

YOUTH EMERGENCY SHELTER SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND
FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

2023



Youth Emergency Shelter (YES) Services – Service Expectations

Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS) is a suite of services within the ministry's broader network of care. Currently, SHSS are comprised of four distinct service types: Emergency Care; Low-Barrier Short-Term Stabilization Care; Respite Care; and Specialized Long-Term Care. Within each service type there are: consistent service expectations, deliverables, and intended outcomes across the province. In accordance with legislative requirements, placement priorities and best practices, SHSS are considered after exploring less intrusive options to meet the needs of a child, youth, or family. As part of its ongoing work to address gaps and improve services, the Ministry is currently working to refine a new youth emergency shelter model that can exist within the SHSS and the network of care.

Youth emergency shelter (YES) services serve vulnerable youth who require the capacity to self-refer to a low-barrier service that meets their immediate needs for shelter, crisis intervention, and safety.

Youth require a voluntary, self-referred, low-barrier service that meets their immediate needs for shelter, crisis intervention, and safety while working to establish trust and connections to access additional supports when they are ready. Youth emergency shelter services are intended for youth:

- Between ages 15-18, regardless of their legal status (in-care, not in care, out-of-care arrangement)
- Experiencing housing instability or homelessness
- living in an unsafe environment (e.g., sexual exploitation, criminal activity, problematic substance use)

YES services provide a voluntary, self-referred service that provides short-term protective accommodation and supports to youth on an emergency crisis-intervention basis. In addition to overnight accommodation, the YES Services provide outreach and drop-in day programming to youth in the community. Access to each of the YES Services is not interdependent, meaning youth do not need to be accessing the YES Overnight Service to engage in the YES Outreach and Drop-In Day Programming services. Youth engaging with in YES services will benefit from an environment that is low-barrier, trauma-informed, supportive of immediate basic needs, and focused on safety, reduction of harm and crisis intervention.

The YES Services are comprised of three components:

1. **YES Outreach Service:** YES Outreach workers provide a mobile service and meet youth out in the community individually supporting them to build relationships and trust. Outreach services are also intended to act as a pathway to services with community partners and MCFD and provide an important opportunity to support youth that might not otherwise access MCFD's services.
2. **YES Drop-in Day Programming Service:** provides a safe and accessible environment at the Care Setting for youth to visit and participate in voluntary programming to the degree they wish. This programming offers a supervised area for youth to connect, including through activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for youth arranged by the Service Provider.
3. **YES Overnight Service:** provides culturally safe, short-term, protective accommodation to youth on an emergency basis and for whom no other safe living arrangement is readily available. The YES Overnight Service supports the needs of youth by providing a low-barrier service that allows youth to meet their immediate needs for shelter, crisis intervention and safety while working with the youth and family on stabilization.

YES services reflect a home-like setting, promote experiences and feelings of belonging including access to cultural supports and connections and are flexible to meet the needs of youth. Some YES services may provide shelter and services for specific youth populations such as parents and their children, pregnant youth, LGBTQS+ and/or Indigenous youth.

YES services are intended to be a pathway for youth to access increased supports including referrals to government or health authority services and/or community resources and programming. Youth who access YES services will not unduly need to prove their case is worthy of support and safety concerns regarding contacting a parent or guardian will be carefully considered. YES staff will facilitate the assessment of the youth's needs and circumstances, coordinate appropriate supports, and identify safe networks of care for youth accessing their service. YES services will not conduct functional assessments or have clinical staff but will support MCFD in gathering appropriate information to support providing service to the youth. If a youth is determined to be in crisis, they will be connected to the appropriate supports (e.g., Low-Barrier Short-Term Stabilization Care or hospital). When a youth identifies as Indigenous, their family, community and/or Nation will be involved if they choose.

If a youth is not in the care of the Director, YES services will be treated as a pathway to voluntarily connect them with supports available through MCFD and community partners. YES services will inform youth of their right to service by the ministry and outline all available supports to youth. Youth requiring mental health and/or substance use services can access YES services where they will be connected with appropriate supports, if they choose. Youth who are struggling with housing will be referred to appropriate housing supports.

YES service contribute to successful crisis intervention for youth by:

- Allowing for self-referral to service.
- Providing culturally safe, trauma informed care, during a challenging time for youth.
- Providing a short-term resource to assist a youth to connect to appropriate supports and services.
- Developing an understanding of the youth's needs to provide crisis intervention and prevention.
- Prioritizing youth agency where youth are responsible and empowered to create a plan that is representative of their goals, interests, and support networks.

The YES services service differs from the four SHSS service in the following ways:

- **Self-referral:** Youth do not need a referral from MCFD, Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA) or a community partner to access YES services.
- **Youth served:** YES services are intended to be available to youth, regardless of their legal status, who have an emergent need for a safe place to stay when no other living arrangement is available or accessible – any youth can access YES services.
- **Low barrier access:** YES services service requires little or no information to be collected from the youth. Disclosing personal information is not a requirement for accessing the YES services service but will be encouraged.
- **Initiation of Relationships:** YES services will provide services that help build trust between service providers and youth, with the goal that YES services are intended to act as a pathway to services with community partners and MCFD.

Service Recipients:

YES services will be available to youth if they are between the ages of 15 and 18 years old, regardless of their legal status (e.g. Not-in-Care, in Out-of-Care arrangements, and In Care), and are

- experiencing housing instability or homelessness; or
- living in an unsafe environment (e.g., sexual exploitation, criminal activity, problematic substance use).

Service Length:

The **YES Outreach Services** provide mobile services to meet the Safety and connection needs of the youth and connect them with appropriate supports and services. YES Outreach Services is available to any youth who states that they would like to access YES Outreach services (as appropriate).

The **YES Drop-in Day Programming Services** are provided during the daytime and early evening only to meet the safety and connection needs of the youth and connect them with appropriate supports and services.

The **YES Overnight Services** provide a short-term services to meet the emergent needs of youth and connect them with appropriate supports and services. Placements in the YES Overnight Services will not exceed 2 weeks unless otherwise approved by the Director in their sole discretion.

Desired Outcomes of YES services:

How this service is intended to benefit a Youth and their family

Intended Outcomes	Measurements (indicators)
Youth experience immediate safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth has immediate needs met after receiving YES Services (e.g., Safety, food, clothing, a place to sleep) • Youth feels protected and safe • Youth experience helpful and/or trusting relationships with the Service Provider, YES Services Personnel, community supports or MCFD staff • Youth’s living arrangement is stabilized and strengthened
Risk of ongoing homelessness mitigated and/or improved stability and wellbeing for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth’s living arrangement is stabilized and strengthened • Youth’s experience with homelessness, housing insecurity, or community support connection improves
Youth are able to move to or return to a stable living environment upon leaving YES Overnight Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth returns home • Youth transitions to a stable alternative living arrangement
Youth who receive YES Outreach Services and/or YES Overnight Services and their family have supports in place for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth is (re)connected to community supports and services

continued stabilization upon leaving the Service	
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How this service is intended to positively impact the broader system of care

Intended Outcomes	Measurements (examples)
Fewer Youth living in the community without a secure living arrangement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer Youth experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. • Increased number of Youth accessing YES services and seeking a voluntary care agreement with the ministry.
Youth experience improved outcomes/experiences in young adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth experience more supportive transitions into young adulthood. • Youth experience less intrusive care. • Reduced adult shelter use/hospitalization/ experience with the criminal justice system.

Key Benefits of Specialized Homes and Support Services – YES services:

- Provides a safe landing place during a crisis for youth that can be accessed even when a person is not in a place to trust or rely on others.
- Promotes a youth’s feeling of control over their situation;
- Provides an emergency service that facilitates a pathway to greater supports available through MCFD and other partners.
- Supports current and future living arrangement stability and overall youth well-being by facilitating connection to ministry and community supports.
- Supports the initiation and development of appropriate and supportive agreements that meet the youth’s needs if reunification with family or placement is not possible, or out-of-care options are exhausted.
- Provides time and space to understand the youth needs.

Practice Principles:

- Best Interest of the Child (CFCSA) and Best Interests of the Indigenous Child (*An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (The Federal Act))
- Placement Priorities as outlined in s.71 of the CFCSA and s.16 of the Federal Act, and Ongoing Reassessment of Placement
- Harm reduction: practice that aims to minimize the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with health behaviours – working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination or requiring that they cease the problematic health behaviours completely as a precondition of support
- Culturally responsive and aligned to the [Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework](#)
- Trauma-Informed approach (in alignment with [Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families](#))
- Strengths based: practice that concentrates on the inherent strengths of children, youth, families and communities
- Developmentally appropriate: practice that varies with and adapts to the age, experience, interests and abilities of individual youth

- Rights of the Child: Uphold the obligations outlined in s.70 (Rights of Children in Care) of the CFCSA; an Indigenous child's inherent right to culture, language, and tradition; and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* which provides a foundation for the protection of children's rights globally.
- Prioritizing youth agency where youth are responsible and empowered to make choices representative of their goals, interests, and support networks.

Environment:

- Provide an environment that is welcoming, safe, predictable, and supportive
- Provides a private space for youth that supports crisis intervention and promotes a feeling of control over one's situation.
- Provide a physical environment that is culturally safe, accessible, developmentally appropriate, trauma informed, and that enables the effective care and comfort of youth.

Programmatic Features:

Youth's transition into the YES services:

- Provide a low-barrier experience for Youth that records the minimum information required to safely serve them and others residing at the YES services.
- Protect the safety and privacy of youth transition into the YES services service.
- Ensure Youth are informed and involved in the processes that affect them: include them in identifying their own goals and give them voice regarding their needs.
- Support Youth access the YES services at any hour of the day and any day of the week.

Collaboration with ministry, care team and community supports:

- Facilitate and develop trust between the youth and ministry/community supports.
- Actively engage and work with ministry staff, the youth and those supporting them.
- Provide youth information and resources about available services and supports delivered by the ministry and community partners, including how to access these services and supports if interested.
- Work with community professionals, paraprofessionals, and community members (e.g., Elders, cultural leaders) to address the youth's medical, physical, emotional, mental, behavioural, spiritual and other needs.
- Continue working with the ministry to ensure that service quality is consistent and enhanced over time.

Supporting the youth transition out of the YES services service:

- Actively involve the youth in their transition planning, identifying their needs in the process prioritizing youth agency and choice.
- Develop supportive transition strategies and materials for the youth and their guardian/caregivers.
- Facilitate transition planning by working with caregivers, the youth's care team and Indigenous community, where appropriate.

Supporting Youth in Everyday Living

- Ensure the safety of all youth at the YES services service and mitigate the issue of not having information immediately available on their medical, physical, emotional, mental, behavioural, spiritual, and other needs.
- Support Youth to develop new skills to care for themselves.
- Provide recreational, community and culturally appropriate activities.
- Provide healthy, nutritious meals and snacks in accordance with traditional diet and/or Health Canada's "Canada Dietary Guidelines" or the professional advice of dietary experts, where appropriate.
- Develop and maintain good relationships with the neighbourhood and community in which the youth resides.
- Provide opportunities/activities that encourage positive peer interaction.
- Promote Youth's day-to-day hygiene care.
- Involve Youth in activities that include, but are not limited to: shopping, budgeting, meal preparation, household chores, use of public transportation, and work experience appropriate to their age and developmental level.
- Ensure Youth have access to technology to support their education, recreation and social development.
- Provide transportation to/from appointments/school/work/day program/recreational activities/family visits, as per their plan of care.
- Provide crisis intervention and support Youth at all hours, both inside and outside of the resource.
- Where appropriate, host the youth's guardian/family and community visits inside the YES services service.
- Provide supervised visits where necessary.

Staffing Model/Expectations:

Bed Resources	Staffing	3 Bed	
Day Staff	Residential Child & Youth Worker	112 hours per week	
Night Staff	Awake Residential Night Worker	112 hours per week	
Outreach Workers	Adult, Youth and/or Child Worker	224 hours per week	
Supervision and Program Management	Residence Coordinator	40 hours per week On-call – 24 hours	
	Program Manager	40 hours per week On-Call – 24 hours	
	<p>Supplemental Supports and Clinical Consultation – additional support to meet the needs of the youth. For clarity, Supplemental Supports are only available for youth receiving the YES Overnight Services.</p> <p>These supports will be provided based on the youth’s SHSS Service Plan (if any) and determined/approved through collaboration with the Director.</p> <p>Efforts will be made to leverage existing community services and supports (e.g., MCFD provided and contracted Child and Youth Mental Health and Child and Youth Support Needs services) for the purposes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • Clinical consultation • Intervention and therapies provision • Clinical care planning 	<p>Examples of supplemental supports include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional staffing • Clinical interventions • Cultural supports <p>Clinical Consultation will be provided by qualified individuals in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in Schedule B of the service agreement.</p>	Depends on needs of Youth

Qualifications:

The Service Provider will hire staff with an appropriate level of training and experience for their position.

Special Equipment:

Youth require universal accessibility at the facility. Reasonable access child-specific equipment will ensure their safety, recreation, and socialization in and out of the facility (for example: equipment augmenting inclusion, transportation supports).