

SUPPORTING UNHOUSED POPULATIONS

Speaker: Laura Galloro

Position: Housing & Aftercare Manager

Agency: Youth Without Shelter

Contact: laurag@yws.on.ca, 416-748-0110 ext.: 27

Case Management and Support Planning

- **Assessing client individual situation and options.**
- **Identifying barriers.**
- **Identify options, apply for various housing**
- **16 & 17 years old (SIS, OW and DA codes)**
- ✓ The youth population is unique given the age. Many are fleeing abusive households, many have no ID or access to their ID, limited or no work experience, limited life skills, immigration issues, poor credit or no credit, addictions and or mental health.
- ✓ identifying and addressing the barriers must be the first step to developing a housing plan with a young person. Nothing can move forward without proper ID or status.
- ✓ Addressing mental health and or addiction barriers and connecting them to support and applying for appropriate housing and income. Checking the system for existing applications depending on a client's history. Many have applications and do not even know **(Always Check First)**. ODSP applications are time consuming.
- ✓ Ensuring clients are document ready as early as possible in order for them to be eligible for any Rapid Housing or PATHS offers.
- ✓ Signing the BNL upon intake is critical to open to housing opportunities from the City. If clients refuse to sign the BNL, they should be explained this can open them to housing opportunities.
- ✓ 16- and 17-year-olds have priority to Youth codes through A2H (explained below)
- ✓ YWS offers a unique transitional housing program called the Stay in School Program. Priority is given to high school students 16-17 years old. Applications can be found on our website: www.yws.on.ca
- ✓ Reminding youth that are high school students on OW that they are able to keep 100% of any employment income without any deductions.

Access to Housing and Youth Homelessness

- ✓ -Applying for A2H. Checking youth files is critical. Many are often already listed on a parent or guardians' application. If they are, the file can be split and receive the original application start date or the 16th birthday. Many various housing

opportunities that can come from the city such as Rapid Rehousing offers require clients to have an A2H application.

- ✓ -If a client is under the age of 18, a youth priority code should be designated to their file, and they will be open to Choice Base Cycles immediately.
- ✓ Youth Codes remain on an A2H file, different to Homeless codes that need to be updated annually.
- ✓ Applying for SPP. Many youths enter homelessness because of abuse or neglect from the parents or caregivers. SPP is getting more difficult to achieve with rigid reviews and existing barriers. Cohabitation proof is the most challenging for youth leaving their parents' home. The best resource for this purpose is schools.
- ✓ DO NOT change home addresses on a youth's school records before they are assessed for SPP.
- ✓ Annual updates to files are necessary to avoid applications from being cancelled. Notice of Assessments are mandatory every year and if not uploaded must be waived on the application for valid reasons. Homelessness qualifies as a valid reason, but a priority homeless code should also be applied to the file with that.
- ✓ Choice Base Cycles- Choice Base cycles through rent café are when a person becomes able to bid on vacant units. Clients will get immediate access to this if they are granted SPP or are Youth Coded.
- ✓ SPP clients are the first to receive offers. It is important that clients bidding understand the 1 offer rule and need to be selective what they pick. If they get an offer that they do not want they will have to still take it. Selecting all vacancies is not a good idea although it may seem like it is. Some neighbourhoods are not suitable for young people or people struggling with addictions.
- ✓ We often suggest visiting the neighbourhood and area of the building someone is considering. Google searches of addresses also provide information of activities that have occurred in places.
- ✓ Clients MUST be document ready before they begin bidding.

Housing Search and Placement

Assist youth/individuals in identifying safe and affordable housing options.

- Teaching youth to navigate the housing market and things to be aware of is very important.
- Basic tenant rights are important for clients to know, especially youth as they are often a targeted population in the housing market.
- Online scams for e-transfer deposits are on the rise. Educating clients never to send deposits via transfers before they have viewed housing.
- Educating clients that housing viewings should be treated like job interviews. Presentation is important and first impressions mean a lot.
- Educating clients on good, poor and no credit and what that means. As well as when and why co-signers are required. If you know you have poor credit, it is not a bad idea to line up a co-signer ahead of time if it is possible.

- Room rentals are the more affordable route. Educating clients to ensure that they rent shared accommodations with other tenants and why this is important.
- Understanding leases and what they mean. Reminding clients why it is important to add people that are not originally on lease if they end up moving in.
- It is helpful for housing workers to build relationships with landlords and property managers to create housing opportunities for youth. We have been able to do this while assisting clients with their housing searches and being present at viewings. This also helps to avoid the chance of your client facing discrimination.
- Upon securing housing, we provide all of our clients with the necessities to live on their own including an air mattress while they wait for their Furniture Bank appointment.
- Whenever possible, we strongly encourage clients to set up pay direct to landlords if they receive OW, ODSP or any type of housing subsidy. Most clients are willing to do this and allow us to support them to set it up.

Advocacy

- Advocate for youth experiencing barriers to housing, including discrimination, poor rental history, lack of income, mental health concerns, involvement with child welfare, or justice system involvement.
- Challenge systemic barriers that limit access to housing and community resources. This is most needed for those youth experiencing mental health and addictions.
- Support youth in navigating social assistance, income supports, healthcare systems, and legal services. These areas can be most challenging for clients struggling with mental health and addictions as well. The system can be very frustrating and at times not very supportive to clients that need more support, although it should not be this way.
- Representation/advocacy for hospitalization. This is an enormous challenge and having workers stand up for their clients needs and well being is essential to getting our clients the help they need.
- Educate landlords, community partners, and service providers about youth homelessness and housing needs.

Life Skills Development

- Teach budgeting, financial literacy, and rent payment management. Many people struggle with budgeting, but youth are often learning this skill for the first time and what it means to pay for a household.
- Support youth in developing household management skills, including cleaning, meal planning, and maintaining a tenancy. Again, this requires more attention with the youth population in many cases. Teaching clients about costs they are not familiar with such as hydro and ways to manage costs, as well as tenant insurance and tips on saving when grocery shopping.
- Assist with conflict resolution, communication skills, and problem-solving. Youth often lean on us as workers to do things for them, but it is important to do things WITH them, not FOR them.
- Help youth build independence and self-advocacy skills.

- Filing income tax is a large part of life skills support we offer for clients. Again, youth often require more support often doing this for the first time. Taxes are critical to any clients receiving subsidies or living in RGI. However, they are also important for clients to know about for other reasons such as claiming rent, GST and Trillium benefits and because it is required for all Canadians to do so.

Crisis Intervention

- Respond to housing crises, eviction risks, landlord conflicts, and safety concerns. Greater with youth as most situations.
- Develop safety plans for youth experiencing violence, exploitation, or housing instability.
- Provide emotional support during periods of crisis and uncertainty. Arrange aftercare visits.
- Connect youth to emergency shelters, transitional housing, or crisis services when necessary.

Community Resource Navigation

- Connect youth with employment, education, training, healthcare, mental health, addictions, and cultural support services.
- Facilitate referrals and coordinate care with community partners.
- Support youth in accessing identification, banking, income assistance, and other essential services.
- Check in reminders during tax seasons and referrals to tax clinics.

Aftercare and Housing Retention

- Provide ongoing support after youth are housed to ensure housing stability.
- Conduct regular home visits and check-ins.
- Mediate issues between tenants and landlords.
- Help youth maintain community connections and natural support networks.
- Support youth through transitions to greater independence.

Core Skills and Qualities

- Strong relationship-building and engagement skills.
- Trauma-informed and youth-centered practice.
- Knowledge of housing systems, landlord-tenant legislation, and community resources.
- Crisis intervention and conflict resolution abilities.
- Cultural competency and anti-oppressive practice.
- Advocacy and systems-navigation expertise.
- Ability to work collaboratively with community partners and multidisciplinary teams.