



Aftercare Support Pilot Program

Going Beyond Housing First
for Youth

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Who We Are

The Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Demonstration Lab (MtS) is a *Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab*.

- Identifying, developing, testing, evaluating and mobilizing innovations in policy and practice that support the prevention and facilitation of sustainable exits from homelessness
- Focus on young people
- Researching impact and outcomes of Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) with young people in Ottawa and Toronto and piloting the Aftercare Program for the Ottawa site
- Co-led by A Way Home Canada (AWHC) and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH)



Aftercare: What is it?



What is Aftercare?

- post-program support that allows young people to stay connected to their program based on their needs and desires

What kind of activities are involved in Aftercare?

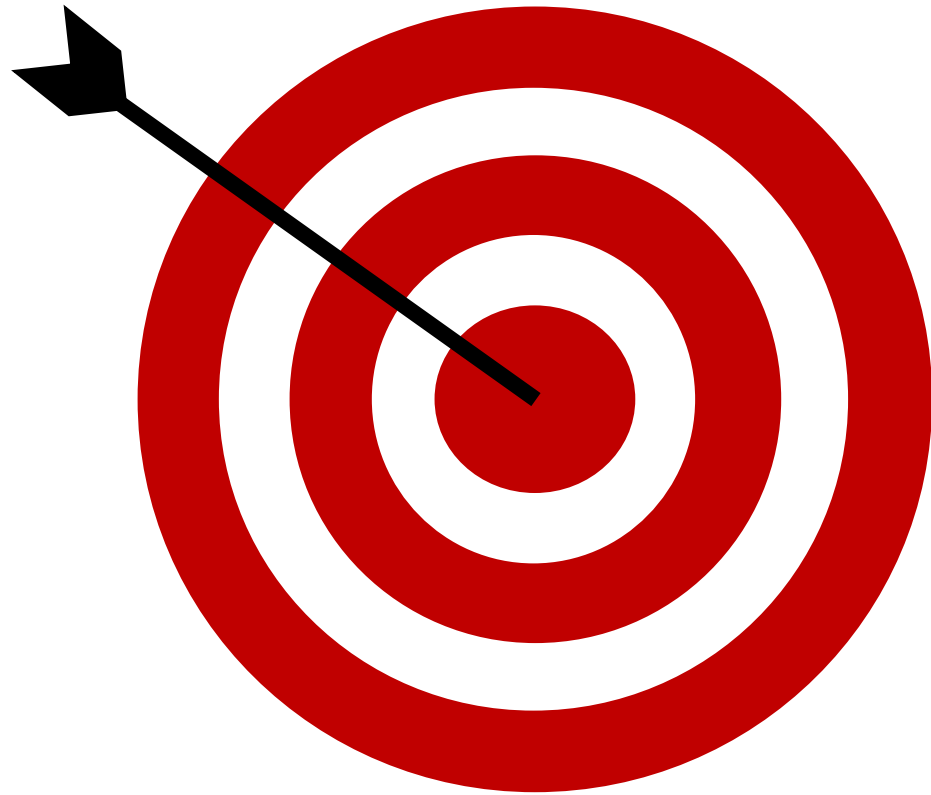
- can vary depending on the needs but could include including housing support, counseling, regular check-ins, mentoring, and connections to a range of resources and services



“Extra assistance needed for individuals recently exiting a more intensive program. It’s there to make that transition to ‘normal life’ easier.”

- Youth definition of Aftercare

Goals of Aftercare



Help youth learn about resources and make sure they have the supports they are looking for

- Less intensive (light touch) supports compared to case management

Build on life skills such as budgeting, grocery shopping, meal planning, dealing with landlords, applying to school, finding a job, and more

Help youth with their own goal setting at a pace that is comfortable for them



Methodology

Main goal: Identify the critical components of the Aftercare model and how to deliver and implement the model effectively.

Focus on youth ages 18-27, recent graduates from the HF4Y program in Ottawa

➤ Criteria identified:

- 1) have been in HF intervention group for at least 1 year,
 - 2) are transitioning from the HF4Y program or who have exited the HF4Y program, and
 - 3) are no longer receiving intensive supports from the program.
- A mixed-methods approach was used, which included survey batteries, interviews, and focus groups/engagement sessions with participants.
 - Case files, team meeting notes, and government reports were also assessed



Youth Participant Demographics

Avg. age = **19.4**

75% identify as
LGBTQ2S+

41.6%
identify as Black/
African Canadian

Young women	7
Youth who have not completed HS	3
Involuntarily NEET	2
Indigenous	2
Youth with disabilities	3
Visible Minority Youth	1
Black Canadians	5
Total # of participants with data	12

What has Aftercare provided to youth?

Unpacking trauma that hasn't been dealt with yet
Being a new parent (baby feeding, sleeping, illness, etc.)
Learning how to make certain foods (ex: curry)
Managing sobriety
Pest protection/management
Getting school/daycare supplies for children
Meal prepping
Just to chat
Sexual health advice
Getting over phone anxiety
Connecting to resources (ex: financial advisor, driving lessons, prenatal classes, etc.)
Moving
Cleaning/organizing
Substance use reduction
Search for family MD
Help finding shelves online to display my stuffed animals
AND MORE.....

What ELSE could've been provided?

Maid Service to help get started or support when things get really bad.

Home organization service to learn how to maximize space and keep things organized.

Financial advisor to help with goals & debt management and support financial literacy and budgeting. (This could even be an accounting student, in a program where youth can self-refer.)

Giftcards for groceries on a monthly basis or a basket with cleaning supplies. The opportunity to review receipts with your worker can be helpful to get feedback on spending.

Someone to support with school options and applications.

Access to a therapist on a long-term basis, beyond the weekly check-ins.

Group activities to go out and do something fun together, or a small honorarium to be able to explore activities in communities (ex: payment for drop-in swim lesson, or a day at the museum)

Help with pets is essential. Vet bills are very expensive.

Having a drop-in office in an area would be super helpful to come in and have a juice and chat.





Aftercare in Action (Brianna's Story)

Challenges with Transition

- First year of Housing First involves housing and most urgent basic necessities.
 - Post-Housing Period: A year or two may be needed before focusing on improving daily living skills and other soft skills.
 - Participants require a period of relaxation and recovery (need for rest)
 - After housing, bills become a priority, but stress remains. There is a rush to get these paid.
- A significant shift from HF to Aftercare
 - The need for a smoother transition plan (especially financially)
 - Young people may struggle to seek assistance.
 - Adjusting to a new life after homelessness is challenging (relationships, identity, emotions, etc.)

Importance of Relationships

- **Building Strong Relationships:** Key to success in the Aftercare program.
- **Right Support Person:** A worker focused on relationships, not just tasks. Peer support has great potential here.
- **Allowing Space:** Workers create space for participants to tap into their own tools and strengths
- **Role of Worker:** Workers become sounding boards and safe spaces for reassurance.
- **Transition Stress:** Changing workers or researchers can be stressful for participants.



Mental Health Challenges

- **Common Denominator:** Mental health challenges are prevalent among participants.
 - Seems to be the biggest factor regarding overall stability.
- **Impact on Education, Employment, and Housing:** Mental health issues affect various aspects of participants' lives.
- **Need for more intensive intervention that is not time-limited.**



Looking Ahead (Final Engagement Session)

- **Current Concerns:** Access to resources without being in a program, aging out of "youth" services.
- **Hopes and Dreams:** Aspirations of education, careers, and personal success.
 - Continued signs of hope and feelings of potential for themselves
- **Importance of a Social Safety Net:** Lack support of support and community.
 - Escaping Generational Poverty
 - Desire to be connected to others (Family and Natural Supports)



Conclusion

- The Aftercare Program aims to provide essential support for young people transitioning out of homelessness.
 - The program contributes to a brighter future for participants and can help sustain the improvements created by Housing First.
 - Goal is to scale this to much larger programs
 - Multiple partnerships are needed to guarantee success





Questions?

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