New York, the "Housing First" approach has been widely implemented in cities across North America. In Canada, it was first introduced in Toronto. The approach is based on the idea that social and economic barriers can be addressed once the person has access to stable housing (Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, 2007). This approach addresses the housing instability issue faced by many homeless youth. The City of Toronto has found that teaching lifeskills or making referrals to service agencies before the person is permanently housed is not an effective way to eliminate homelessness (United Way Serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, 2009). Toronto's "Streets to Homes" program was established to address street homelessness and help people by getting them into a stable housing situation (United Way Serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, 2009). The City of Vancouver implemented a similar approach by providing housing first to homeless people, and then the services needed to teach the necessary skills once they are in a stable housing situation (United Way Serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, 2009).

3.4.3 Street Needs Assessment

The Street Needs Assessment is an approach created by the Toronto City Council in 2005 to determine the needs of homeless individuals and to better

understands the demographics of where they are located (Shleter, Support and Housing Administration, 2006). The survey was conducted in 2005 and 2009. The 2005 report targeted homeless individuals living outdoors. The 2009 report showed a 51% decrease in people living outdoors, and an increase in shelter space (Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, 2009). The City of Toronto along with the Ontario Provincial Government were able to create more shelter spaces in a five year span to accommodate the housing needs of homeless individuals even in the current economic conditions. In assessing the top need of homeless, more people expressed interest in finding permanent housing (Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, 2009). This finding is consistent with the intention of the Housing First Model implemented by the City of Toronto. The results of the 2006 survey were used in many ways by governments and agencies especially in creating more funding opportunities to service agencies. Although the Street Needs Assessment does not have a direct effect on homeless youth, it does however address many service needs of this population.

3.4.4 Homeless Score Card Report Ottawa

A report card is a tool to evaluate the performance of a particular program. It has other benefits such as identifying community problems, monitoring changes, raising public awareness, and assisting in public education (The Alliance to End Homelessness, 2004). In Canada, cities such as Toronto, Halifax, and Calgary use the report card system for the assessment of homelessness in their cities. Indicators that have been used in building a homelessness report card often include measures such as housing supply, housing demand, support

services, affordability, and action plan on homelessness (The Alliance to End Homelessness, 2004).

In Ottawa, the Alliance to End Homelessness has produced a report card on ending homelessness every year from 2004 to 2008 (The Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008). The 2004 report was a baseline to measure the conditions of homeless individuals in Ottawa. Other reports build on the baseline report. The basic criteria for the report card are housing, income, homelessness, and length of shelter stay (The Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008). The 2008 report saw an 27% increase in shelter use among youth (The Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008). The report card system was useful due to the fact that it outlined the most pressing needs of homeless individual at the time and allowed agencies in Ottawa to form action plans to resolve the problems efficiently. Homeless youth as a part of the homeless population benefit from this system when their needs are indicated by the report card as a priority.

3.4.5 Kingston Approach

In Kingston, the United Way publishes occasional reports on housing and homelessness. Its reports have outlined some of the main causes of homelessness along with the City of Kingston's current methods for addressing it. The report indicates that while Kingston has a low unemployment rate and high average income compared to the national average, the working class still struggles to make ends meet. The report recognized the importance of having stable housing, and proposed the Housing First model to end street homelessness (United Way Serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington,

2009). Organizations such as Kingston Youth Shelter and Passage House provide services to promote housing stability for youth which is consistent with this model.

3.5 Other Problems for Homeless Youth

Most of the research on the health conditions of homeless youth focuses on subcategories of mental health issues, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual behavior/ HIV, pregnancy risk, and violence and assault. These are all interrelated issues for homeless youth. The literature suggests that, if homeless youth are addicted to alcohol and drugs, they are also likely to suffer from mental health issues, and more likely to engage in street violence, become pregnant at an early age, or to suffer from HIV.

3.5.1 Mental Health Issue

The mental health conditions of homeless youth and runaways seem to be under-researched before the late 1990s. In fact, there were only two articles in the 1980s providing in-depth analysis of the mental health condition of this special population (Rotheram-Borus, 1993; Stiffman, 1989). However, there is now a wealth of information and literature available regarding such issues in both the United States and Canada mostly focus on depression, post traumatic disorders, and suicide (Ayerst, 1999; Kevin A. Yoder, 1998; Sean A. Kidd, 2002; Angela J. Stewart, 2004).

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among all youth between ages of 15-24 (Andrus et al., 1991). Among homeless youth, suicide is the leading cause of death and they are 11 times more likely to have attempted

suicide (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Females are three times more likely to have the thought of committing suicide than males (Overholser et al., 1990). According to Bolger et al. (1989), Caucasians are more likely to commit suicide than African Americans or other non-caucasian adolescents.

Many have attempted to explain the high suicide rate in homeless youth using different methods. The method used by Kevin A. Yoder (1998) called "life course theory" tries to explain the relations between homeless youth and suicide rates. The theory assumes human development involves person-environment interaction, and people tend to select new environments that most resemble the old environment (Kevin A. Yoder, 1998). Homeless youth have a higher chance of getting into abusive situations because they often come from families with abusive histories (Kevin A. Yoder, 1998). Furthermore, the literature has demonstrated that causes for homeless youth to commit suicide (such as abuse and depression) are the same as the reasons that made them runaway from families and become homeless.

One gap in the literature reviewed is the lack of information regarding the mental health conditions of the immigrant population, many of whom have already become homeless or may become homeless in the near future.

3.5.2 Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse is very common among the homeless youth, and has been described as a way for them to cope with the hazardous street environment and possibly forget about their abusive past (Smart and Adlaf, 1991). It can also diminish the loneliness and helplessness they experience

(Singer et al., 1989). The literature has suggested that the percentage of homeless youth experimenting with alcohol and drugs is much higher than that of youth who are not homeless (Baron, 1999; Joshua Aaron Ginzler, 2003; Smart and Adlaf, 1991; Kurt D. Johnson, 2005). Johnson (2005), in his report *Substance Abuse Disorders Among Homeless and Runaway Adolescents,* suggested that 93% of the homeless youth have experience with marijuana in Hollywood compared to 49% among high school seniors in Hollywood. Even though the study was conducted in one geographic district, it is still clear that the rates of drug abuse among homeless youth and runaways are much higher than for youth who are not homeless. The literature also notes that the actions of parents have long lasting effects on youth (Baron, 1999; Joshua Aaron Ginzler, 2003; Smart and Adlaf, 1991; Kurt D. Johnson, 2005). Multiple studies have indicated that parental actions have effects on the behaviors of homeless youth (Joshua Aaron Ginzler, 2003; smart and Adlaf, 1991; Kurt D. Johnson, 2005). If the parents are addicted to drugs and alcohol, their children have a higher chance of becoming addicted to alcohol and drugs.

Most of the research on alcohol and drug abuse was completed through selective interviews. For example, Baron's (1999) report on street youth substance use in Edmonton was conducted by selecting a group of males under 24 years of age. The research was carried out by interviewing selected candidates and collecting relevant data. Each candidate who agrees to participate in the interview was given a monetary compensation.

3.5.3 Sexual Behavior/ HIV

Homeless youth are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior. Studies have shown that compared to other youth groups, the HIV positive rate is substantially higher among homeless youth. In fact, a study completed by Ennett (1999) on homeless youth shows that the HIV positive rate ranges from 1.1% to 5.3% with youth residing in emergency shelters to 11.5% for street youth. These rates are extremely high compared to rates for other youth groups. Sampson & Lauritsen (1990) have identified several reasons for sexual victimization and high HIV rates among homeless youth. First, they are highly visible to any potential threats because they spend a lot of time on the street (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). Secondly, they get involved in high-risk activities, which "put them into close proximity to potential offenders" (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). Thirdly, homeless youth are less likely to report to the police because it is possible that they are in trouble with the law. Fourthly, their appearance may put them at increased risk (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). Finally, they are less likely to use contraception while engaging in sexual activities, or use new needles while engaging in drug activities, which are the two main risk factors for contracting HIV. Rew (2005) has identified another reason for the high HIV rate among youth homeless, the increasing number of gay, lesbian, or bisexual homeless youth on the street. Many are throwaways because their parents do not approve of their sexual orientations (Rew, 2005). It is possible that they may engage in unprotected sexual behaviors. In literature relating to HIV and sexual behaviors, many have introduced the concept of 'survival sex' (Rew. L, 2005; Sampson &

Lauritsen, 1990; Rew, L. 2000; Rotherman-Borus,1992). It is the concept of exchanging sex for money, shelter, and drugs.

The most common research method for this topic is interviewing youth. Researchers conduct interviews in locations frequented by homeless youth. The accuracy for such methods, however, is never tested, and the reliability and accuracy of the data compiled may vary among these studies.

3.5.4 Violence

Violence is a common and visible problem among homeless youth. Homeless youth have a higher mortality rate than people in the same age group because they are exposed to high-risk activities such as trading drugs, prostitution, and gang violence. They become easy targets for physical abuse and sometimes, even homicide. On the other hand, the environment they live in is also very conducive for them to have a hand in criminal activities (Baron, 1998). It is necessary to point out that homeless youth are more likely to commit involuntary crime. That is to say that they commit the crime largely due to pressure on them to survive on the street. Without proper working skills, the only way that homeless youth can survive is to engage in illegal drug dealing, prostitution, or even robbery and murder. One study regarding the mortality rate of homeless youth has shown that the mortality ratio of homeless youth in Toronto is 8.3 among male age 18 to 24 in 2004 (Roy, Haley, & Leclerc, 2004).

The focal point of the literature on homeless youth violence is facts, figures, statistics, and data. While it is sufficient to provide a comprehensive

overview of the issue, it does not provide suggestions for any solutions. This gap would need to be addressed in future research.

3.6 Conclusions

Homeless youth faces many challenges in their lives. There are many extensive research reports available on the issues they face. However, most of the literature available focuses on the homeless youth in big cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Calgary. There are few reports available on the conditions of the homeless youth in medium or small size cities that experience the same issues, and may experience even higher rates of hidden homelessness that go unnoticed. Perhaps it could be a topic of interest for future research. Furthermore, studies seem to focus more on the external reasons of youth homelessness such as abusive family history or lack of affordable housing rather than the reasons stated by homeless youth themselves. It is assumed that they are forced to become homeless, but the literature has not taken into account that some choose homelessness as a way of life. Further research is required on this topic. The other gap that should be addressed is the limited published youth homelessness research in Canada. The majority of the journals and academic reports seem to focus on the United States. While Canada has its own share of the problem on youth homelessness, it is difficult to undertake further research with the academic sources currently available.

Chapter 4 Analysis of the Needs of Homeless Youth in Kingston

4.1 Introduction

In an effort to better understand the needs of homeless youth in Kingston and services provided by agencies to homeless youth, interviews were conducted with 20 youth and 3 agencies in January 2011. This chapter presents the results of the interviews and analysis of the information related to the three research questions identified in Chapter 2.

4.2 Background Profile of the Youth and Agencies Interviewed in this Study

This section presents a profile of the youth and agency staff interviewed. All interviews were conducted in compliance with the university ethics code. The 20 interviews of youth were carried out with the assistance of the agency staff and all youth were able to complete the interview questionnaires.

4.2.1 Homeless Youth Interview

As I noted in Chapter 1, the target population for this study was youth who were 18 years old or older. Therefore, the findings are not intended to reflect the characteristics of younger teenage youth who may also experience homelessness.

Interviews were completed with 20 youth aged 19 to 22, and included both male and female youth. The youth were mostly from Kingston or other cities in Ontario with only one coming from out of province. The interviews asked youth to

identify the reasons leading up to them becoming homeless. Of the 20

interviewees, 50% of the youth became homeless due to dispute with parents,

20% due to drug related issues, and 15% due to trouble with the law. One youth

was discharged from the Children's Aid Society at age 17 and moved on to use

the shelter system. Another individual claimed that he became homeless by

choice. One other youth was hurt while serving in the army, but was discharged

without disability pay and unable to afford a place to live. Table 1 below provides

a breakdown of the reasons that caused homelessness for the 20 interviewees.

Table 1: Reasons for Becoming Homeless

Category of Issues	Number of Responses	Percent (%) of Respondents
Dispute with Parents	10	50%
Trouble with Law	4	20%
Drugs	3	15%
Other	3	15%

Interviewees were asked about the length of their homelessness. One

youth experienced permanent homelessness, a period of 20 years. The statistical

breaks down of the youth are as follows: 30% of the youth interviewed have

been homeless for less than 6 months; 20% have been homeless for 6-12

months; 20% have been coping with this situation for 1-2 years, 10% have been

homeless for 2-3 years; and 20% of the youth have been without a home for

more than 3 years. Table 2 below provides a breakdown of the length of

homelessness in the 20 youth interviewed.

Table 2: Length of Homelessness

Length (Years/Months)	Number of Responses	Percent (%) of Respondents
<6 Months	6	30%
6-12 Months	4	20%
1-2 Years	4	20%
2-3 Years	2	10%
>3 Years	4	20%

This statistical analysis represents a portion of homeless youth in Kingston. It is not a statistically representative of the entire homeless youth population. A detailed report with regard to homeless youth in Kingston has not been conducted in the past five years. Therefore, there is no way to determine if this cross-section of homeless youth is similar to homeless youth in Kingston as a whole.

4.2.2 Agencies Interviewed

Three agencies were interviewed for this report. These agencies were chosen due to their familiarity with homeless youth and the services they provide to meet the needs of youth.

Kingston Youth Shelter (KYS) is one of the first youth shelters created in Kingston. It was established in 1999 by the Social Planning Council of Kingston and District as a 6 month pilot project, though was deemed to be successful and was continued as a regular youth shelter contracted by the City of Kingston for eight beds until 2005 (Kingston Youth Shelter, 2000). With ongoing financial support from the United Way, KYS currently operates 15 beds year round, and

provides food, shelter, counseling and referral services to youth. The youth are required to leave the shelter during the day.

Passage House is a program of Home Base Housing in Kingston. Home Base Housing is a not-for-profit organization that provides a range of supportive housing service to youth in need (Home Base Housing, 2010). Passage House as a part of Home Base Housing was designed to prevent at-risk-youth from becoming homeless by teaching important skills. The shelter offers a shared living model, and can accommodate 8 youth. Other services they provide include counseling, life skills training, and referral services. Passage House opens to youth all year long (Home Base Housing, 2010). The youth are selected based on compatibility. If selected, they will live in Passage House with supervision for the period of one year. During this contracted year, youth have to follow rules set by peers. These rules include cooking dinner, doing laundry, cleaning, and attending events organized by the staff. Failure to do so may result in termination of the contract.

Kingston Youth Employment Services (KEYS) is one of the few agencies in Kingston that specializes in career counseling for youth of any social and economic background (KEYS, 2011). The agency offers career training for homeless youth as well as pairing youth with potential employers.

All agencies staffs interviewed were very knowledgeable regarding the topic of youth homelessness and at risk youth. They have aided the completion of this report by providing essential information about issues youth face. They also

offered a unique perspective on the service planning processes with regard to meeting the needs of homeless youth.

4.3 Meeting the Needs of Homeless Youth

This section will address the following question with the results gathered from the interviews:

How are the existing service networks in Kingston assisting homeless youth in dealing with their needs?

Youth were asked to identify their top three needs during the interview. 78% identified shelter as their top need, followed by employment at 15%, and education at 7%. This section will present in detail how agencies have met the needs identified from both the perspective of youth and the agencies.

4.3.1 Perspective of the Youth

4.3.1.1 Housing/Shelter Program for Homeless Youth

The services provided by shelters in Kingston are delivered horizontally. Kingston Youth Shelter provides basic shelter services. Passage House promotes collaborative living and teaches important life skills. Journey House was not included in this report due to time constraint. It is an extension from Passage House. It offers independent living environment so youth can get accustomed to living by themselves. Youth are given opportunities to live in one

of the several apartments provided by Home Base Housing, in which they have to support themselves in all aspects of life.

The following are what youth have said about their experiences with the housing and shelter service providers in Kingston:

When asked about their housing conditions, youth from Kingston Youth Shelter seemed comfortable with their current arrangement in the shelter. In fact, no one responded negatively when asked about his or her housing needs. All interviewees stated that the Kingston Youth Shelter met their temporary needs, and provided them with a secure and relatively healthy living environment. The residents agreed that staff members are resourceful and fun. However, there was consensus among youth that they would like extended business hours or possibly having the shelter stay open all day. 90% of the youth residing in Kingston Youth Shelter have expressed interest in moving to Passage House or moving to an apartment when asked about their future housing needs. This means that the services provided by KYS have provoked positive attitudes among youth. Youth have the will power to move toward becoming independent. This also means that the horizontal service delivery structure fits the current conditions of homeless youth in Kingston.

When interviewing youth from Passage House, all youth confirmed that their housing needs were met on a timely manner by the supervisor and additional staff members. Youth have also indicated that programs such as cooking, financial management, and personal life management are offered to

prepare them for independent living. After the contract expired with Passage

House, some residents indicated that they would choose to live in Journey

House, and others hoped that they could move into an apartment. A few

participants expressed displeasure over the co-operative living environment

stating that they did not get alone with housemates and wanted more one on one

attention from the staff.

4.3.1.2 Education Programs for Homeless Youth

Two programs make up the primary public education supports for

homeless youth, Second Chance and Street Smart. These programs are both

referral-based urban programs of the Limestone District School Board

administered through local secondary schools. The staff members in the youth

shelters will refer youth to one of the two programs if they have the desire to

complete high school but do not want to attend a traditional secondary school.

Second Chance is an educational centre for people of any age who wish to

complete a high school diploma. Students enrolled in this program can work at

their own pace under supervision. Street Smart is a similar program designed

only for youth between ages 15 to 20 (Limestone District School Board, 2011). It

is an alternative to high school where an independent learning environment is

created to help student achieve their goals of graduating high school. 69% of the

youth interviewees stated that they dropped out of high school because the

traditional high school learning environment did not fit with their learning styles.

Street Smart offers a substitute to a high school program where they do not have

to interact with anyone and can still achieve their goals of completing high school

independently (Limestone District School Board, 2011). It is worth mentioning that not all homeless youth interviewed attend school at Second Chance or Street Smart, a few are still attending regular high school.

Following are the information gather from interviewing youth:

Of the interviews conducted in Kingston Youth Shelter, most participants stated that they had dropped out of school and were not going to school at the moment. Therefore, a fair assessment could not be made on whether or not Second Chance or Street Smart meets the education needs of these youth. They did not disclose reasons why they are currently not attending school during the interview. However, youth in Passage House were enrolled in both schools, and were able to give feedbacks on the services they had received from these two programs. Youth are in favor of the independent learning environment that Second Chance and Street Smart offer. In fact, when asked to compare their experiences between a conventional secondary school and a program that offers independent learning, most respondents choose the latter. They believed that they could cope better with the academic pressure when enrolled in Street Smart or Second Chance owing to the fact that they had the power to choose when to learn and how to learn. Of the youth interviewed who are currently attending school, all are still in the process of completing high school.

4.3.1.3 Employment Services for Youth

Kingston Youth Employment Services (KEYS) is one of the few agencies in Kingston that specializes in career counseling for youth of any social and

economic background. In spite of that, no one within Kingston Youth Shelter or Passage House has considered using services provided by KEYS. Several reasons can attribute to this outcome. First, when dealing with the career needs of homeless youth, agencies would refer their clients to Ontario Works where youth can receive temporary monetary support as well as finding employment opportunities. Second, KEYS does not actively reach out to homeless youth, but rather treats them as any other clients. This is mostly because homeless youth often do not identify as homeless when using employment services. Thus, when serving homeless youth, the staffs often do not know that they are homeless, therefore cannot clearly identify their career needs. Third, the career expectations of youth interviewed in this study seem to be quite limited. When asked about their career aspirations, many replied with working for fast food restaurants or grocery stores, none of which required extensive career counseling. Thus, from the perspective of the youth, it appears that KEYS program is not designed to address the types of work that homeless youth may be seeking, and therefore does not currently meet their employment needs. This is not to undermine the effort of the agency, but rather to identify it as an issue that can be addressed in the future.

4.3.2 Perspective of the Agencies Interviewed

Same questions with regard to the needs of the youth were asked to each of the agency directors as well. The following sections are summary of the agency staff responses to the questions about the housing, education and employment needs to homeless youth.

4.3.2.1 Housing/Shelter Needs of Homeless Youth

KYS stated that within the financial constraints of the organization, it is doing a good job in fulfilling the needs of youth by offering food, shelter, counseling and referral services to youth. However, due to limited funding opportunities, it is not able to undergo necessary renovation to make the shelter wheel chair accessible or hire bilingual staff to accommodate French-speaking youth. Therefore, the shelter could not meet the needs of youth with physical disabilities or those requiring French language services. In the immediate future, KYS hopes to increase the operating hours of the shelter especially in cold and hazardous winter conditions and increase the number of youth they can serve by expanding the range of services. KYS currently assists approximately 200 youth per year.

Passage House is also confident that the shelter is meeting the housing needs of the current residents with a shared living environment, 24-hour on-site support and referral services. It identified areas of improvement such as more funding, outreach, and creating an umbrella service by connecting with mental health agencies. It was hoped that eventually all services for homeless and at-risk youth would be under one roof. Looking ahead, Passage House is looking into hiring more staff as well to work with youth that do not fit in the shared living model.

4.3.2.2 Education Needs of Homeless Youth

Unfortunately, Second Chance and Street Smart were not included in the interviews due to delays in the ethics approval processes. Nonetheless, from information provided in other interviews it was learned that the youth shelters both have clients who attend schools. It appears that Second Chance and Street Smart accommodate the educational needs of the homeless youth very well. One of the staff interviewed pointed out that simply having the opportunity to go to school is crucial for the psychological recovery of homeless youth. It establishes a routine and stability that homeless youth have not had in their lives. In addition, having the freedom to work on their own in the subjects of their interests goes a long way in helping youth to achieve their goals and increase their chance to succeed in life.

4.3.2.3 Employment Services for Homeless Youth

KEYS faced a number of difficulties in serving homeless youth according to those interviews. First, youth often do not identify themselves as either homeless or living in poverty, so it is hard to target their career needs. It was estimated that in 2000 clients served per year, 5% might be homeless youth, which is a very small percentage. Second, homeless youth often do not have permanent address or phone number, thus making it almost impossible for potential employer to contact them through KEYS with regard to employment opportunities. Third and most importantly, homeless youth need to find a solution around homelessness before even considering employment. Finding stable and affordable accommodation in Kingston was reportedly a tall task for these youth.

However, KEYS does help youth by providing supportive programs such as a two-week job training session free of charge to prepare them for future employment.

4.3.3 Conclusion

It is evident that the service providers in Kingston understand the needs of homeless youth and provide needed services. Based on the interview results gathered from youth and the agencies, youth were satisfied with the services they have received. Both the youth and the agencies were able to identify similar areas for improvement making future adjustments easier.

4.4 Gaps Identified during Interviews

This section will address the following question:

What are the existing gaps in the aforementioned service networks?

Several gaps were presented when cross examining the interview results from the agencies and youth. The following gaps identified put the focus on the service providers, the City of Kingston, and other organizations.

First and formost, the agencies do not have a real estimate of the number of youth needing services. This prevents the agencies from conducting a need assessment to determine their current and future needs including budgeting, program planning, and service expansions. Second, the agencies have not conducted a need assessment to determine the areas of needs, which would help organizations to better allocate their funding and concentrate on these

areas. Thirdly, the current levels of outreach and community involvement efforts are not sufficient enough to raise community awareness. The majority of Kingston residents do not know that these agencies exist and are helping the youth in need. Furthermore, the agencies rarely utilize social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter which are effective ways to raise awareness in the community for free or with relatively low cost. Fourth, although the City of Kingston provides funding for organizations, it is my assessment that the city officials do not have a real understanding of the issues the agencies face and thus may not be allocating the right amount of funding for each agency.

The following gaps are specific to individual service providers. For Kingston Youth Shelter, the service are only availiable to youth duirng regular operational hours, which is at night. Day time programs are not availiabe at this moment. This service gap was mentioned in interviews with both the agency and youth. For Passage House, concerns were raised among youth about the shared-living model. Youth feel like they do not have any privacy under this current model, especially when an agency staff is present at all times in the house. The staff interviewee is aware of the concern, and has stated that the agency is currently working on improving this service model. For KEYS, the service gap is rather obivous. The agency currently does not offer services specifically for homeless youth. Homeless youth are treated as part of the general population. This is partly due to the fact that homeless youth do not identify themselves as homeless, therefore it is hard for KEYS to address their needs on an individual basis.

Gaps in the education system cannot be identified due to time constraints. However, from the interviews conducted, it is evident that Street Smart and Second Chance are meeting the education needs of the youth served. In some cases, they have exceeded their expectations.

4.5 Suggested Improvements

This section will address the following question:

How could current services be improved to better meet the needs of homeless youth?

As stated in section 4.4, serveral gaps in services were presented throughout the interviews. This section will provide suggestions for areas that need improvements. A general recommendation section with regard to improvements in service planning processes is available in Chapter 5. The purpose of this section is to make of few suggestions with regard to the improvements that are specific to each agencies.

When conducting interviews on Kingston Youth Shelter, the need for extended operational hours and day time programming have emerged to be the top priorities for the agency. Daytime programming combines with extended operational hours will keep youth off the street during the day while increasing the shelter's visibility within the Kingston community. For a initial start, KYS could increase the operational hours by 2 hours, and add on more hours as the funding becomes available. The programs KYS offers could include career preparations, life skill training, as well as some school courses for youth who are not currently

attending school. By doing so, youth who reside in KYS could be better prepared for the future when they leave, and may have a smaller chance of becoming homeless again.

The top need identified for Passage House is revamping the shared-living model. This is potentially a collaborative effort between the Director of Home-Base Housing and the staff at Passage House. Passage House will need to work with clients that do not fit into the shared-living model by proposing alternatives such as providng individual apartments and redirecting them to other shelters. Home-Base Housing will need to secure funding for more subsidized apartments for youth that cannot live in Passage House. The logistics of such a change may require more detailed planning.

KEYS needs to increase collaboration with other agencies such as KYS and Passage House. The clients in these agencies often have career needs, and KEYS specializes in helping youth with career needs. However, before adding homeless youth to its clientele, thorough research should be conducted on their career needs. Throughout the interview process, I have noticed that the career expectations of homeless youth are quite low. KEYS may be able to raise their expectations by providing proper career training to increase employability of the youth. It could also save funding for other agencies that currently run career training programs.

4.6 Conclusion on Analysis

The interviews conducted were extremely helpful in constructing the analysis chapter. The information collected from the agencies and youth helped identify the gaps in services. The interview results indicated that although improvements are still needed to fully meet the needs of homeless youth in Kingston, youth are generally satisfied with the services they are receiving.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Upon completion of the interviews, it becomes clear that the issues homeless youth face in Kingston are similar to the issues other homeless youth face in Canada. This is evident through the comparative analysis between the interview results in Chapter 4 and literature review in Chapter 3. Some notable common issues include drugs, family conflicts, and trouble with the law. Coincidentally, the needs identified are similar as well. Youth in Kingston identified shelter, employment, and education as their top three needs. In the literature review, it is clear that shelter is the top need of homeless youth. The Housing First approach, which is widely used in larger cities in Canada, is also successfully implemented in Kingston. The shelter system in Kingston tries to ensure a stable living arrangement first before assisting youth with other issues they face. Through this process, it is indisputable that even though the issue of youth homelessness in Kingston is on a much smaller scale than that of larger cities, the same concept can be applied to assist youth at risk.

The research findings indicate that the agencies in Kingston are meeting the housing and education needs of homeless youth, and are trying to improve the current career services offered to meet their needs as well. In Kingston, there is a range of shelters from emergency shelters to longer term housing. Therefore, homeless youth would have the opportunity to move along the system from Kingston Youth Shelter to Passage House to Journey House, and living independently. Each stage serves a purpose. For instance, KYS helps youth establish a daily routine, and providing a sense of stability for homeless youth.

Passage House establishes more disciplines, teaches life skills, and encourages

interaction between peers by promoting a shared living environment. Journey

House gives youth more space to experience the concept of living independently.

These steps allow homeless youth to move through the system as they become

more familiar with living independently. The education system including Second

Chance and Street Smart offers youth an opportunity to complete high school at

their own pace, and increases their chances of receiving post-secondary

education. Improving their education is expected to improve their life and work

opportunities and the chances for success in their lives. Even though KEYS does

not currently offer services specifically for homeless youth, it is offering services

that homeless youth can take advantage of such as free job training and career

counseling. With these services available to homeless youth in Kingston, it is

reasonable to expect that youth who experience homelessness have some

opportunities to improve their housing, education and employment opportunities.

However, the research has identified a number of gaps in the services available

and the limitations in planning to meet the needs of homeless youth in Kingston.

The gaps and improvements are outlined in Chapter 4. The following

summarizes the gaps identified and improvements suggested.

The gaps identified in services provided by Kingston Youth Shelter

focused on lack of daytime programming and extended operational hours.

Therefore, it is suggested that KYS should expand the current operational hours.

In addition, KYS could offer programs such as career preparation and life skill

trainings to better prepare youth for when they are discharged from the youth
shelter systems.

The shared-living model was identified as the top priority in the future
improvements of services at Passage House. Several residents have expressed
displeasure with the shared-living model. It is suggested in Chapter 4 that
Passage House to work in collaboration with Home Base Housing to increase the
number of individual apartments for youth who do not fit in the shared living
model.

For KEYS, the gap identified was that the agency currently does not offer
services that specifically target homeless youth. As a result, it is suggested that
KEYS to increase collaborations with local youth shelters. The interview results
have suggested many youth have the desire to start working as soon as
possible. But they do not have access to career counseling and training needed
to become successful. KEYS should work collaboratively with these agencies
and help homeless youth to become successful in a real world setting.

The following recommendations are tailored for the agencies, the City of
Kingston as well as for general researchers interested in the topic of youth
homelessness. These recommendations will offer a general direction of the
future steps to be taken to improve planning service delivery processes:

1. The City of Kingston needs to collaborate with the agencies to conduct a
   statistical analysis and produce a detailed report with regard to the current
   conditions of homeless youth in Kingston, and obtain an estimate of the

number of youth that needs assistance. These will be of use for the city and the organizations to have a better sense of the extent of youth homelessness -- i.e. we do not know if we are have enough spaces to accommodate all the youth in need.

2. The agencies need to conduct needs assessment and feasibility analysis to determine if the current service approach is efficient, and if funding is reaching the area that is most in need.

3. The city officials need to follow up with agencies to assess the service delivery approaches and evaluate if current programs are achieving expected results.

4. Federal and Provincial Governments should provide necessary funding to aid the development of a comprehensive program Canada-wide that focuses on researching the topic of youth homelessness, and providing services to homeless youth in Canada.

5. The agencies need to run campaigns such as community involvement fairs or fundrasing and on social networks to raise awareness in the community. Kingston has a wealth of resources with three post-secondary institutions and numerous volunteer organizations. Running a successful awareness campaign not only can bring these resources to the agencies, but it could also bring financial assistance to the agencies in need.

6. The agencies need to utlilize the facility and offer day time programing to youth who stay on the street during the day. This will engage these youth and prevent them from running into trouble.

7. Future research can be conducted on the underlying causes of youth homelessness in Kingston, and solutions to prevent youth from becoming homeless. This research can also be extented nationally to help eliminating youth homelessness in Canada.

8. Many youth experince hidden homelessness. Hidden homelessness as a phenomena should be further researched by government organizations, service agencies, and scholars to understand the extent of this issue.

Bibliography

Angela J. Stewart, M. M. (2004*). Victimization and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Homeless Adolescents*. Journal of. AM. Academy. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry.

Andrus, J. K., Fleming, D. W., Heumann, M. A., Wassell, J. T., Hopkins, D. D., and Gordon, J. (1991*). Surveillance of attempted suicide among adolescents in Oregon, 1988*. Am. J. Public Health 81: 1067-1069.

Aratani, Y. (2009). *Homeless Children and Youth: Causes and Consequences.* The National Center for Children in Poverty. Columbia University.

Ayerst, S. L. (1999). *Depression and Stress in Street Youth. San Diego*; Libra Publisher.

Baron, S. W. (1999). *Street Youth and Substance Use: The Role of Background, Street Lifestyle, and Economic Factors*. Windsor: Sage Social Science Collections.

Baron, S., & Hartnagel, T. (1998). *Street youth and criminal violence. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 35(2), 166-192

Bolger, N., Downey, G., Walker, E., and Steininger, P. (1989*). The onset of suicidal ideation in childhood and adolescence*. Journal of. Youth Adolescence. 18:175-189.

City of Kingston. (2011). *Synopsis Phase 1 for the Whig.* Kingston: City of Kingston.

Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. (2004). *Homelessness in Toronto.* Toronto: Community Social Planning Council of Toronto.

California Department of Education. (2010, June 02). Definition of Homeless. Retrieved August 24, 2010, from California Department of Education: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/

Ennett, S., E. Federman, S. Bailey, C. Ringwalt, and M. Hubbard. 1999. *HIV-Risk Behaviors Associated with Homelessness Characteristics in Youth*. Journal of Adolescent Health 25: 344- 353.

Filteau, J. (2009, April 27). Slow economy brings rise in homeless youth. *National Catholic Reporter*.

Gaber, J & Gaber, S. *Qualitative Analysis for Planning & Policy, Beyond the Numbers,* Chicago and Washington: Planners Press, American Planning Association, 2007.

Greene, J., Ringwalt, C., Kelly, J., Iachan, R., & Cohen, Z. (1995). *Youth with runaway, throwaway, and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and*

other at-risk behaviors (Volumes 1 and 2, final report under contract no. 105-90-1703). Research Triangle Park, NC: Administration for Children & Families, Research Triangle Institute.

Hagan, J., & McCarthy, B. (1997). *Mean streets: Youth crime and homelessness*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Home Base Non-Profit Housing. (2002).*Youth Homelessness in Kingston.* Kingston: Homes Base Non-Profit Housing.

Home Base Housing. (2010). *Home Base Housing.* Retrieved January 20, 2011, from Home Base Housing: http://www.kingstonhomebase.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1

Home Base Housing. (2010). *Youth Services.* Retrieved January 20, 2011, from Home Base housing: http://www.kingstonhomebase.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=53

Home Base Housing. (2010). *Youth Services*. Retrieved January 20, 2011, from Home Base housing: http://www.kingstonhomebase.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=53

Human Resources and Skills development Canada. (2006, 09 21). *Evaluation of the National Homelessness Initiative: Implementation and Early Outcomes of the HRDC-based Components* - March 2003. Retrieved 11 23, 2010, from Human Resources and Skills development Canada: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/cs/sp/hrsdc/edd/reports/2003-002435/page05.shtml

Hutson, S. and S. Jones (2000), *Community Self-Build for Young Homeless People: Problems and Potential*. Housing Studies 17(4):639-656

Jo Ensign and John Santelli, *Shelter-Based Homeless Youth: Health and Access to Care*, Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med, Aug 1997; 151: 817 - 823.

Joshua Aaron Ginzler, P. N.-R. (2003). *Sequential Progression of Substance Use Among Homeless Youth: An Empirical Investigation of the Gateway Theory*. Marcel Dekker, Inc.

KEYS. (n.d.). *Who We Are.* Retrieved January 20, 2011, from KEYS: http://www.keys.ca/about/who_we_are.html

KEYS. (n.d.). *Who We Are*. Retrieved January 20, 2011, from KEYS: http://www.keys.ca/about/who_we_are.html

Kingston Youth Shelter. (2000). *Mission Statement*. Retrieved January 19, 2011, from Kingston Youth Shelter: http://kingstonyouthshelter.com/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/

Kevin A. Yoder, D. R. (1998). *Suicidal Behavior Among Homeless and Runaway Adolescents*. Plenum Publishing Corporation.

Kingston Youth Shelter. (2000). *Mission Statement.* Retrieved January 19, 2011, from Kingston Youth Shelter: http://kingstonyouthshelter.com/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/

Kipke, M. D., Simon, T. R., Montgomery, S. B., Unger, J. B., & Iversen, E. F. (1997). *Homeless youth and their exposure to and involvement in violence while living on the streets*. Journal of Adolescent Health, 20(5), 360-367.

Kroner, M. 1998. *Housing Options for Independent Living Programs*. Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America.

Kurt D. Johnson, I. b. (2005). *Substance Abuse Disorders among Homeless and Runaway Adolescents*. The Journal of Drug Issues.

Limestone District School Board. (2011). *Second Chance*. Retrieved February 9, 2011, from Limestone District School Board: http://www.limestone.on.ca/schools/Community_Education_Centres/qecec_profil e

Limestone District School Board. (2011). *Streetsmart KCVI Community Education Centre*. Retrieved February 9, 2011, from Limestone District School Board: http://www.limestone.on.ca/schools/Community_Education_Centres/kicec_profile

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 42 U.S.C. 11301 Sec.101

Moore, J. (2005). *Unaccompanied and Homeless Youth Review of Literature (1995−2005)*. National Center for Homeless Education.

Pamela Miller, Peter Donahue, Dave Este, & Marvin Hofer. (2004). *Experiences of Being Homeless or at Risk of Being Homeless among Canadian Youths*. Adolescence, 39(156), 735-55. Retrieved September 1, 2010, from ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source. (Document ID: 785465711).

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006*). Street Youth in Canada. Public Health Agency of Canada*. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006). *Street Youth in Canada.* Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.

Raising the Roof. (2009).*Youth Homelessness in Canada: the Road to Solution.* Raising the Roof.

Rew, L. 2000. *Sexual Health Practices of Homeless Youth: A Model for Intervention*. Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing 24: 1-18.

Rew, L., T. Whittaker, M. Taylor-Seehafer, and L. Smith. 2005. *Sexual Health Risks and Protective Resources in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Homeless Youth*. Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing 10: 11-20.

Robertson, M. J. (1991). *Homeless Youth: An Overview of Recent Literature*. In L. M. Julee H. Kryder-Coe, Homeless children and youth: a new American dilemma (Vol. 2, pp. 33-36). New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (1993). *Suicidal behavior and risk factors among runaway youths*. Am. J. Psychiat. 150: 103-107.

Rotherman-Borus, M., H. Meyer-Bahlburg, C. Koopman, M. Rosario, T. Exner, R. Henderson, M. Matthieu, and R. Gruen. 1992. *Lifetime Sexual Behaviors Among Runaway Males and Females*. Journal of Sex Research 29 (1): 15-29.

Roy, É., Haley, N., & Leclerc, P. (2004*). Mortality in a Cohort of Street Youth in Montreal*. Montreal: American Medical Association.

Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1990). *Deviant lifestyles, proximity to crime, and the offender-victim link in personal violence*. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 27, 110-139.

Smart, R.G., & Adlaf, E.M. (1991) *Substance use and Problems among Toronto street Youth*. British Journal of Addiction, 80, 999-1010

Sean A. Kidd, M. J. (2002). *Suicide and Prostitution Among Street Youth: A Qualitative Analysis*. San Diego: Libra Publisher.

Shelter, Support and Housing Administration. (2009). *Street Needs Assessment Results 2009.* Toronto: City of Toronto.

Shleter, Support and Housing Administration. (2006). *2006 Street Needs Assessment: Results and Key Findings.* Toronto: City of Toronto.

Statcan. (2006). *2006 Community Profile.* Kingston: statcan.

Straka, D., C. Tempel, E. Epstein. 2002. *Supportive Housing for Youth: A Background of the Issues in the Design and Development of Supportive Housing for Homeless Youth*.New York: Corporation for Supportive Housing.

Straka, D., C. Tempel, and K. Lipson. 2001. *TANF Funding for Services in Supportive Housing for Homeless Families and Young Adults*. New York: Corporation for Supportive Housing.

Street connect. (2005). *Who are Street Youth?* Retrieved August 24, 2010, from street connect: http://streetconnect.org/research/who-are-street-youth.html

The Alliance to End Homelessness. (2004). *Report Card Methodology and Indicators: Development of the Report Card on Homelessness in Ottawa.* Ottawa: The Alliance to End Homelessness.

The Alliance to End Homelessness. (2008). *Experiencing Homelessness.* Ottawa: The Alliance to End Homelessness.

Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration. (2007). *What Housing Fisrt Means for People-Results of Streets to Homes 2007 Post-Occupancy Research* Toronto: Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration.

United Way Serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington. (2009). *"A Place Fisrt"- A Community Plan on Housing and Homelessness in Kingston.* Kingston: United Way.

Van Leeuwen, J. 2005. *Reaching the Hard to Reach: Innovative Housing for Homeless Youth Through Strategic Partnerships*. Child Welfare 83(5): 469-492

Whitbeck, L., Hoyt, D., Yoder, K., Cauce, A., & Paradise, M. (2001). *Deviant Behavior And Victimization Among Homeless And Runaway Adolescents*. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 16(11), 1175-1204.

Wright, B., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T., & Silva, P. (1998). *Factors associated with doubled- up housing – A common precursor to homelessness*. Social Service Review, 72(1), 92.111.

Yin, R. (2009). *Definition of the Case Study as a Research Method.* In R. Yin, Case Study Research Design and Methods (Vol. 5, p. 17). London: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. (2009). *Desinging Case Studies.* In R. Yin, *Case Study Reaearch Design and Methods* (Vol. 5, p. 38). London: Sage publications.

Yin, R. (2009). *Desinging Case Studies.* In R. Yin, *Case Study Reaearch Design and Methods* (Vol. 5, p. 43). London: Sage publications.

Yin, R. (2009). *Desinging Case Studies.* In R. Yin, Case Study Reaearch Design and Methods (Vol. 5, p. 46). London: Sage publications.