CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA

Futures Forward Enhancement Project:

Qualitative Research of Youth Housing First Pilot Project

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Canadian Mental Health Association
Manitoba & Winnipeg
Mental health for all

100 *years of community*

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Introduction

This report is a qualitative evaluation of the *Futures Forward* six-month intensive Housing First pilot project. As such, this report will provide a qualitative analysis of: (1) the pathways to youth homelessness in order to provide broader context of the social conditions which programs like *Futures Forward* are responding to; (2) the experiences of youth leading up to their participation in the program; and (3) the effects or outcomes of the intensive Housing First pilot project from the perspectives of youth participants and program staff.

Background Information:
Futures Forward Enhancement Project

In 2013 a collaboration originally called *Building Futures* (now called *Futures Forward*) was developed through the General Authority of Child and Family Services in partnership with The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Youth Employment Services (YES), and Community Financial Counselling Services (CFCS) to support youth who are in or have been apprehended or had contact with the Child and Family Services (CFS) system in Manitoba. The evidence highlighted in this report overwhelmingly demonstrates that youth who have been apprehended or had contact with the CFS system face poorer life trajectories (life chances and therefore life choices) than those who have not had any contact with CFS including a higher likelihood of experiencing homelessness and mental and emotional distress. As such, the *Futures Forward* program offers advocacy and support for participants in: obtaining educational goals such as high school and post-secondary; identifying and working toward employment opportunities; developing life skills; accessing Indigenous cultural programming; and accessing counselling services.

Despite the need for these supports, within the first year of operations it became clear to program staff that without access to safe and affordable housing, participants continued to experience persistent barriers in obtaining their education, employment, and other life goals. Dealing with these barriers falls beyond the scope of participants' personal efforts or merit since the barriers encountered to safe and affordable housing are structural and systemic in nature including, for example, racism in the housing market. As one program staff member noted, while there are some equitable efforts in the province of Manitoba such as post-secondary tuition waivers for those who have been apprehended by CFS: "You can't complete your university studies if you're living at Salvation Army. It's just not gonna happen." In other words, safe and affordable housing is a necessary component of success with educational, employment, and life skills development, not to mention a primary determinant of health (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010; Patrick, 2014).

As a result, the CMHA obtained funding for a six-month intensive housing pilot project of youth housing with wraparound supports. This pilot project was informed by CMHA's pre-existing Community Housing with Supports (CHS) program, based on the principles of Housing First and harm reduction.

The Housing First philosophy approaches homelessness from the perspective that difficulties people face, such as substance-abuse, are often a *consequence* rather than the *cause* of homelessness. This philosophy understands homelessness from a social perspective rather than from a human-deficit model (characterized by blame-the-victim discourses for socially-produced problems such as poverty and inequitable funding arrangements) (Thistle, 2017; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017). From this perspective, housing approaches that establish barriers and 'housing ready' requirements are insufficient, as people will not becomes 'housing ready' without a stable foundation. Housing First approaches to homelessness are lauded for shifting homelessness strategies to a more rights-based approach which is "designed to meet clients where they are at" (Noble, 2015, p. 6). One *Futures Forward* staff member described the Housing First philosophy as follows:

> And it was that intensive support, it was working with them [participants] over time, it was meeting with them in the community, it was having the knowledge and experience of mental health and addictions and how

it impacts people and how it impacts their interactions with people, not seeing it as like a behavioural problem, not seeing it as just a difficult person to work with, but a person, or people doing the best that they can to manage their circumstances, and sometimes that's with drugs and alcohol. And that's what they're capable of doing at that point in their life because everything else isn't working. And, and so kind of seeing the person behind that and then committing to the work over the long period. (Staff)

Futures Forward was able to offer employment, financial, educational, mental, emotional, and cultural supports as well as Housing First with wrap-around supports (including eviction prevention) to assist the youth participants in achieving their life goals. This programming is consistent with national and international recommendations across the country regarding warp-around program design for youth who are or are at-risk of homelessness (Patrick, 2014; Egilson, 2018; Schwan et. al., 2018a). A federal grant for the six-month pilot project and the help of many in-kind (CMHA) donations supported the project financially.

Research Methodology

After securing approval from the University of Winnipeg Research Ethics Board (REB) two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each *Futures Forward* participant who agreed to participate in the qualitative research component. A first pre-pilot interview was conducted with each participant near the beginning of the pilot project to discuss: previous and current challenges experienced in finding safe and affordable housing; supports needed from the program; experiences aging out of CFS; and other life goals and aspirations. A second interview was conducted at the end of the pilot to discuss: participants' current housing situation; challenges faced and obstacles that remain in securing housing; further supports and services that are needed; and overall reflections from their experience in the *Futures Forward* Housing First pilot. Participants were given a $25 honorarium per interview in the form of a gift card to a location of their choosing in appreciation and recognition of their valuable time and wisdom shared in each interview. A total of 7 participants were interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with *Futures Forward* staff following the conclusion of the pilot project. This included Youth Service Navigator(s), Manager(s), Housing Coordinator(s), and Housing Navigator(s).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were provided to participants who so requested for their review prior to the writing of this report.

A sample of literature on youth homelessness and child welfare involvement was collected and reviewed by the researcher to provide broader context for this work. This included reviewing both academic literature and grey literature (published material from governmental and non-governmental organizations). Interview transcripts were then analyzed for themes pertaining to the usefulness of the housing pilot project in securing safe and affordable housing for the youth participants.

For further details regarding the project's methods including interview questions and consent forms, please see Appendices A, B, and C at the end of this report.

Literature Review

i. Defining Youth Homelessness

The Canadian definition of youth homelessness is: "The situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire stable, safe, or consistent residence" (Schwan et. al., 2018a, p. 7). Figures from a 2016 National Youth Homelessness Survey across Canada show that at least 20 per cent of the homeless population in Canada is comprised of youth (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2018b).

Nationally, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) suggests that there are 35,000–40,000 youth experiencing homelessness in any given year (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2018b). While the COH suggests that youth homelessness is characterized by housing instability (moving from place to place), other literature suggests that for many youth, their housing instability and homelessness began at an early age — often at the onset of child welfare intervention and apprehension (Baskin, 2007; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017).

Moreover, these numbers are likely to be lower than the actual number of youth experiencing homelessness, since youth are more likely to experience what is referred to as 'hidden' or 'concealed' homelessness. This means that youth are more likely to seek out provisional accommodations rather than utilize emergency homeless shelters.

Provisional accommodations can include staying with friends, family, or acquaintances (i.e. couch surfing); renting cheap rooms in boarding houses or hotels; being in jails, transition homes, or detox centres and having nowhere to go upon release; living in overcrowded, unstable, or inadequate housing; or exchanging services like babysitting, selling drugs, or exchanging sex for a place to stay. Provisional accommodations are precarious or unpredictable in nature because there is no "guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing" (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2018a, para. 1). It is important to remember that those experiencing concealed or hidden homelessness will *not* be captured in official data counts on how many people are experiencing homelessness on any given night (Baskin, 2013; Brandon et. al., 2018).

This type of provisional housing and couch surfing can become particularly unsafe for girls and young women who are at a heightened risk

of sexual assault and sexual exploitation. Indeed, The Homeless Hub estimates that:

> 59.6% of homeless youth who are street-involved report violent victimization, meaning they are 6 times more likely to be victimized compared to the general population. As well, the more times a youth experiences homelessness, the more likely they are to be exposed to a number of risks such as sexual exploitation, economic exploitation, traumatic events, declining health and addictions. (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2018b, para. 3)

In this way, youth homelessness is intricately connected with other pressing social and, most importantly, *preventable* human sufferings including Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), sexual exploitation, and youth suicide, therefore requiring urgent attention. (Patrick, 2014; Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016; Egilson, 2018). These social atrocities are being largely ignored by those in positions of authority because they are affecting some of the most marginalized members of our society (Porter, 1968). In the meantime and without due attention, these issues are becoming more exacerbated.

Locally, while the Winnipeg Street Census is not designed to estimate or capture the hidden homeless population, information from the 2018 Street Census can still help to inform our understanding of youth homelessness. While youth are underrepresented in the street census for reasons already discussed, the census does illustrate that for those surveyed, events leading to their homelessness often began in youth, including for those who have experienced chronic homelessness into their adult lives:

> The median age at which people first became homeless was 20 and the most frequent age was 18 years. Of those who experienced homelessness for ten or more years throughout their lives, the majority (62.0 percent) first experienced homelessness when they were 18

years old or younger. The most common reason people experienced homelessness for the first time was family breakdown, abuse, or conflict. 51.5% of people experiencing homelessness had been in the care of Child and Family Services at one point in their lives. 62.4% of them experienced homelessness within one year of leaving care. (Brandon et. al, 2018, p. 5).

This means that preventing, ending, and removing pathways to youth homelessness will result in less homelessness both in the overall population as well as in any one individuals' life course. This is both socially just and cost-effective because any homelessness prevention means less emergency service utilization (Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016).

Youth have been identified as the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in Canada (Hulchanski, Campsie, Chau, Hwang, & Paradis, 2009).). However, this is not the full picture. In particular, the growing and disproportionate homelessness of Indigenous youth has already been declared a "rapidly escalating national emergency" (Patrick, 2014, p. 32). This research on Indigenous youth homelessness is consistent with research suggesting that *as a population*, Indigenous people, regardless of age or gender, are consistently and disproportionately homeless or housed in unsafe conditions (including in structures in violation of building/ health and safety codes as well as in settings with a higher likelihood of being targets of violence). Again, this means that across the life course, Indigenous peoples are more likely to experience homelessness and housing insecurity than are settler Canadians (Patrick, 2014).

In Winnipeg, it is estimated that 84 per cent of youth experiencing homelessness are Indigenous (Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016). Similar patterns are evident across the country. For example, even in cities such as Ottawa whereby Indigenous youth comprise only 1.5 per cent of the city's total population, 20 per cent of the city's street youth are Indigenous (Thistle, 2017). While Indigenous

youth are far from a homogenous group, common themes which emerge in their experiences of homelessness include: poverty and inadequate housing in their early years of life, negative experiences in the child welfare system, and family histories reflective of Canada's ongoing colonialism including grandparents and parents' involvement with residential schools and/or the child welfare system (Baskin, 2013; Patrick, 2014). In Baskin's (2013) research with Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness subsequent to CFS involvement it was found that the youth who participated, "clearly believed that the child welfare system was difficult for them, their families and communities because, according to them, it mirrored residential schooling" (p. 413). Indeed, systemic racism in public systems such as the one we refer to as "Child Welfare" is one of the leading causes of Indigenous youth homelessness and warrants our central concern.

Manitoba has the highest rates of child apprehension in Canada (Wall-Wieler et. al., 2017) and has been described as "ground zero" for not only rates of child apprehension, but also for the rate of deaths of children in care and for the rate of newborn or "birth alert" apprehensions, which are on average, one newborn/day (Pauls, 2018; Malone, 2018; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017). However, CFS policies and practices, specifically around apprehension, do not affect all Manitoban families equally.

Research and a breakdown of current cases consistently shows that Indigenous families are disproportionately under the gaze and intervention of child welfare due primarily to their Indigeneity, class position, and prior involvement with CFS, thus securing and entrenching intergenerational system-involvement (Strega & Esquao, 2009; Baskin, 2013). As a result, the most recent numbers released by the Manitoba provincial government show that there are over 11,000 children in CFS and approximately 90 per cent of them are Indigenous children (Brake, 2019). Data from Manitoba CFS illustrate that

both the number and proportion of Indigenous children apprehended has increased since 2002 (Brownell et. al., 2015). To illustrate, between 2002 and 2014, the number and percentage of Indigenous children being apprehended has increased from 4, 449 (81 per cent) to 8,960 (87 per cent). During the same time period, the number of non-Indigenous children being apprehended has also increased, although much less significantly (1,046 to 1,333) and the percentage of non-Indigenous children being apprehended has actually decreased from 19 percent to 13 percent (Brownell et. al, 2015, p. 3).

Across Canada, not only are there *three times* as many Indigenous youth in the child welfare system today than there were in residential schools at their peak in the 1940s (Baskin, 2013), but also, in Manitoba, more children on average die while in the 'care' of CFS than died during the residential school era: "According to the AMC [Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs], 546 Manitoba children died in the child welfare system between 2008 and 2016. At an average of 68 each year, that's more than during the residential school era" (Pauls, 2018, para. 12).

Once apprehended, there is demonstrable evidence that these youth generally face negative life trajectories. Even the current federal minister of Crown-Indigenous relations, Carolyn Bennet, publicly noted in Winnipeg in June 2018 that there are "perverse incentives in this system people are calling [the] child welfare industry" whereby more funds are provided for child apprehensions than are made available to support families who are struggling to provide for their own children (Taylor, 2018a, para.11). In this way, child apprehensions become financially incentivized despite overwhelming evidence that children apprehended, particularly those removed from their languages and cultures, do not fare well (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017).

To provide some examples from the local and national level, youth who have been apprehended are more likely than children who have

not been apprehended to: experience homelessness (Courtney, Nino, & Peters, 2014; Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, 2014; DiStaio, Sareen, & Isaak, 2014; Drabble & McInnes, 2017); experience pre-mature death (Egilson, 2018); be criminalized (May, 2019); die by suicide (Egilson, 2018; Schwan et al., 2018a); experience sexual exploitation (Patrick, 2014); have their own children apprehended (Baskin, 2013); be missing or murdered (Taylor, 2018b).

The documented and demonstrated evidence of poor trajectories and outcomes of youth who have been apprehended by child welfare is overwhelming. Given that Indigenous families are much more likely to be scrutinized and are therefore overrepresented among those whose children have been apprehended (both nationally and locally), the CFS system in Manitoba is part of structural, systemic, and financially incentivized racism toward Indigenous peoples. These state actions and the documented poor trajectories of youth taken into state 'care' are consistent with the criteria for genocide as outlined in Article II in the *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (UN General Assembly, 1948). As was noted in in Volume 5 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC):

> Aboriginal children are still being separated from their families and communities and placed in the care of child welfare agencies. Like the schools, child welfare agencies are underfunded, often culturally inappropriate, and, far too often, put Aboriginal children in unsafe situations. The child welfare system is the residential school system of our day. (p. 4)

Since the child welfare system has so clearly failed to "protect" youth, particularly Indigenous youth from neglect, new approaches are badly needed. Restoring First Nation jurisdiction of children (as this was never conceded) through an Indigenous-created Child and Family Act and as will be discussed, efforts to decrease family pover-

ty are necessary first steps (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017; Baskin, 2013). Indeed, calls for restoring Indigenous jurisdiction over child welfare have been made repeatedly in multiple provincial inquiries and national commissions including the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (Chartrand & Whitecloud, 2011, Vol. 1); The Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry (Hughes, 2013, Vol. 2); The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 2); the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015); and the most recent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019, V. 1a).

ii. Strengths and Aspirations of the Youth

Previous research on Indigenous youth who had been involved with child welfare and who are or had experienced homelessness in Winnipeg illustrates that despite often profoundly negative life experiences and social conditions, the youth held and practiced a variety of strengths and values. These include: self-control, active involvement in their communities, resourcefulness, friendship, sharing, protecting, looking to the future, and a desire to take care of others (Brown et. al., 2007). This has been confirmed with subsequent research on youth homelessness in Winnipeg (Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016). Research with comparable populations in Calgary and Lethbridge have also produced consistent findings (Patrick, 2014).

As will be discussed in the *Findings* section of this report, the youth interviewed for this qualitative evaluation project showed incredible strengths and aspirations for their own futures, as well as for building a better world for their loved ones, community members, and humanity at large. Given their own negative experiences in the CFS system, youth participants who were interviewed expressed profound concerns for their peers and other youth who are in CFS including other family members. Indeed, youths' participation in this evaluation project is testament to their desire to

ensure that future youth do not have to experience the struggles that they have fought through. All youth interviewed expressed desire to be independent of state systems such as CFS, EIA, and in some cases, the prison system. All youth interviewed expressed desire to contribute and engage positively with their families, communities, and society but faced persistent structural and systemic barriers to realizing their goals.

iii. Structural, Systemic, and Family Pathways to and Barriers from Exiting Homelessness

Much research on youth homelessness uses a *socio-ecological model* for understanding pathways into and barriers from exiting homelessness (Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016; Schwan et. al., 2018a; Schwan et. al, 2018b). This model is useful for understanding how youth homelessness becomes constituted or real and considers (1) Structural Factors, (2) System Failures, and (3) Individual and Relational Factors.

Structural factors refer to "broad systemic, economic, and societal issues that occur at a societal level that affect opportunities, social environments, and outcomes for individuals" (Schwan et. al, p. 3, 2018b). Structural factors include things like poverty, lack of housing, colonization, racism, inequity and discrimination, harmful societal beliefs and values, and adverse childhood experiences. As such, efforts to prevent structural causes are of utmost importance in capturing the proverbial 'root' of the problem. Examples of structural prevention efforts include:

- Poverty Reduction & Elimination: Family poverty (growing up poor) is detrimental to youth's development, educational outcomes, access to living-wage employment, and other significant life trajectories (Brownell et. al., 2016).
- Increasing the Availability of Affordable Housing: Countries with the lowest rates

of homelessness have invested the most in affordable housing. Also shown to be effective are targeted housing subsidies as well as penalizing landlords and rental agencies for discriminatory actions (Schwan et. al, 2018a).

- Homelessness Prevention Policy and Legislation: Increasing the amount of affordable housing stock to make Housing First more effective.

Evidence strongly suggests that interventions focused on reducing poverty, increasing incomes, and improving access to affordable housing for families living below the poverty line can effectively reduce the risk factors associated with youth homelessness (Schwan et. al, 2018a). Research shows that this is badly needed in Manitoba. For example, in 2016 it was reported by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that Mantioba fares as one of the worst provinces in the country regarding child poverty (MacDonald & Wilson, 2016). Winnipeg has the highest Indigenous child poverty rate (42 per cent) and 76 per cent of status First Nation children living on reserve in Manitoba are growing up in poverty and are therefore facing continuing inequitable life opportunities (MacDonald & Wilson, 2016, p. 6). Youth and families who have experienced child welfare apprehension as well as leading scholars on this subject matter often understand poverty to be the fundamental issue precipitating the accusation of 'neglect' (Brown et. al., 2007; Bennett, 2008; Baskin, 2013; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017). As a result, efforts to ameliorate this racialized poverty such as honouring the Treaties (which includes returning lands and equitable resource sharing) will result in less family poverty, fewer child welfare apprehensions, and less youth homelessness.

System Failures refer to "situations in which inadequate policy and service delivery within and between systems contribute to the likelihood that someone will experience homeless-

ness" (Schwan et. al, p. 3, 2018b). System failures can include obstacles to accessing public systems (e.g. current wait times in Manitoba for addictions treatment), failed transitions from publicly funded institutions and systems (e.g. aging out of CFS into homelessness), and silos and gaps both within and between government funded departments and systems. Commonly known system failures in Manitoba directly contributing to youth homelessness include being discharged or released from government authorities, programs, or services without a plan for housing. This includes from hospitals, mental health and addictions programs, jails, and, most significantly, from CFS placements. Systemic prevention of youth homelessness then, requires "dismantling the processes through which public systems … contribute to youths' trajectories into homelessness" (Schwan, p. 17, 2018a).

Efforts to address systemic failures leading to youth homelessness can include better alignment of government and community systems to ensure that nobody is discharged from institutional state 'care' into homelessness. Additionally, since we are said to be in an era of reconciliation, addressing system failures involves decolonizing, such as implementing Indigenous self-determination and jurisdiction of systems which disproportionately effect Indigenous youth such as the CFS and the criminal justice system. These systems are increasingly being recognized as industries whereby Indigenous youth are treated as commodities (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs,

2017). This assertion is reflected in the current rates of those incarcerated and apprehended as well as the funding schemes which incentivize their confinement, sometimes leading to young adults who have lived most of their young lives in institutional settings.

Finally, *individual and relational factors* refer "to the personal circumstances that place people at risk of homelessness" (Schwan, 2018b, p. 3). This can include: Family conflict, abuse and neglect, personal and family crises, social exclusion and isolation, and violence in the community. While there are best practices for programs and services to address the personal circumstances that may make one more vulnerable to homelessness, it is imperative to understand personal circumstances as always already bounded or constrained by what is going on at the systemic and structural level. Thus, individual and relational factors are better understood as consequences or outcomes of structural and systemic factors. For example, sovereignty, self-determination, self-governance, and proper restitutions and reparations to Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations are pre-requisites for healthy communities, families, and individuals. For these reasons, individual-level interventions may have the potential to alleviate some immediate suffering for some individuals, but can never solve the structural and systemic nature of these problems. Without direct action and advocacy at the structural level, we will continue to spin our wheels in the mud.

Futures Forward Intensive Housing Pilot Evaluation Findings

i. Quantitative Results

Quantitative results of the Futures Forward Intensive Housing pilot are as follows:

- A total of thirteen youth were offered housing supports

- Seven youth were housed and provided with wrap-around supports

- Eviction Prevention Plans were completed for seven youth

- Crisis Prevention and Recovery Plans for seven youth

Wrap-around supports provided over the course of the pilot included:

- Completing housing searches, viewing and applying for apartments

- Accessing identification

- Accessing financial resources

- Obtaining furniture and needed resources to set up their apartments

- Learning skills to live independently such as budgeting, cleaning, cooking and organizing

- Obtaining primary care

- Obtaining mental health supports

- Accessing food security

- Re-connecting with natural supports

- Referrals for counselling, mental health supports, accessing doctors, and other resources

- Reducing harms associated with substance abuse and accessing addictions treatment

ii. Staff Interviews

Interviews conducted with program staff regarding their evaluation of and reflections on the housing pilot revealed the following themes: time, funding and staffing, Winnipeg's low-income rental market, and funding cuts to Child and Family Services (CFS).

Time

All staff members interviewed emphasized the necessity of understanding Housing First as a process. Thus, housing stability typically happens over time and usually *does not* happen in the first placement. This can be due to a variety of factors including poor housing conditions in Winnipeg's low-income rental housing market; tenancy disrupted by addictions or mental and

emotional distress; or tenancy disrupted due to incarceration.

Because of these factors, staff members interviewed found that a six-month pilot did not allow staff to work with participants to secure safe and affordable housing. Indeed, staff suggested that it could take up to six months just to establish a relationship with a rental housing provider in the city who is willing to work with the program.It is only because the CMHA had an existing Community Housing with Supports (CHS) Housing First program for adults that they had existing housing connections to work with in order to facilitate a shorter-time period. It was clear through interviews with program staff that while some participants were housed during the pilot, the potential was there to reach more people if given more time.

Having a permanently-funded Housing First program as part of the *Futures Forward* program would provide consistency for participants and would presumably increase trust rather than forcing youth to have to piece together programs and services from numerous agencies and organizations across the city. Also, mental and emotional distress, substance use, and other consequences of trauma among participants, means that securing safe and affordable housing simply takes more time:

> That's one of the surprising things I think with this program is that how many individual working hours it takes in order to get somebody stabilized in an apartment. (Staff)

Frontline staff noted the imperative of time in dealing with participants, particularly those using substances. When asked what they thought could be done to help mitigate situations with exacerbated substance use, one frontline staff member again noted the necessity of time:

> I think just a lot more patience and time spent with the participant kind of talking about safe use and talking about harm reduction, and

really taking like an understanding approach to it. (Staff)

It is imperative that Housing First with wrap around supports such as that offered by *Futures Forward* receive long-term funding in order to provide sufficient time for staff to secure safe and affordable housing with participants. It must be remembered that by the time they arrive at *Futures Forward*, participants' difficulties are often greatly exacerbated by the accumulation of the structural and systemic failures previously noted.

Funding & Staffing

In order for the program to integrate the Housing First philosophy over the long term, permanent funding is required at a sufficient level to support additional staff. Interviews with frontline staff revealed that for the program to continue successfully, long-term funding sufficient for an additional housing worker and a full-time housing coordinator is required. Generally speaking, housing workers and coordinators play a central role in Housing First programs because they are the link between the participants/tenants and the landlord/property management. Without the housing workers and coordinators, the relationship breaks down or is never formed in the first place. For example, the housing worker noted how their presence is often what persuaded landlords and property managers to even consider renting to participants:

> And the first person we actually housed was with our housing coordinator and it was the landlord had said, he goes, 'I'm gonna be honest with you, if it weren't for you two,' and he pointed to myself and my colleague, he goes, 'I wouldn't have even given this person a shot,' … 'I wouldn't have even considered this person. But because I know the support that you guys are providing and you'll be in here daily, I'm willing to try this out.' (Staff)

Specifically, the call for an additional housing worker is two-fold: first, to be able to reach more participants in offering direct housing supports including apartment searches, going to viewings, and obtaining furniture and basic supplies. Second, staff expressed concerns regarding safety if there is only one housing worker doing home visits. Having two housing workers allows the program to be flexible and more responsive in working with clients while also facilitating safety for staff who are sometimes in situations where there is potential for violence or escalation.

Significantly, if staffing levels are insufficient, participants' attempts at outreaching and working with the program may not be responded to, thus decreasing the trust of the participants. Sufficient staffing would allow the program to achieve its potential — support for participants that is relational and trust-based. Having adequate staff would allow the program to be both flexible and effective in working with participants, illustrated by the following remarks from staff members:

> The flip side of that is that we've got 300 plus participants who we are kind of connected with right now and a majority of them need some sort of change in housing stability so this is just sort of scratching the surface. (Staff)

> … having two housing workers would be I think paramount in reaching more people. (Staff)

Regarding the housing coordinator, staff noted that while 10 per cent of the pre-existing CMHA CHS housing coordinator's time was allocated toward securing housing for *Futures Forward* participants, *much* more of her time was utilized (approximately 35 per cent) thus making it necessary to call for an additional housing coordinator. Additionally, other staff from the CHS team (beyond the Housing Coordinator) provided support, assistance, and advice to Futures Forward staff throughout the pilot that is not necessarily quantifiable.

While *Futures Forward* staff reported having over 300 files open with participants who sometimes need more intensive support at various times, what is consistent is that nearly all participnats have a housing need at some point during their time with the program.

Winnipeg's Low-Income Rental Market
As noted in the introduction, from the beginning of the *Futures Forward* program (previously called *Building Futures*), staff were aware that access to safe and affordable housing was the missing component to their work:

> That is one of the main needs that they [participants] have — housing — when they arrive here. (Staff)

> Most of the people that I work with have at one point struggled with homelessness. Whether that's just sort of housing instability or uh couch surfing or direct street entrenchment. Very few of them go to shelters. (Staff)

However, the current low-income rental housing stock itself is limiting to work with in terms of availability, quality/condition, and cost of the rental units.

In Manitoba, Manitoba Housing provides social housing whereby rent is calculate at 30 per cent of one's monthly income. This is also referred to as rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing. However, currently in Manitoba, the social and affordable units managed by Manitoba Housing are not enough to fill the current need. To illustrate: "As of May 31, 2016 there were 2,050 families, 689 seniors, 966 single adults and special needs clients on the waiting list for social housing" (Glowacki, 2017, para. 22). As a result, the shortage of social housing forces people into the privately owned low-income rental market which has glaring issues regarding quality of housing in the face of a profit-incentive. (Brandon & Silver, 2015).

Issues with the quality of Winnipeg's private low-income housing include: rampant bed

bug and cockroach infestations, mice, mold, de-teriorating rooming houses that do not meet basic living standards, and negligent, preda-tory, and/ or absentee landlords (Brandon & Silver, 2015, Drabble & McInnes, 2017) Health problems resulting from poor housing include respiratory diseases and asthma due to molds and poor ventilation, and the mental health impacts of living in survival mode (Brandon & Silver, 2015).

Additionally, the ways in which landlords and property managers act as housing gatekeepers in the significant authority and discretion they have in who to rent to was noted by staff. Because of the low vacancy rate in Winnipeg, landlords and property managers are able to pick whom to rent to from a pool of applicants and even apartment viewings are done in groups, despite apartment conditions being less-than-desirable due to bug infestations and active drug-use in many buildings. This should not be surprising given that, "The vacancy rate for bachelor units in Winnipeg was 2.7 per cent in October 2017. That's 100 units across the whole city. The av-erage rent for a bachelor unit increased by 3.8 per cent" (Brandon et. al., 2018, p. 8). This sets the stage for discriminatory rental practices on the basis of applicants' age, record of system-involvement, and/or ethnicity, for example. In-deed, housing discrimination toward Indigenous peoples, for example, has been documented in Winnipeg and across Canada (Cohen & Corra-do, 2004; Thistle, 2017).

As a result of these conditions in the rental market, participants were not always housed in a location of their choosing. While this was out of necessity, this is inconsistent with the Hous-ing First philosophy whereby participants have their choice of housing. Additionally, the condi-tion and location of housing that could be secured for participants could contribute to the tenancy breaking down which is obviously counter-pro-ductive to the purpose of the program. As one staff member noted:

> Often it's not the best neighbourhood, it's not the best for a mental health or addictions recovery. It, it would be very difficult for us to find an apartment building that didn't have you know, bed bugs or other tenants in the building that were experiencing, you know, addictions, which is often, often triggering for people. So that's another obstacle we had was just the lack of available, affordable, safe housing in Winnipeg. (Staff)

Moreover, staff noted not only issues surround-ing the condition and cost of private low-income rental units and the discriminatory attitudes of landlords and property managers, but also that many of the participants would not qualify for or utilize other housing programs leaving them in a serious policy/service gap, foreclosing both private endeavors to obtain housing as well as those provided through non-governmental and community-based organizations:

> Our clients don't, because they don't go through the shelter system and because the traditional Housing First programs in Winnipeg are sort of based around direct street-entrenchment homelessness, it's difficult for us. (Staff)

This speaks to the critical importance of Hous-ing First projects for youth such as that offered through the *Futures Forward* housing pilot project.

Funding Cuts to Child and Family Services (CFS)
Recently, provincial funding cuts to Child and Family Services have been announced whereby the province will "reduce service fees to a max-imum of $20 a day for approximately 130 foster parents of young adults. The service fees for all foster care providers of 18- to 21-year-olds will be capped at a maximum of $20 a day" (Brohm-an, 2019, para. 3). These cuts are being imposed on youth in CFS who are on the verge of 'aging out' which has the effect of increasing their po-tential for homelessness. Frontline staff noted

the effects this will have on their work and the programming, services, and supports they offer, due to a higher demand and a potentially larger population of homeless youth subsequent to their CFS involvement. Staff worry that this will significantly increase their workload and make them less available to participants:

> There's also been pretty enormous cuts to Child and Family Services Supports. There was announced a few weeks ago some big cuts to foster programs which means that a lot of people are losing their extensions of care so we are already starting to get phone calls from schools on behalf of students who are in school and going to be losing CFS supports, facing homelessness. . . Those cuts are big and they're gonna disproportionately affect young people who are leaving CFS care.

Funding cuts to CFS make long-term funding for Housing First with wrap-around supports for *Futures Forward* all the more imperative while at the same time threatening to strain existing supports due to increased need.

iii. Participant Interviews

Interviews with participants at the beginning of the six-month Housing First pilot project confirmed that participants faced many structural and systemic barriers to finding and keeping safe, affordable housing. These included the conditions of the low-income private rental housing market in Winnipeg (discussed further below) and Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) budgets or wages as insufficient to remain housing secure (not spending more than 30 per cent of one's monthly income on rent). Limited access to financial resources in this way also created barriers to moving or initially obtaining housing as this requires payment of first month's rent, damage deposits, and set-up/moving costs. While some youth were couch-surfing at the time of the first interview, others shared experiences of previous housing breaking down because too much of their monthly income was going toward rent.

Youth interviewed shared many goals and aspirations for the future including educational goals (completing high school and/or pursuing post-secondary education), employment goals, a desire to be independent, and a general sense of wanting to gain stability in order to pursue these goals with success. Supports needed as expressed by participants in order to achieve their life goals included first and foremost safe and affordable housing. Other necessary resources for success include affordable transportation (Winnipeg transit fare increases have meant that some participants face barriers to even getting around), not being cut-off of EIA when trying to pursue education, one-on-one tutoring toward completing high school, and ongoing peer and emotional supports.

Many of these challenges were a direct result of youth being discharged from CFS without adequate transition planning and supports. For instance, youth expressed feeling "dropped" by CFS workers and subsequently having insufficient money for housing, school, and other necessities and quickly falling into debt. Participants expressed how accumulating debt and low credit ratings as a result of this survival strategy often became another barrier to obtaining housing over the long-term. Participants described their mental and emotional health as taking a hit during this time due to the stress of feeling that "everything's falling apart". For some participants, CFS workers became like family, and having such fundamental relationships suddenly end left them feeling alone and unsupported.

As a result, participants suggested the following things that CFS could do to ensure youth who are transitioning out of child welfare find and keep safe, stable housing: maintain relationships with workers who sometimes become like family; open communication and collaboration with youth and families; secure a housing plan upon discharge from CFS including eviction pre-

vention; job training and securing employment with adequate income; and providing cooking and budgeting skills.

Interviews with program participants following the six-month Housing First pilot project revealed the following themes: Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) barriers; failures of Child Welfare intervention; intergenerational impacts and effects; participants looking to be reunited with their own children; low-income rental market and behaviour of landlords, caretakers, and property managers; participants' experiences of homelessness and the importance of social support and inclusion; and finally, the impacts of the *Futures Forward* housing pilot.

Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Barriers

For many youth who are discharged from CFS, their only transition planning is being set up with EIA. Youth interviewed who were on EIA at the time of the interview expressed a desire to move off of EIA to obtain employment. For other participants, EIA was required in the meantime in order to have some income to try to move forward toward housing and other life goals. However, barriers were encountered to even registering with EIA due to ID requirements. For instance, one youth described the struggle to get all of the paper work and ID requirements for EIA as follows: "... it was a wild goose chase to try to get those things together." This is consistent with data collected in the *Winnipeg Plan to End Youth Homelessness* (Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016) whereby it was found that "income assistance [EIA] was described by youth to be one of the most difficult systems to navigate" (p. 12).

The point of income support programs such as EIA is to be a social safety net for Manitobans who are negatively impacted by structural and systemic failures and inequities. Youth who have been discharged from CFS and who do not have financial support from biological family, for example, need to be supported in obtaining access to financial resources in order to have equal opportunities as their cohorts.

For those participants who were on EIA, the budget was so constraining that it negatively effected life choices and life chances. While housing is understood to be a primary social determinant of health, current EIA budgets give recipients little choice but to occupy substandard housing and even then, participants were spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent:

> Still feel kind of overwhelmed because of the expenses and how expensive rent is. And, you know, like after you spend your money on rent and food then you're pretty much left with nothing. (Youth Participant)

> And the houses that you do find there's like a lot of bad stuff that happens in them. (Youth Participant)

> And I think that the only places that are gonna let me live there are not places that I wanna live. (Youth Participant)

In addition to having to occupy substandard housing, EIA also created barriers which prevented youth participants from going back to school.

> I originally told them [EIA] that I wanted to go to school and my worker told me that I had to find a job and if I were to go to school then they'd stop my benefits. And it's not like I have friends or family who would help me, you know? (Youth Participant)

In this way, participants are faced with the following 'choices': (1) Remain on EIA budget which leaves one living in poverty; (2) Register for school and be cut off from EIA (which would leave one unable to pursue schooling); or (3) Seek out employment as per EIA demands which leaves one often making poverty wages. As one participant noted in relation to their current job:

> You think I love doing what I do? Working my ass off for what, ninety dollars ($90) a day when

there's bad things that you can do for more? (Youth Participant)

It becomes clear then how EIA traps people in poverty and creates unsafe situations whereby doing "bad things" such as selling drugs or exchanging money for sex actually becomes a viable 'option'.

Failures of Child Welfare Intervention

There is a great irony in that children who are removed from their home, often for reasons labelled as "neglect" are statistically more likely to end up themselves homeless or in inadequate housing at the failure of and subsequent to the intervention of the Child Welfare System (Courtney, Nino & Peters, 2014; Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, 2014; DiStasio, Sareen, & Isaak, 2014; Drabble & McInnes, 2017). Across the country and particularly in Manitoba which has the highest rates of child apprehension in Canada (Wall-Wieler et. al., 2017), youth who have been apprehended by child welfare are more likely to experience on average: pre-mature death (Egilson, 2018); criminalization (May, 2019), suicide (Egilson, 2018), sexual exploitation (Patrick, 2014), having their own children apprehended (Baskin, 2013), and/or becoming missing or murdered (Taylor, 2018b) than youth who have not been apprehended by child welfare.

Child welfare intervention must be understood from a family perspective rather than an individual one. There is research demonstrating that *both* children who have been apprehended as well as mothers whose children have been apprehended are more likely to become homeless or be at risk of homelessness as compared with those who have not had contact with the child welfare system (Baskin, 2013; Drabble & McInnes, 2017; Wall-Wieler et al., 2017). All youth interviewed had negative experiences with CFS as illustrated by the following excerpts:

So, now I'm just back into the situation that I was in before I went to CFS. (Youth Participant)

… There's so many of us that are aging out of care every year. So many. But like, I feel like we're like so forgotten about … I just feel like it's so sad when you think about what actually happens to the kids, especially the girls. Like, it just kills me, like so much of my friends they're like in these such bad positions and it's just so, I don't wanna say it's, it's definitely worse for females, man. There's so much sexual exploitation that happens to us because we don't have anywhere to go, you know? It's very sad. (Youth Participant)

I'm a just throw this piece out that everyone's talking about this missing Indigenous women and everything, you guys should be, like you guys are basically handing them over kids when you're kicking them and driving them to the welfare office at eighteen (18) or nineteen (19) … What do you think these girls are gonna do? Of course they're gonna, 'Oh, I'm gonna go with this guy and have a dream that I'm gonna go to Calgary and make money for myself'. Like, bad shit happens to them. (Youth Participant)

CFS apprehends children based on the notion that one's biological family is unable to care for them, but evidence is overwhelming that youth who have been apprehended face poor life trajectories. As one participant noted, "Why would you dis a parent if you're going to do the same thing in the end?" This is consistent with national studies of youth homelessness whereby it was concluded that "A crucial finding of this study is the frequency with which young people felt that child welfare workers failed to protect them from abuse and neglect, or contributed to their experiences of isolation and marginalization" (Schwan, et al., 2018b, p. 81).

Intergenerational Impacts and Effects

Some of the greatest pain expressed by participants was not only going through CFS oneself, but seeing loved ones being taken by the system and feeling helpless to do anything about

it while knowing the traumas their loved ones will experience. For some participants, this was too heavy to discuss. Other participants talked about the intergenerational impacts and effects of CFS-involvement:

> Like, girls that I've grown up with and like they have to take drugs to cope with it or their kid will get taken from them and they just lose it. Like CFS taking their kids … That's very stressful because like especially if you're in CFS, you never want your kid to go to CFS. But, they're already in your life, you know? And like, those are stressors that will trigger anyone to do drugs." (Youth Participant)

Additionally, while living in a hyper-individualized society, participants should be praised, celebrated, honoured, and ultimately rewarded for their efforts to gain financial stability not merely for themselves, but in the hopes of supporting other family members (often siblings), in order to put a stop to intergenerational poverty, CFS and EIA involvement. As one participant noted in relation to their siblings:

> Just that, I wanna be able to go back to school. And, it's one of my goals for the next five or six years. And I wanna have like money and a good house and stuff for my siblings. (Youth Participant)

Indeed, the theme of the intergenerational impacts and effects of child welfare involvement and homelessness reflected in this research project are consistent with findings from the most recent Winnipeg Street Census (Brandon et al., 2018) whereby intergenerational patterns of homelessness and CFS involvement were identified.

Participants Looking to be Re-United with Their Own Children

Child welfare involvement and housing are intricately connected given that inadequate housing is often cited as a reason for both child apprehensions as well as refusing to reunite families. Youth participants who have children expressed their desire to obtain housing to accommodate them:

> Having my own place just to feel comfortable at and I guess having a place where I can have my kids back. … But I can't really do that either because lots of two-bedrooms are expensive and I only live off of so much. (Youth Participant)

One can see how housing security is related to intergenerational impacts through the circular arguments and policies of child welfare and their lack of coordination with EIA and housing. Children can be apprehended under the category of 'neglect' if the parent or family is living in substandard or inadequate housing (Baskin, 2013). For primary caregivers who are receiving income assistance, their income will then be reduced, often forcing them to move from their current residence because it is no longer affordable. If the parent or caregiver does not have housing to accommodate one bedroom per child, they will be deemed 'ineligible' to be re-united with their children. However, without receiving the income assistance child benefit, parents are unable to afford housing to accommodate one bedroom per child to then be re-united with their own children (Drabble & McInnes, 2017).

The documented mental and emotional distress of having one's children apprehended by the state is seriously exacerbated by such CFS and EIA policies which effectively punish primary caregivers for experiencing poverty. In this way, parents are punished for experiencing poverty with some of the most drastic assaults on one's dignity by having their children apprehended and losing their housing allowance/child benefits. Additionally, young women who become pregnant while in CFS are at highest risks for birth alerts (Wall-Wieler et. al., 2018). Given the overwhelming evidence that youth who have been in CFS are at a higher risk of homelessness or housing insecurity, providing safe and affordable housing to youth aging out of CFS is of utmost importance. This also has the potential to

reduce intergenerational involvement in CFS by strengthening families' abilities to care for each other. As one participant who was seeking to be re-united with their children noted in relation to needing adequate housing for their child:

> And that's like the main problem with the CFS. And that's one of the main things that they use against you, right?[Inadequate Housing] (Youth Participant)

It is clear that resources need to be re-directed to support families, particularly given Manitoba's reputation of having a "humanitarian crisis of child welfare" based on a system which financially incentivizes apprehensions (Brake, 2019, para. 3).

Low-Income Rental Market and Behaviour of Landlords, Caretakers, and Property Managers
While Manitoba Housing provides social housing (rent-geared-to-income based on 30 per cent of one's monthly income), the waitlists are too long. Participants expressed frustration in trying to access Manitoba Housing but ultimately gave up on this being an option.

Consistent with reflections from program staff, participants recognized the reality that in Winnipeg's private low-income rental market, it is not only almost impossible to find rental units within one's budget, but that which is available is often unsafe and/or over-run with rodents/pests.

> And right now, you can only get into a rooming house for $600. Who else is gonna be in a rooming house with you, right? Sharing a bathroom. I know my friend's in a rooming house — she like had a lot of bad experience because there's like a lot of drugs in the rooming house. So, I feel like that's definitely not — a really negative place because I've already been down that road. Trying to, still in recovery. (Youth Participant)

Participants are often in situations where the odds are against them in securing safe and affordable housing. For example, even once one has obtained a rental unit, there are virtually no means to address discriminatory behaviour of landlords, property managers, and/or caretakers on the basis of age, gender, system-involvement, perceived ethnicity, and/or class. Discriminatory behaviours of landlords, property managers, and caretakers includes building files against tenants, refusing to rent to potential tenants, or failing to respond to tenant complaints or fix what is broken in the rental unit.

Housing requirements for co-signers, damage deposits, and guarantors screen out many people on the basis of class. It has already been summarized in this report how youth aging out of CFS have been removed from their biological families, often lose touch with their social workers who may have become "like family", and often have no financial supports except those who were passed on to the EIA system. These youth are at a clear disadvantage in meeting such requirements for low-income housing because they are marginalized from accessing financial resources and those who could otherwise network for them. Youth who have not been apprehended by child welfare are more likely to be in a position where they could get a parent or family friend to be a co-signor or guarantor. Additionally, housing discrimination leads to a lack of rental references, which then serves as a further barrier to obtaining housing. For many participants, having to survive on their own from a young age resulted in 'bad credit' which similarly then becomes a further barrier to obtaining housing. This can often lead to despair and a general sense of defeat:

> Well not being able to find housing or not being able to find anything you kinda just like, what's easier? The drug world's easier. (Youth Participant)

Participants' Experiences of Homelessness and the Importance of Social Support and Inclusion

Consistent with the literature summarized at the outset of this report, some participants described their homelessness as beginning at a young age, often at the onset of CFS involvement. This confirms that homelessness is much more than lacking a physical structure, but also involves an assault on one's sense of self and diminished meaningful social relationships (Thistle, 2017). Consistent with the Indigenous definition of homelessness whereby to be homeless is first and foremost to be disconnected from *All my Relations*, obtaining a physical space was not enough to feel 'at home' for many participants:

> And yeah, I just, that didn't feel like my house. It didn't feel like my home. I wanted it to be. That was what I wanted to have to happen. I wanted that to be my place.

Almost all participants referenced mental and emotional distress in one way or another stemming from their social circumstances. Participants also referenced friends and family who were no longer around, in a 'bad place' or who have died. Participants expressed a sense of isolation and exclusion culminating in a profound sense of "who gives a f***?" This is consistent with research indicating that exiting homelessness for the long term requires not only a physical structure, but also relational and social support networks (Schwan et. al. 2018a).

> Because being in our situations can be a struggle and can bring people down into a deep depression. (Youth Participant)

Participants' needs for social support and inclusion should not be surprising given that social exclusion is understood to be a social determinant of ill-health (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

Impacts of Futures Forward Program and Housing Pilot

Youth spoke highly about supports offered through the Futures Forward program, particularly the emotional support and encouragement from frontline service navigators. Consistent with previous remarks regarding the importance of social support and inclusion, participants expressed the most gratitude for the emotional support they found in frontline staff.

> … they're gonna be there for me when I need someone to be there. That's the most important part. (Youth Participant)

> I don't know if it was to not be here [Futures Forward] I think there would be a lot more people doing a lot worse than they are, if that makes sense. I think that this place is very important to a lot of youth out there. Because this is where they probably find most of their support. (Youth Participant)

> She's [Futures Forward staff] my biggest support. (Youth Participant)

> I guess you can say Futures Forward was my family from the past little while. 'Cuz they have done what I thought was unreachable. (Youth Participant)

The appreciation expressed by these youth is consistent with research demonstrating that youth who have the support of adults who care about them are more likely to better rate their own mental health (Egilson, 2018).

Specific to the Housing First pilot project, youth expressed appreciation in housing workers providing rides to go to apartment viewings, obtaining furniture and basic supplies, communicating with landlords, caretakers, and property managers, advocating for tenants, and coming to check on them once they were housed. Daily visits from housing workers helped participants not only to stay on top of maintaining their housing, but also to feel a sense of support:

And they're [housing workers] helping 'cuz they check up on us. [The housing worker] checks on us every day. So that helps too 'cuz it reminds me of things that I have to do. (Youth Participant)

… when they come check up on you and it's like they're always on your side. They're like trying to help you. (Youth Participant)

… my worker would come, come by and she would check up on me. I liked that. (Youth Participant)

Also, youth felt more confident in dealing with housing when they had the support of the housing worker:

Like, it looks really professional when you go there with someone. Like, landlords kinda think that like if they see someone like me, maybe they can take advantage of, you know? (Youth Participant)

Despite these positive impacts and consistent with feedback from staff, participants expressed frustration at the lack of time they had to work with the Housing First program to secure safe and affordable housing. For some, there was not enough time to obtain housing at all:

I wasn't able to get housing because I was only, I was only in the program for a very short amount of time. Like, by the time I got into the program there was probably only three weeks left. (Youth Participant)

While some who obtained housing remained housed at the time of the second interview, for others the housing broke down due to discriminatory actions of the landlords/property managers, eviction, or incarceration, for example. This illustrates the necessity of permanent funding for Housing First programs such as that offered through this pilot project. Such participants expressed desire to continue to work on maintaining housing, but the short-term nature of the housing pilot prevented them from being able to do so, causing some of them to feel a sense of despair and loneliness:

At the time I just felt like stressed out, like a lot still even though that I got my first place. I don't know, but I still feel like that 'cuz now I don't have a place and I just have to start all over again. (Youth Participant)

Again consistent with staff interviews, participants revealed that the consequences of inadequate short-term funding ultimately fall on them as their correspondence may at times go unanswered due to the high work load and that time literally ran out for some participants to obtain housing.

For those participants who were able to obtain or retain (through eviction prevention) housing, the results were not only the prevention of (continued) homelessness for such participants, but also an increased sense of personal competency as an outcome of being supported:

Closing thoughts is yes, the program has helped me more than I can say, and I'm not good at expressing my feeling so I'm not gonna get all mushy-gushy. But, they have helped me, they fought off one of the biggest things that I've ever dealt with as an adult and without being part of any like CFS program or any like BNL or anything. Like this is the first thing I've had to truly deal with on my own. … I personally think they should make it a thing because there is a number of people I know could use the supports that I have received. (Youth Participant)

Conclusion

This report has outlined the Futures Forward Housing First pilot project. After providing a nuanced literature review for broader context, this report summarized and analyzed themes that emerged out of interviews with both *Futures Forward* youth participants as well as staff members.

Consistent with the broader literature on youth homelessness as a consequence or outcome of structural and systemic failures, youth who have been discharged from the CFS system require access to supportive programming and services which address all social determinants of health — including safe and affordable housing — most of which have been seriously violated preceding their arrival at *Futures Forward*.

Without access to safe and affordable housing such as that offered through the *Futures Forward* pilot project, the many other supports offered by not only *Futures Forward* but also other community organizations and even institutional bodies in the province (e.g. tuition waivers) can become inaccessible to youth with previous involvement in the Child Welfare System who are experiencing homelessness. Additionally, failing to mitigate youth homelessness through long-term funding of such Housing First programs will cost Manitoba much more financially, through increased

emergency-service utilization and personally, through the lost potential of our fellow human beings, remembering that youth homelessness is intricately connected to other pressing social issues including sexual exploitation, criminalization, addiction, and suicide. As noted by one *Futures Forward* staff member:

> If we're not investing in Housing First and housing interventions for youth who are leaving CFS care then we're going to be investing tenfold into you know, addictions services and prison systems because the options, if you can't, if you don't have stable housing as an option and you're 18 years old and you're leaving CFS care, then you're options are limited to, you know, addiction, criminal activity. If we can't get you that stability, then it's gonna cost our province a lot more in the end. (Staff)

Given that a majority of youth who are apprehended, youth who are criminalized, and youth who experience homelessness are Indigenous youth, it must be remembered that efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness are a matter of reconciliation. This has been documented in numerous provincial and national inquiries and commissions with the most recent (National

Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019) making the following call for justice:

> 12.4 We call upon all governments to prohibit the apprehension of children on the basis of poverty and cultural bias. All governments must resolve issues of poverty, inadequate and substandard housing, and lack of financial support for families, and increase food security to ensure that Indigenous families can succeed.

In addition to long-term funding of such Housing First programs and recalling the limitations of Winnipeg's private low-income rental market, the following actions are also needed by the provincial government in order to increase the effectiveness of Housing First:

1. Government investment in building and operatonal funding of social RGI housing with the understanding that current wait times to access housing (housing as a primary determinant of health) are unacceptable;

2. Measures to hold landlords, property managers, and caretakers accountable for discriminatory behavior in the private rental market

Finally, in order for the work of needed social programs such as Futures Forward to truly be effective in mitigating youth (and subsequently, adult) homelessness, structural and systemic changes as suggested throughout this report need to be implemented at the provincial level. Specifically, reducing child welfare apprehensions and subsequent youth homelessness through strengthening families requires the following:

1. Restoring Indigenous self-determination and self-governance over child welfare through the Indigenous-led creation of an Indigenous Child and Family Act;

2. Honouring the Treaties including returning lands and equitable resource sharing;

3. Increased availability of social RGI housing.

Without the implementation of these changes, Futures Forward staff will continue to experience a constant inflow of youth experiencing the same structural and systemic failures which landed their previous counterparts homeless — a pattern which has become repulsively redundant.

Appendix A

Futures Forward Enhancement Project:
Qualitative Research Component

CONSENT FORM

Purpose & Explanation of Study
You are invited to participate in a research study jointly conducted by two Co-Investigators (CI's): Terra Johnston of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and Dr. Shauna MacKinnon of the Urban and Inner-City Studies Department of The University of Winnipeg. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Futures Forward Enhancement Project, particularly the Youth Housing with Wraparound Supports. You are being invited to take part in this research study as a participant in the Futures Forward Enhancement Program. Your participation will help to inform the impact of the Futures Forward Enhancement Project and will in no way impact your participation in the program.

Methods
Interviews will be the means of gathering information. Interviewees will participate in two interviews. The first interview will take place during the initial intake stage. A Youth Service Navigator as well as a researcher, Rachel Antonia Dunsmore, will conduct the first interview. The second interview will take place at the end of the six-month pilots and will be conducted by the above-named researcher. Both interviews will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Findings will be included in a final report.

Anonymity & Confidentiality
You have the option to use your real name in the study or to choose a false name. Due to the small population of the communities in question, there remains a risk that a community member reading the final report could piece together your identity. However, for those who wish to remain anonymous, precautions shall be taken for confidentiality such as the removal or anonymization of identifying information in all materials linked to you. Every effort will be made to ensure that only the researcher conducting the interview will know your identity if you choose to remain anonymous. If you choose to, you can review your transcript and excerpts from your interview for accuracy. Upon completion of the study, you will be given a four-page summary of findings.

Data will be stored in locked file cabinets and password protected computers at the PI's home and work place for five years after completion of the study (unless you agree to let the PI retain materials) and will be disposed of by shredding paper files, deleting electronic files, and destroying memory cards.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or the way it is being conducted, please contact the CI's directly. Terra Johnston can be reached by phone at 204-982-6107 or by e-mail at tjohnston@chmawpg.mb.ca. Dr. Shauna MacKinnon can be reached by phone at 204-988-7197 or by e-mail at st.mackinnon@uwinnipeg.ca. If you have any remaining concerns about the conduct of this study that the CI's have not been able to address, you may contact the University Human Research Ethics Board at 204-786-9058 or by email at ethics@uwinnipeg.ca.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question(s) and are free to stop participating in the study any time prior to the end of the study (November 2018) without any consequences. Findings will be published in academic journals and the like. By consenting to participate, you do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm. In appreciation of your participation, a gift card in the amount of $25 will be provided to you after each interview.

Consent

Please circle one

I agree to participate in the study described above:

Yes   No

I would like to use my real name in the study:

Yes   No

I would like to review my interview transcript and any of my quotes to be used in the final report for purposes of accuracy:

Yes   No

I would like a copy of the audio recording and written transcript from my interview:

Yes   No

I agree to let the PI retain a copy of the audio recording and transcript for future research:

Yes   No

_____ _____

Name – Please print Signature

_____ _____

Mailing Address

_____ _____

E-mail   Phone

_____

Date

_____ _____

Print Name & Signature (of interviewer)   Date

_____ _____

Primary Investigator's Signature   Date

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix B

Pre-intervention Interview Questions:
What would help you find safe and secure housing?

What challenges have you experienced in finding and keeping housing? For example, you age, lack of housing history, or racial identity?

What are your aspirations or dreams for the future?

What would help you achieve these goals or dreams?

What can CMHA / Futures Forward do, specifically, to help you find and keep safe, stable housing?

What could CFS do to help you — or other youth who are transitioning out of child welfare — find and keep safe, stable housing?

Do you have friends/relatives that struggle with homelessness? What are the challenges / barriers they face to finding housing? What types of supports do they require?

What are some of the biggest barriers or challenges you have faced in preparing to leave child welfare?

What types of supports or services have you used in preparing for adulthood? And, which of these have been most helpful to you?

What does a safe, stable place to live look like to you?

What do you need to feel safe and secure in your new home?

Post-intervention Interview Questions:
Do you feel you have permanent, stable housing? If so, please describe. If not, please describe.

How has safe, stable housing allowed you to pursue your other aspirations or dreams for the future?

What other supports or services do you require to help you achieve these goals or dreams?

What can CMHA / Futures Forward do, specifically, to help you achieve these goals or dreams?

What are some of the biggest barriers or challenges you faced in settling into your home?

What types of supports or services helped you in finding and settling into your home?

Please describe what it means to you to have a safe and secure home?

What has helped you the most in terms of the support you have received from CMHA?

Appendix C

Staff Interview Questions

1. How do you evaluate the success of the program?

2. Were there any expected and/or unexpected obstacles experienced in the course of the project/program?

3. What would you do differently (both personally and/or structurally)?

4. Do you have any other reflections on the project that you wish to share?

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