

# Gender Specific Programing: Lessons Learned

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CAEH 2019



**Covenant  
House**  
VANCOUVER

Opening Doors for Homeless Youth

# Covenant House Vancouver

- Continuum of Care
- Street Outreach
- Drop-In Centre
- 58-bed Crisis Program
- 25-bed Rights of Passage
- Integrated Case Management Services

# Our Purpose

- Covenant House Vancouver's purpose is to serve all youth, with absolute respect and unconditional love, to help youth experiencing homelessness, and to protect and safeguard all youth in need.

# Our Principles

- **Immediacy**

Covenant House immediately meets the basic needs of youth experiencing homelessness through a nourishing meal, a shower, clean clothes, medical attention, and a safe place to sleep.

- **Sanctuary**

Covenant House provides a safe haven from the hardships of homelessness. We recognize the fundamental worth of every human being and create a safe setting where all youth – regardless of life experience or identity – are served without judgement.

- **Value Communication**

Covenant House leads by example to demonstrate that caring relationships are based on love, trust, respect, and honesty.

# Our Principles

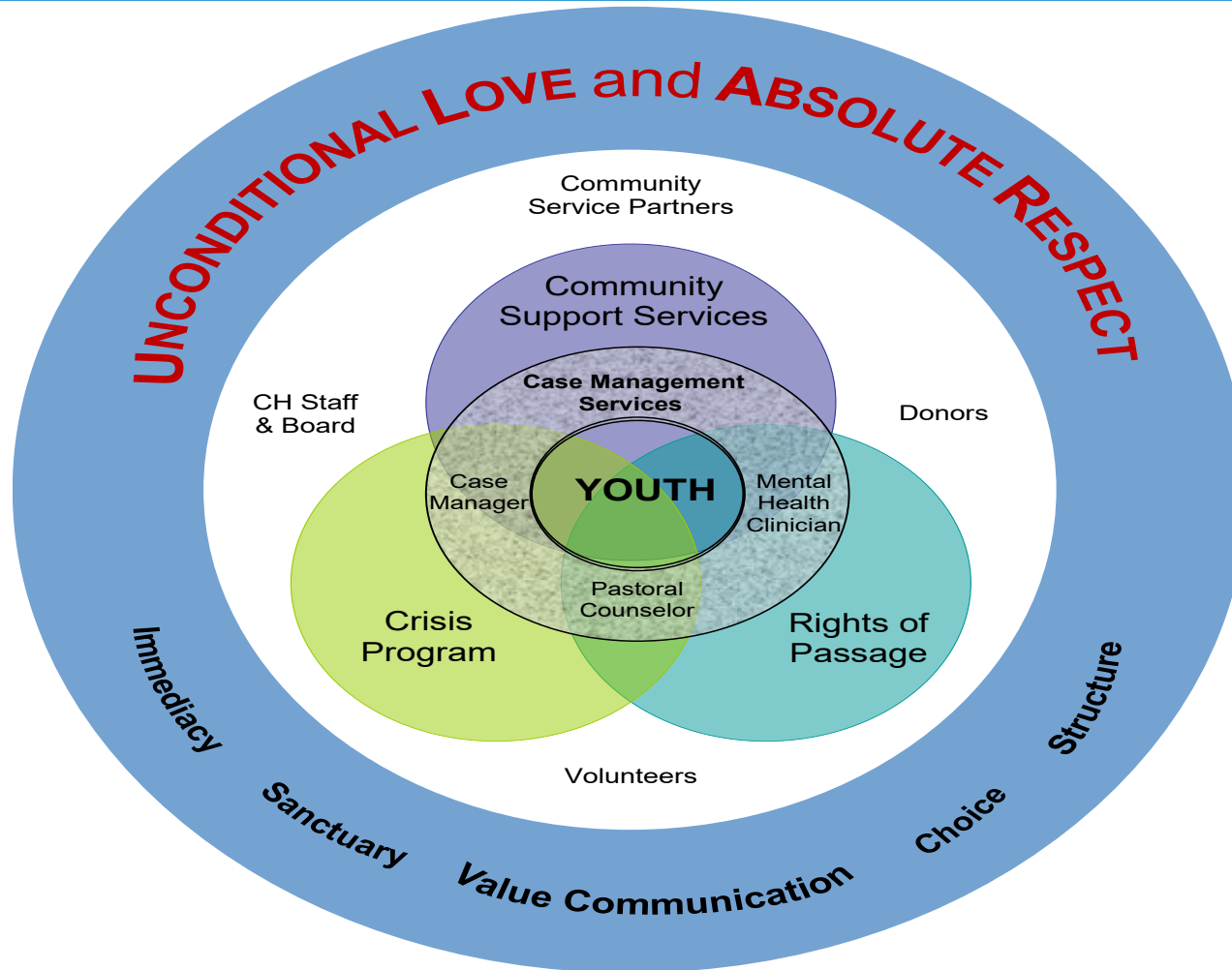
- **Structure**

Covenant House provides the stability and structure necessary to build a positive future.

- **Choice**

Covenant House fosters confidence; encouraging young people to believe in themselves and make informed choices for their lives.

# Structure of Program Services



# The Staff

- 24-hour staffing
- Youth Workers
- Youth Support Workers
- Social Workers (all RSW)
- Life Skills Coordinator
- Mentorship Coordinator
- Clinical Counsellors
- Spiritual Care

# Unconditional Love & Absolute Respect





# Programming

- **Integrated Case Management:** Social Worker works with youth throughout continuum and into community, individualized planning and supports
- **Life Skills:** Pre/post assessments, individualized plan, individual/group/class options
- **Mentorship Program**
- **Recreation and Wellness**

# Clinical Services



# Evidence Informed Programming

- Trauma Informed Practice
- Attachment Theory
- Resiliency Theory
- Strengths Based
- Systems Approach
- Developmental Neuroscience
- Youth Advisory
- LBGTQ Advisory Committee

# Safe and Respectful Spaces



# Pre 2014

- Prior to 2014 all services were co-ed.
- We consistently served less self identified female youth although the research told us they were out there
- We served significantly less LBGQTQ youth however the research told us they are overrepresented in the population we served

# 2014 – The Big Shift!

- We created self identified gender specific spaces within all our residential programs
- We created self identified gender specific programming opportunities
- We implemented specific programming for the LBGTQ population
- We enhanced training opportunities for our staff

# So What Happened?

- Our male identified numbers stayed consistent (there was a fear that this would have a negative impact on this population)
- Our female identified and transgender youth numbers increased significantly
- Many new positive outcomes for youth began to emerge

# What Does Our Data Say?

## Crisis Program

	Before Self Identified Gender Specific Programming	After Self Identified Gender Specific Programming
Self Identified Female Youth	28%	43%
Self Identified Transgender Youth	Avg of 9 individuals per year	Avg of 19 individuals per year



# Female Identified Crisis Program



# What Does Our Data Say?

## Crisis Program

Average Length of Stay in Days	Pre- Gender Specific Programming	Post Gender Specific Programming
Self Identified Female Youth	13 days	23 days
Self Identified Transgender Youth	12 days	33 days

# What Does Our Data Say?

## Drop-In Program

Total Youth Served	Pre-Gender Specific Programming	Post Gender Specific Programming
Self Identified Female Youth	36%	43%
Self Identified Transgender Youth	Avg 13 individuals	Avg 37 individuals

# Drop In Space



# What Does Our Data Say?

## Outreach Program

Total Youth Served	Pre-Gender Specific Programming	Post Gender Specific Programming
Female Identified Youth	38%	46%
Transgender Identified Youth	Avg 9 individuals	Avg 21 individuals

# What Does Our Data Say?

## Crisis Program Highlights

- Male Planned Discharge Rate has increased by 65%
- Female Planned Discharge Rate has increased by 70%
- Transgender Planned Discharge Rate has increased by 150%

# Challenges

- Staff report it is extra challenging to work in a an all female-identified environment
- The female identified residential programs have higher levels of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and youth conflict
- Male identified length of stays have increased but as a result so have male turnaways

# Challenges

- Respecting the physical gender transition process of youth in a shared accommodation program (room assignment, education, safety, trauma histories)
- Making mistakes along the way! ( gender specific assumptions re: programming, “segregated rooms”, stocking of female health products in both sites)



# Gender Assumptions

“Two of the residents and I were walking back from an outing and one of them said, " I heard that the girls program does Spa Nights... why don't we get those?" I asked them if they would like to have a spa night and they shrugged their shoulders and said, "maybe." The next night the team brought in face masks and asked those two guys if they wanted to partake. They both agreed and another two residents joined in. Since that first night, Spa night became a weekly 5 step skin routine involving a heated towel, exfoliant scrub, face masks, beard scrub and moisturizer. The first few weekends those not participating would laugh at the guys for participating in "girls stuff" but it's lead to some great conversations around gender norms, gender stereotypes and self care. It's gotten to the point now where the guys sincerely compliment each other on their glowing skin and try and recruit news guys by promising that their acne will clear up in no time. For one hour every Saturday, the guys close their eyes, listen to Enya and learn the subtle strengths of self care through the art of Spa Night. ”

# Spa Night!



# Expansion Phase 1!



# Questions?

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