



# BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness

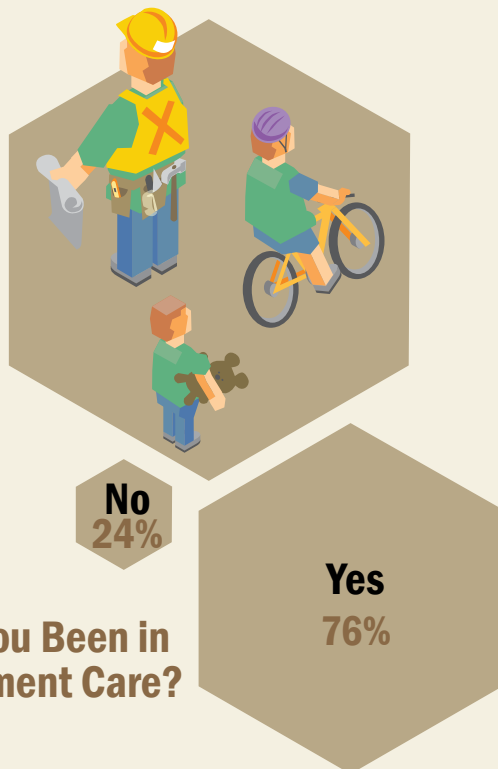
The BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (BCCEYH) started work on a provincial plan to end youth homelessness in 2020. Working with youth serving agencies across BC, we surveyed 94 at-risk young people and performed 3 focus groups to look at the key themes that came out of the data collected in the surveys. We held 2 focus groups where we spoke with a total of 11 young people and one focus group where we spoke with a total of 17 service providers. This preliminary report summarizes some of the major themes so far. Over 2022-23 we will continue to gather and analyze information and provide a comprehensive plan to end youth homelessness.

We would like to graciously acknowledge the contributions of all of the member organizations of the BCCEYH and give particular thanks to the young people who gathered and analyzed the data for this project: Lucas Alexander, Daniel Galbraith, Melanie Hedch, Haley Hodgkinson, Jarvis Neglia, Angell Olsen and Maria Jose Pena Pena. We look forward to their further work on the full report.

## BC Youth Housing Action Plan Preliminary Results - 2022

### Key Findings from the Online Survey

- Over three quarters of respondents said they had experienced homelessness or housing instability
- Over half of respondents who had experienced homelessness or housing instability did so before they were 18 years old
- The most commonly cited reasons for experiencing homelessness were: mental health related reasons, family conflict, insufficient income to afford housing, and abuse
- Over three quarters of respondents had been in the government care system
- Over one quarter of respondents who were in the government care system had been so for 10+ years
- 35% of respondents who had been in the government care system had a transition plan upon aging out of care, but over 60% of them did not find the transition plan helpful
- 74% of respondents with transition plans said their plans did not include housing/accommodation options for when they turned 19 years old



**Have You Been in Government Care?**

## Transitioning to Adulthood

### What We Learned in the Focus Groups:

In all three focus groups two separate themes were brought up regarding transition planning; proactive youth involvement and life skills. Youth aging out of government care would have benefited from earlier transition planning. All three focus groups said it very simply; life skills, and life skills training are needed.

Supports past the age of 19, enhanced or further education for social workers, and a holistic, wrap-around, inclusive approach would soften the aging out process, which was talked about as being frightening and stressful. Youth should have continued supports after the stresses of aging out until they decide themselves the supports are no longer required.

Other themes included: transitional housing, consistent counselling supports, income for youth, substance dependency supports, mental health recognition, and having workers matched to youth that identify with the same specific cultural backgrounds.

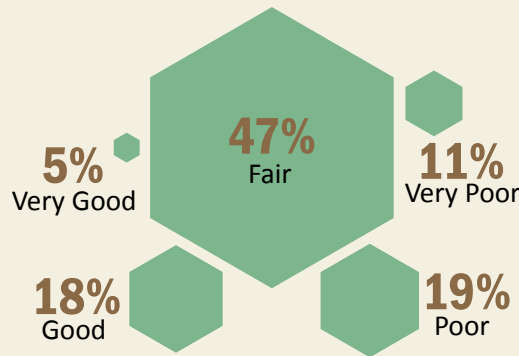
# Mental Health

## What We Learned in the Focus Groups:

Mental health was an important aspect of all of the focus groups, two specific themes showed up across all three focus groups: the importance of peer support and lower barriers.



## State of Mental Health



Youth would be better able to navigate the challenges of mental health support with a peer, rather than doing it alone. Supports would be more accessible with no pre-requisites, and no waiting periods.

Youth voices asked for safe, confidential, independent mental health support, with a focus on access to preventative services before crisis, and no waiting periods. Mental health education, efforts to break down stigma, and in many cases, catered healing for Indigenous youth, with safe cultural reconnection is needed.

Supporting conversations with the family and an option to facilitate familial reconnection would assist in a complete healing cycle.

# Housing

## What We Learned in the Focus Groups:

Housing quality was by far the biggest take away from all three focus groups. Safety and comfortability, with better check ins and supervision of the conditions were discussed. Just being in any housing isn't good enough. Putting youth together from wildly different backgrounds can be detrimental, and it is inappropriate to have youth living with older adults.

Youth worker relationships, ongoing support after being housed, pet friendly housing, optional social events, tenant rights education and protection, youth specific resources, low barrier housing, housing affordability, and housing accessibility are all topics of concern.



Consistent/continued support after getting housing is also key, along with close connections to service workers, ongoing transition workers for youth, enough resources for workers to build long-term relationships with youth, and workers who are independent of the ministry, (but closely coordinated). Insufficient resources for MCFD workers were of great concern.

Education of youth's legal housing rights, accountability for landlords, and better tenant protection are required. Landlord accountability mechanisms and housing advocates for youth are missing. Meaningful, low barrier housing should be a right that includes: abundance, variety, accessibility, subsidized affordability for minors, and support for youth who require a harm reduction environment absent of discrimination.

Ongoing evaluation is needed along with changes to policies to prioritize youth's needs over organizations. The gap between policy design and implementation needs to be closed. There needs to be flexible and consistent policies to create opportunities for service providers to coordinate, advocate, and translate their experiences with policymakers. Ultimately, providing solutions to insufficient supportive housing stock for youth, and ongoing and consistent funding for organizations.

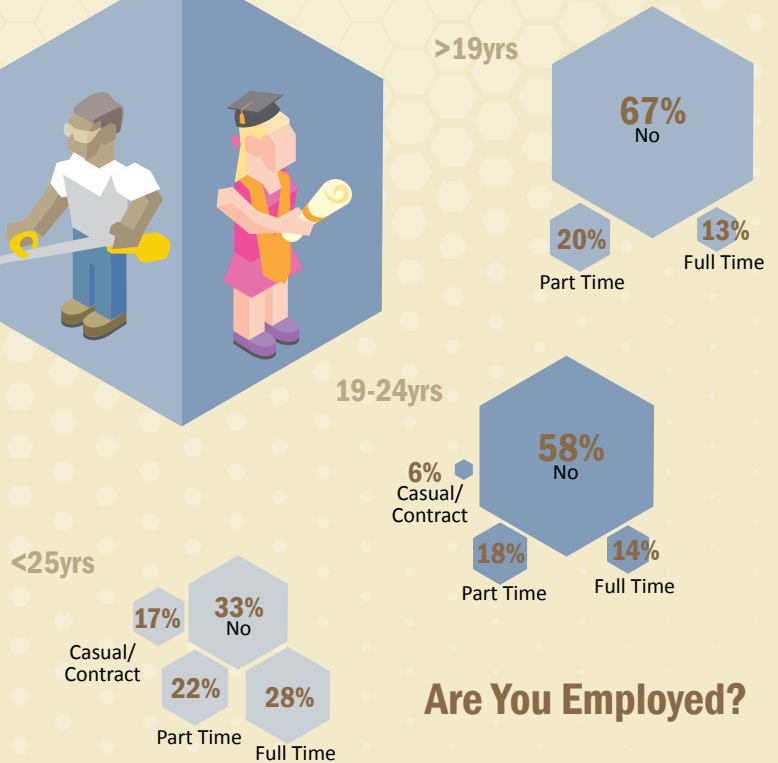
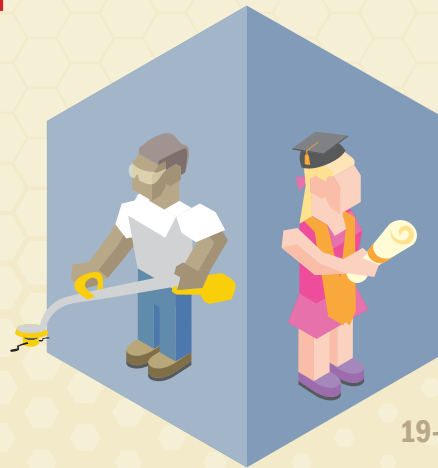


# Employment & Education

## What We Learned in the Focus Groups:

During discussions about employment and education, funding and individualized education supports showed up in all three focus groups.

Assistance with navigating financial issues and changes such as, age limits, tuition waivers, bursaries, basic income, and reduced claw backs are all needed by youth. Consistency of social workers was also discussed along with avoiding providing misinformation and making sudden changes. Individualized education supports were also discussed with themes like study groups, course work/tutoring, independent supports not connected to the ministry, and parent involvement.



## Are You Employed?

# Cultural Supports

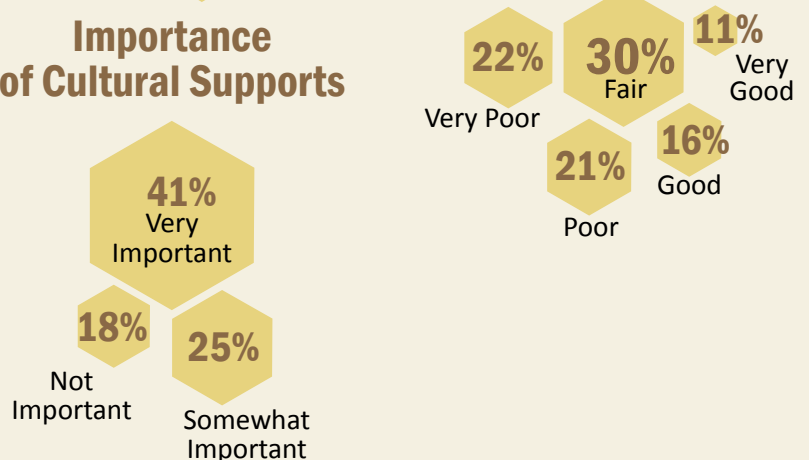
## What We Learned in the Focus Groups:

Focus groups saw that reconnection, cultural inclusivity, and cross-cultural engagement require education and ceremony as common themes. Cultural inclusivity includes the consent to choose specific cultural supports, avoiding assumptions, and providing intercultural engagement and education for non-indigenous individuals without appropriating culture.

Government and service providers alike need to provide supports that destigmatize and normalize indigenous supports including: transition planning, preventative engagement, and education in communities. Further education about ignorance and racism is needed including inter-minority racism. Trauma-informed care is a necessity and approaches to cultures of LGBTQIA2S+ means safe spaces need to be kept safe.



## Importance of Cultural Supports



## How would you describe your connection to culture?