

Youth Leaving Care

BC Poverty Reduction Strategy

SPRAC BC

444 Norfolk Street

Burnaby, BC

V5G 0A7

RE: Small Group Discussion Grant Reporting

Introduction:

On March 13, 2018 the Connecting Community to Surrey Youth Leaving Care hosted a community gathering that focused on bringing together youth, service providers, social workers and community members to look at ways the community of Surrey can address areas of poverty for youth and create positive change for youth aging out of care.

Prior to this gathering the Connecting Community to Surrey Youth Leaving Care's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) hosted a youth retreat in October of 2017. At this retreat Surrey youth attended and shared their voices on how to create better outcomes for youth transitioning out of the foster system. With the close link between poverty and youth transitioning out of care we wanted to focus on the many aspects of poverty prevention. Surrey youth identified over 50 priorities to be addressed at the retreat; this led to the formation of six working groups:

Date	March 13, 2018
Community	Surrey
Number of Participants	52
Number of Organizations	12

About the Participants:

The 52 community members ranged from social workers, healthcare providers, youth serving organizations, local government, Indigenous partners, community members, educational practitioners and youth.

The organizations that were represented at the gathering were: City of Surrey, FRAFCA, First Call, FBCYICN, MCFD, MSDI, Options, PCRS, Fraser Health, School Board, Public Libraries, RCMP.

Youth members in attendance ranged in age from 19-24, with additional alumni from care also present.

About the Findings:

Our focus was addressing issues facing youth transitioning out of care in Surrey and the ways poverty impacts their success.

1. What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?

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Cost of living keeps going up, youth are entering adulthood with few skills to enter workforce and are unable to secure employment. This causes a ripple affect with safe and affordable housing access and the loss of support systems creates more isolation for youth transitioning out of care.

2. What would address these issues and help you and others out of poverty?

Access to affordable housing, continued connection to community and services for youth (don't fall through the cracks). Affordable transportation and accessibility to community outreach, goods/services.

Issues:

- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Limited to no start-up money for youth exiting care
- Lack of support system and social isolation
- Limited job readiness skills and employability
- No options for youth (19-25yr) only detox or mental health services
- Limited availability to services and transportation
- Cut-off of paid supports on 19th birthday

Possible Solutions:

- Affordable and safe housing
- \$1500 start-up money for all youth exiting care
- PWD (persons with disabilities) easier transition for youth joining at 19
- Extended Health benefits for FYIC who don't have access to a health plan up-to age 25yr
- Access to Sanitary Products: personal hygiene products/cleaning supplies/baby products
- Residential detox available for 19-25yr
- Connect with private industry to support key issues for youth exiting care
- Public awareness of youth exiting care and outcomes
- Peer mentorship forum with youth aging out
- Free driving lessons for former youth in care (FYIC)
- Policy change to continue support of youth until 25 year old
- Create positive connections that don't end at 19
- Foster success and engagement prior to aging out

Solutions and Actions That Make a Difference:

(a) Looking at the list of issues and solutions generated, what types of solutions did the individuals identify as most important to them?

- Affordable Housing
- Start-up money

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- Access to Sanitary Products
- Residential detox for 19-25yr
- Extended Health care
- (b) What emerged as the top 3 solution or ideas based on the conversations and the individual priority settings?**
- Connect with private industry
- Community awareness and engagement
- Policy change to advocate for support beyond 19yr

This event was a huge success in gathering a wide-range of individuals to come together to create better outcomes and address the issues that living in poverty creates for youth.

With the generous support of the SPARC Small Group Discussion grant we were able to host a very successful event. This grant allowed us to provide refreshments and food to all attendees, youth honorarium and transportation to and from the event, along with the planning meetings needed to ensure our YAC members were prepared and ready to co-host this event.

Thank you from the Connecting Community to Surrey Youth Leaving Care committee and YAC!

Regards,

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