



MAKING THE SHIFT<sup>INC</sup>

youth homelessness social innovation lab

# Preventing Youth Homelessness

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**Co-Director, Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab**





The ***PROBLEM***

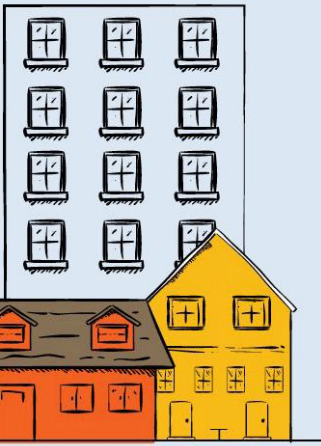
**we are trying**

**to solve...**

# When we let young people become mired in homelessness ...

- **Health worsens**
  - **Mental health declines**
    - **Dropping out of school**
      - **Exploitation and criminal victimization**
        - **Traumatic experiences**
          - **Involvement with the law**
            - **Greater risk of addictions**
              - **Entrenchment in life on the streets**

**REACHING  
HOME**

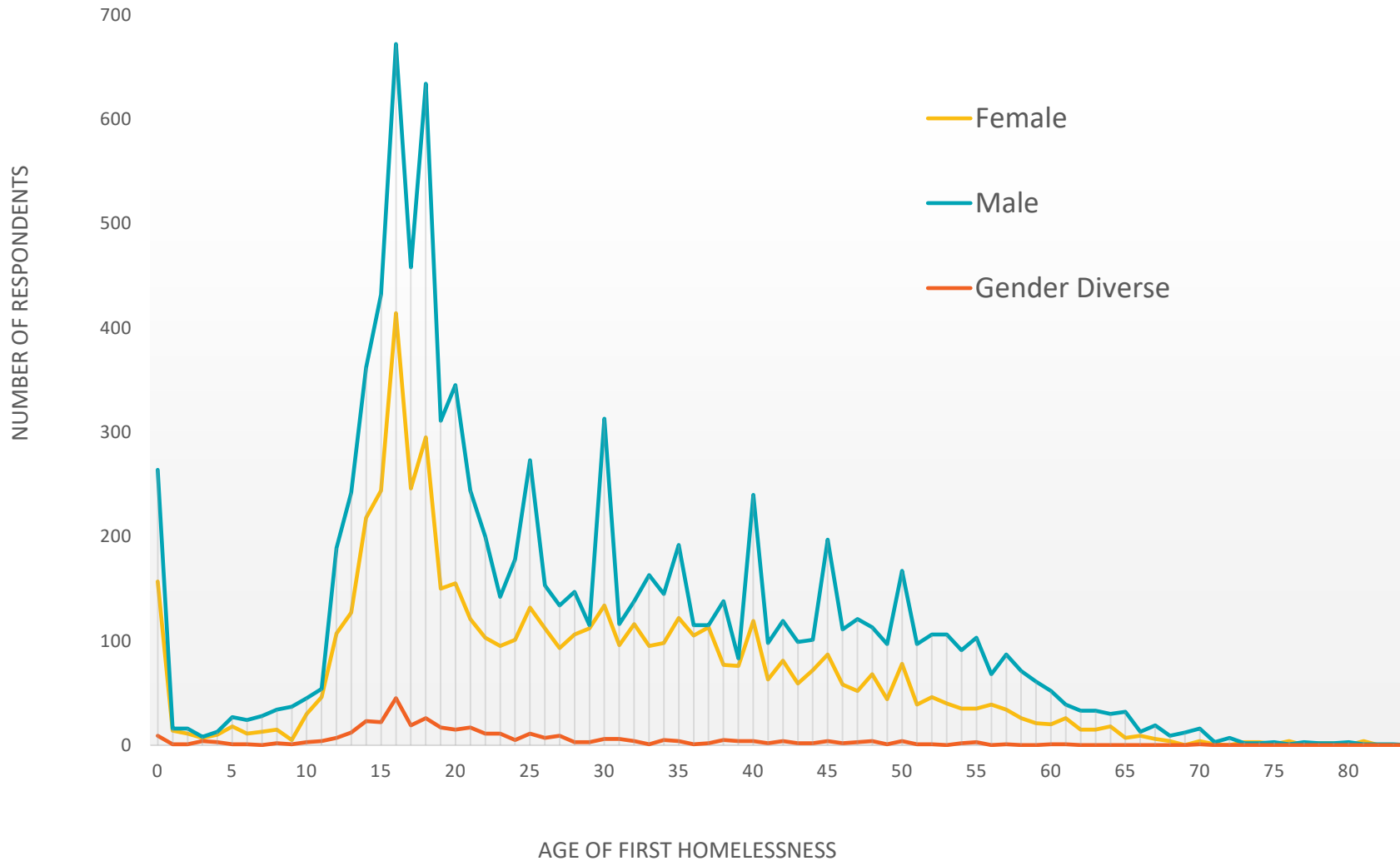


# Mandatory Community Level Outcomes

- Fewer people experience homelessness (homelessness is reduced overall)
- Fewer people were newly identified (new inflows to homelessness are reduced)
- Fewer people return to homelessness (returns to homelessness are reduced)
- Fewer Indigenous peoples experience homelessness (Indigenous homelessness is reduced)
- Fewer people experience chronic homelessness (chronic homelessness is reduced)

**PREVENTION!**

## Selected research findings on youth (PiT 2018)



The 2018 PiT Count survey asked respondents at what age they first experienced homelessness.

Half of all respondents first experienced homelessness under the age of 25. This percentage was still high among older adults (aged 50-64) and seniors (aged 65+), with 25% first experiencing homelessness before 25.

# Age of first experience of homelessness

Many homeless youth became homeless before they were 16, and youth who leave home at a younger age experience greater adversity on the streets.

# 40.1%

*were younger than 16 when they first experienced homelessness*

THOSE WHO LEAVE HOME AT AN EARLY AGE ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- Experience multiple episodes of homelessness
- Be involved with child protection services
- Be tested for ADHD
- Experience bullying
- Be victims of crime once homeless, including sexual assault
- Have greater mental health and addictions symptoms
- Experience poorer quality of life
- Attempt suicide
- Become chronically homeless



**Defining the  
Prevention  
of Youth  
Homelessness**

# Definition

Youth Homelessness Prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that provide supports designed to:

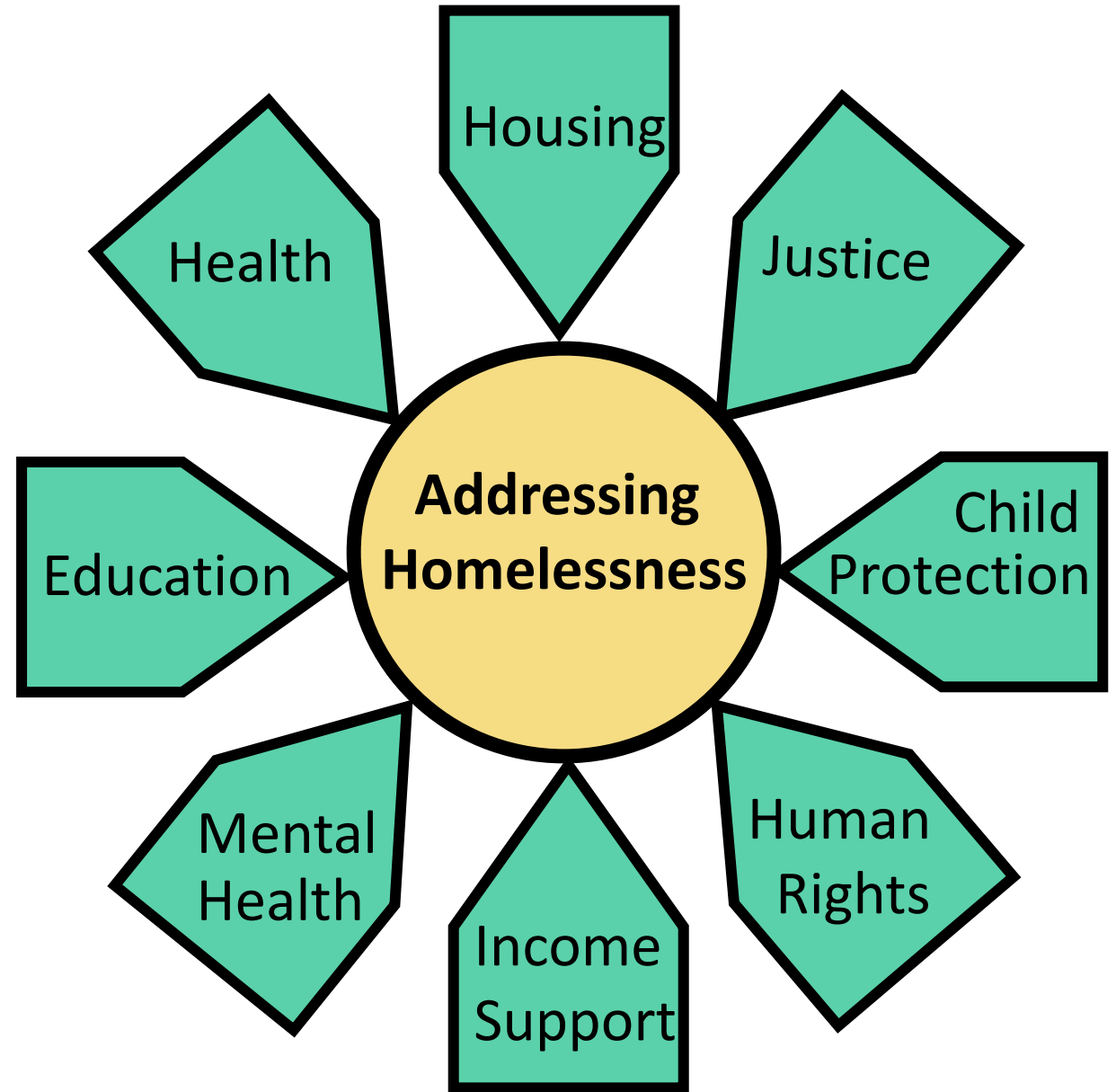
- Reduce inflows into homelessness – in other words, to stop people from becoming homeless in the first place
- Reduce the risk that those who have recently become homeless transition to long term or chronic homelessness.
- Reduce returns to homelessness for those who have experienced homelessness.

**What it is *NOT*!**

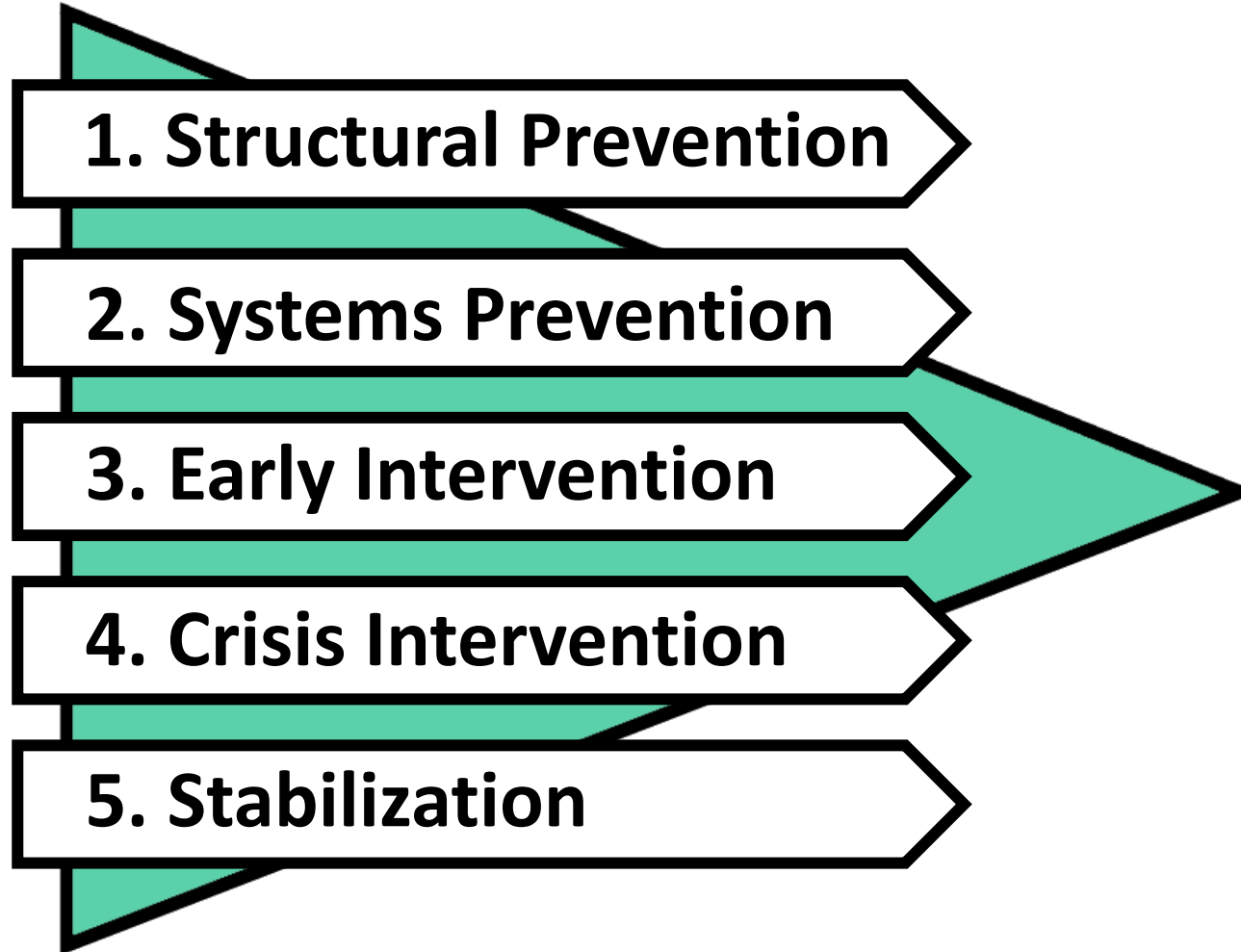


# Youth Homelessness is a “Fusion Policy” Issue

Because homelessness is a fusion policy issue, higher orders of government must put in place legislative and policy frameworks as well as funding that will mobilize other public systems in order to have a more effective impact on homelessness through working upstream. In Canada, both federal and provincial/territorial governments have a key role in this regard.



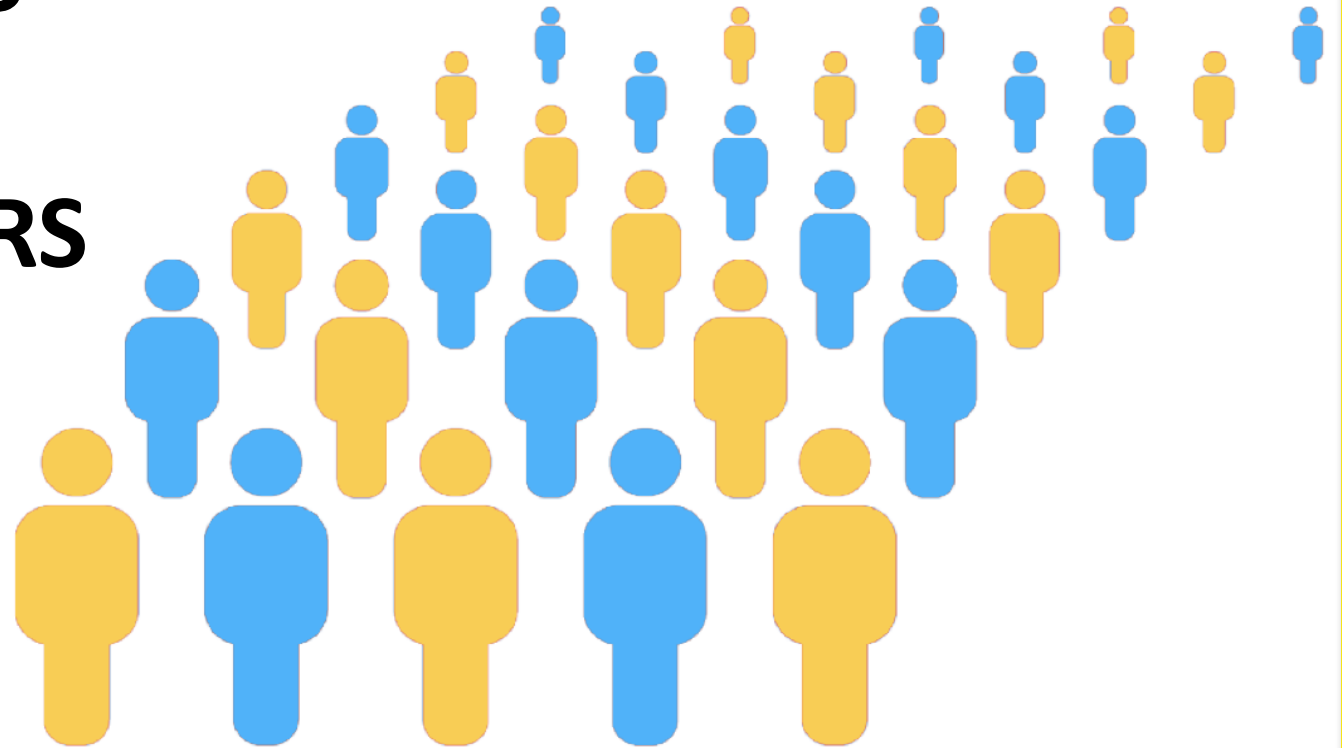
# Typology of Youth Homelessness Prevention



1

# Structural Prevention

Working upstream to  
address underlying  
**STRUCTURAL FACTORS**





# Structural Prevention

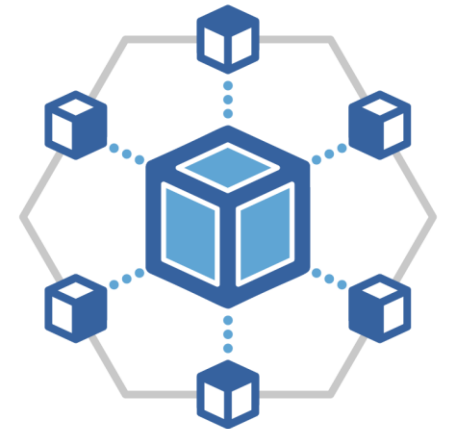
1. Poverty Reduction
2. Increasing the Availability of Affordable Housing
3. Addressing Inequity and Discrimination
4. Addressing legacy of colonialism and ongoing racism on Indigenous peoples
5. Breaking the Link between Homelessness, Migration, and Displacement
6. Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences
7. Promoting Social Inclusion for All
8. Homelessness Prevention Legislation & Policy

# 2

## Systems Prevention

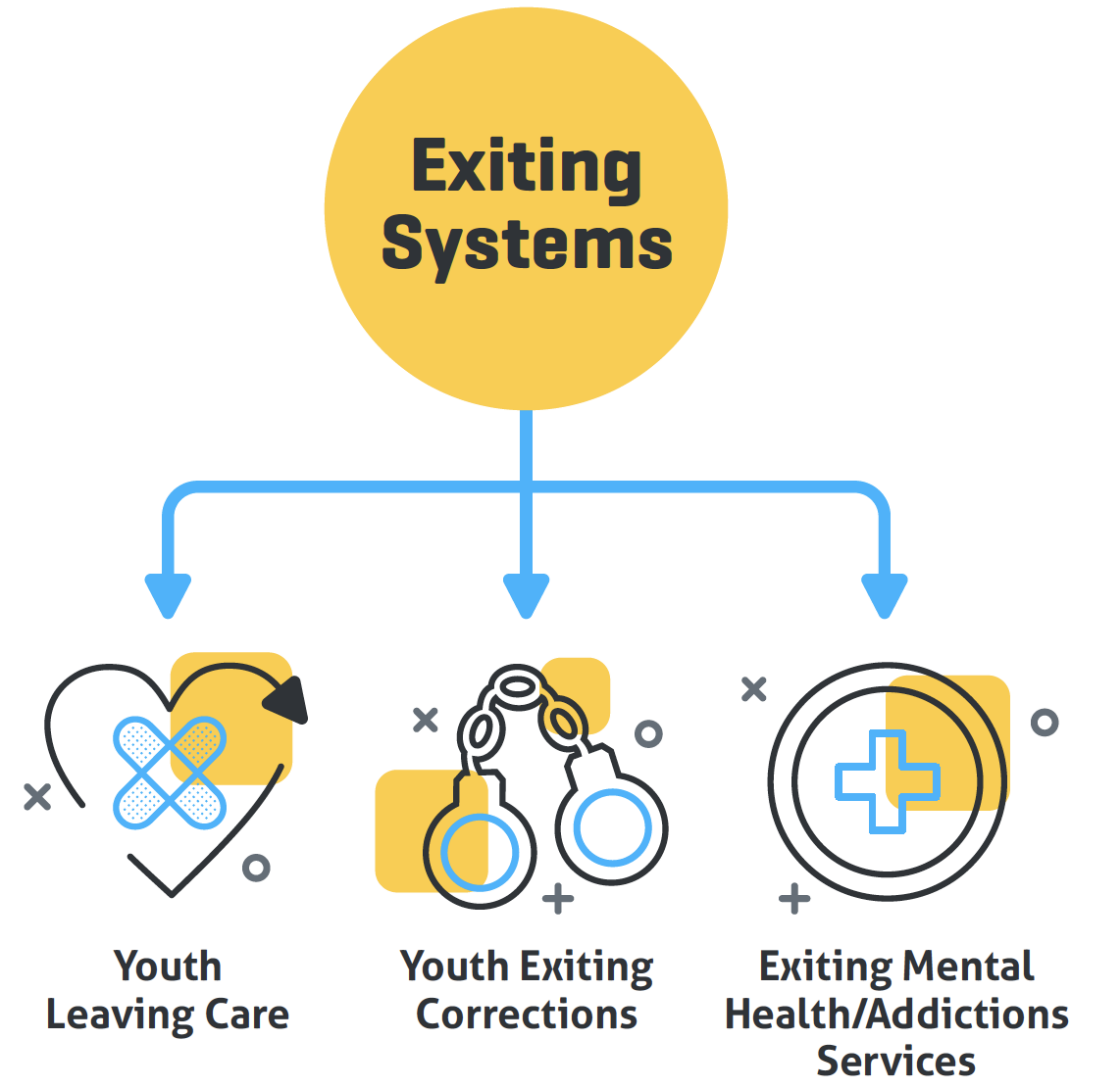
### How public systems can be transformed to support homelessness prevention

Systems prevention of homelessness involves identifying and addressing policies, programs, and practices within public systems that create barriers to accessing supports, and which expose people to the risk of homelessness.



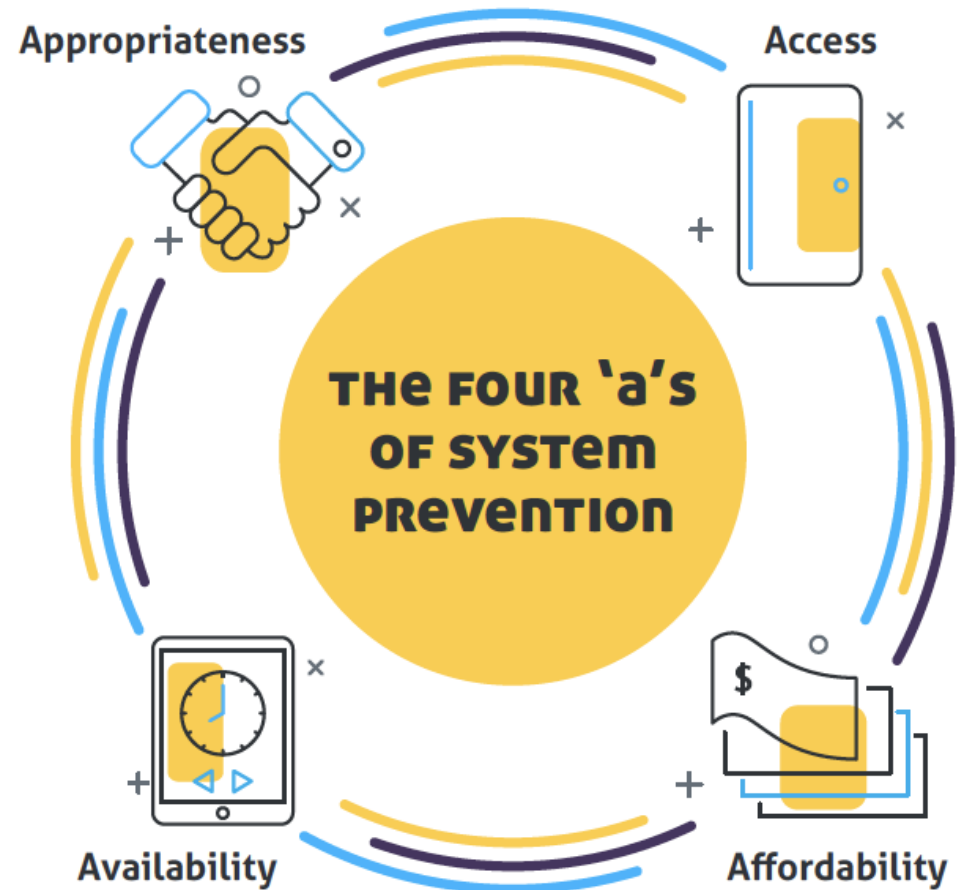
# a. SYSTEMS PREVENTION

## Transitional Supports for People Exiting Public Institutions and Systems



## b. SYSTEMS PREVENTION

Enhancing individuals and family's ability to equitably access and benefit from public systems, supports and entitlements.



# 3

## Early Intervention

This includes policies, practices, and interventions that help individuals and families who are at extreme risk of homelessness obtain the supports needed to retain their current housing or rapidly access new and appropriate housing. Early intervention strategies require effective identification and assessment mechanisms, system navigation support, and potentially case management and integrated systems responses. These supports are designed to provide local temporary housing solutions if people lose their housing so that they are able to maintain natural supports (friends and relatives) and local connections to institutions that they are currently engaged in (e.g., health care, education, community services).



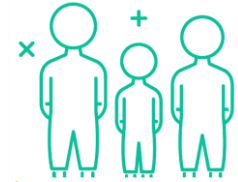
**a**

## Evictions Prevention



**b**

## Family and Natural Supports



**c**

## School-Based Early Intervention



- Youth Reconnect
- UPSTREAM



# 4

## Crisis Prevention

This refers to policies, interventions and practices designed to assist people at imminent risk of, or who have just entered homelessness, to exit the situation with adequate housing and supports to ensure there is no return to homelessness.

Crisis supports that are not housing led, and which do not end a person's experience of homelessness, are not considered prevention.

Crisis prevention becomes a key tactic to reduce the risk of a transition to chronicity.

a

**Shelter Diversion**



b

**Rapid Rehousing**



c

**Host Homes**



d

**Duty to Assist**



# 5

## Housing Stabilization

Housing stabilization includes policies, interventions and practices designed to assist individuals and families to exit homelessness with housing that is adequate, affordable, safe and appropriate, as well as necessary supports help ensure people never wind up experiencing homelessness again.

- **Housing First**  
(including Housing First for Youth)
- **Permanent Supportive Housing**





**Solving problems through**

**Social**

**Innovation**



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# Co-Leadership



canadian  
observatory on  
homelessness

The **Canadian Observatory on Homelessness** (COH) is a research and policy partnership working to conduct and mobilize research designed to have an impact on solutions to homelessness.

Founded - 2008

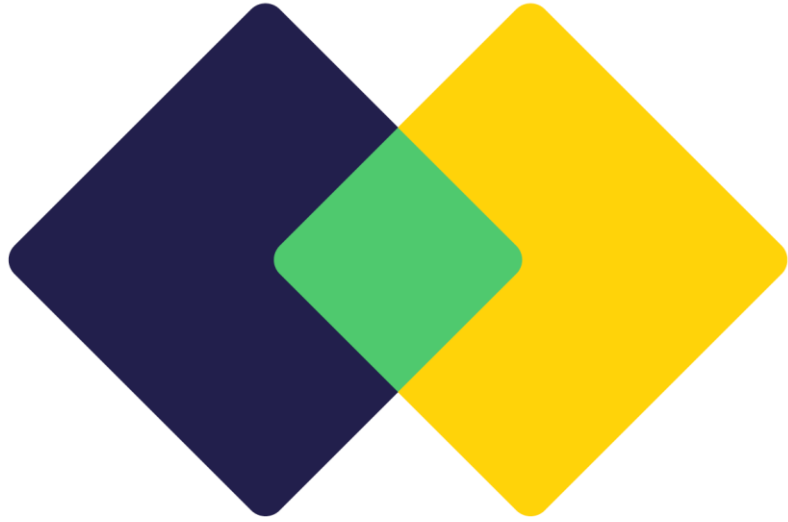


**A WAY HOME**  
**VERS UN CHEZ-SOI**

CANADA

**A Way Home** is a national coalition reimagining solutions to youth homelessness through transformations in policy, practice and planning. We also lead the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness.

Founded - 2015

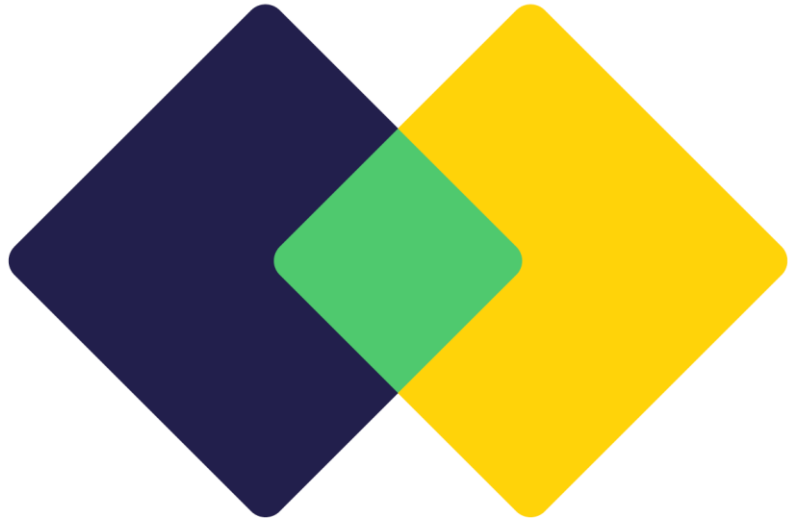


Making the Shift has funded **39 research projects** across Canada focusing on the prevention of youth homelessness

MAKING  
THE SHIFT  
**Funded Research**







MAKING  
THE SHIFT  
**Demonstration  
Projects**

Employing design thinking, our ***demonstration projects*** are intended to expand our knowledge and understanding of innovative approaches to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

**Demonstration Project Models:**

- Upstream
- Youth Reconnect
- Family and Natural Supports (FNS)
- Housing First for Youth (HF4Y)

# Program Design

We do this by identifying, developing, prototyping, testing, evaluating, and mobilizing innovations in policy and practice.



# Research and Evaluation

## Research:

- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- Outcomes tied to service and supports
- For HF4Y - Randomized Control trial

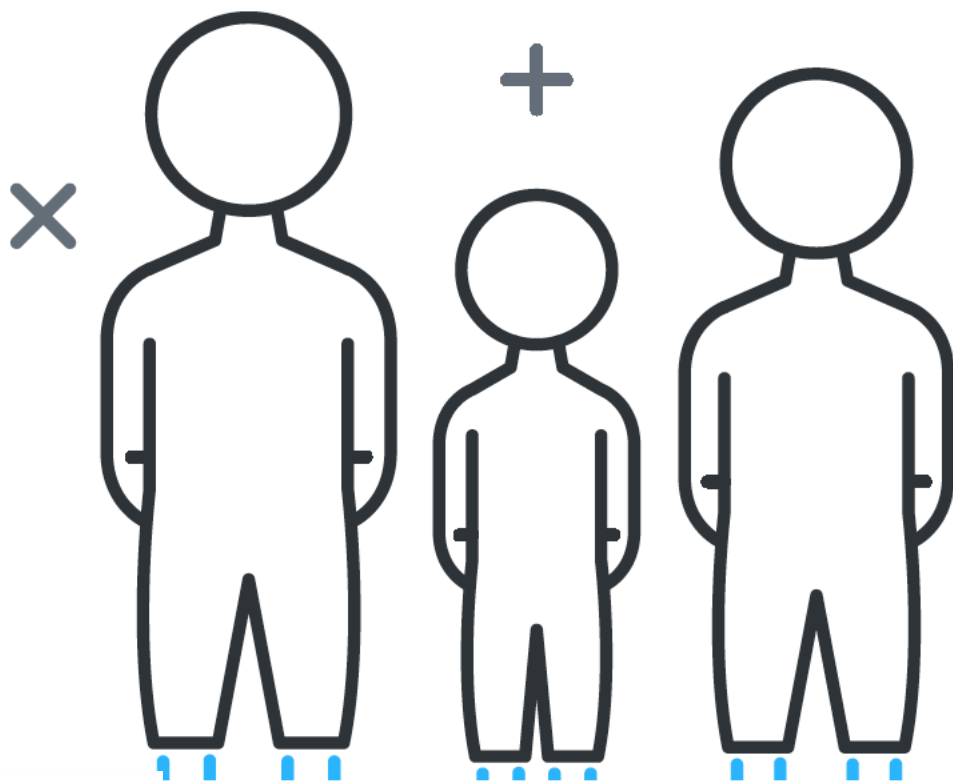
## Evaluation:

- Developmental Evaluation
- Outcomes Evaluation



# 1

## Enhancing Family and Natural Supports



“My trauma led me down a wrong path, and I didn’t know that I had ... places where I could go to access help for that. And my family didn’t know how to support me with my mental health. So they ended up giving up on me because they didn’t know... how. And they didn’t have... anyone show them or teach them how to take care of someone with those circumstances.”

**Kamloops Youth**



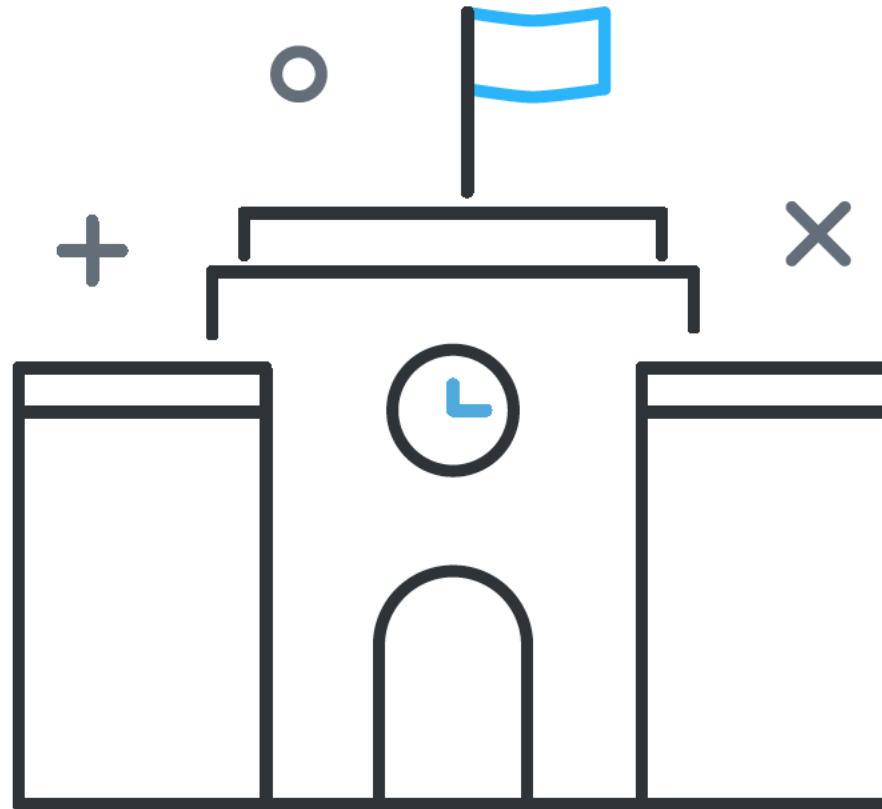


# 2

## SCHOOL-BASED Early Intervention

"Almost everyone has, like, the one teacher that they really trusted and liked, or the one school counsellor that was cool and not scary. So it would be nice if just they got this basic training and also like, signs to look out for. And like, how to approach a student and be like, "hey, you know, how's everything at home, everything going okay?"

Vancouver Youth



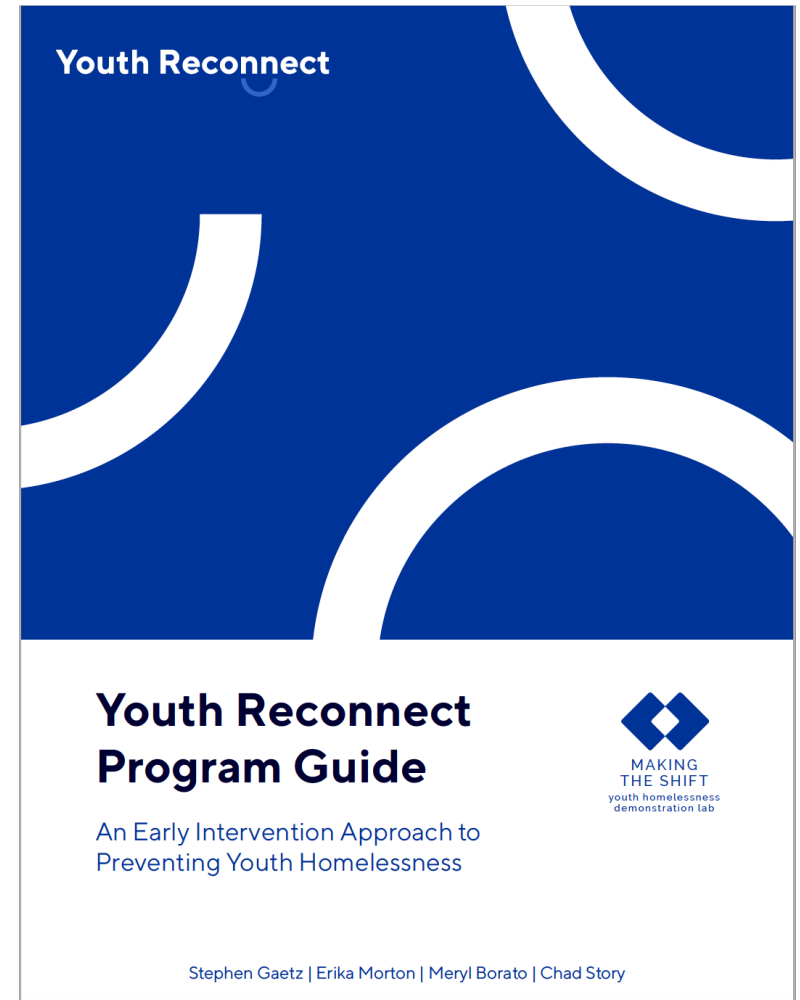
# Why do **SCHOOLS** matter?



# Youth Reconnect

Keeping young people in place

School ↔ Community  
Partnerships





# 1 Keep young people “in place”

“Keeping young people in place is about keeping them in their community. To this day I still feel out of place, an outcast, that’s bumming out of housing...It would be so nice to get that sense of home again, even if you have to rebuild your home.”

Youth with Lived Experience

# 2 Stabilize living situation

“A lot of kids and their families need help, they don’t get along, YR helps with that, you can sit down and have conversations, handle conflict when it comes to parents.”

Youth Reconnect Participant

# 3 Support young people and their families

“The family is a collective unit that needs to be supported. (It’s) not the youth that has all this bad stuff that happened to them.”

Youth with Lived Experience

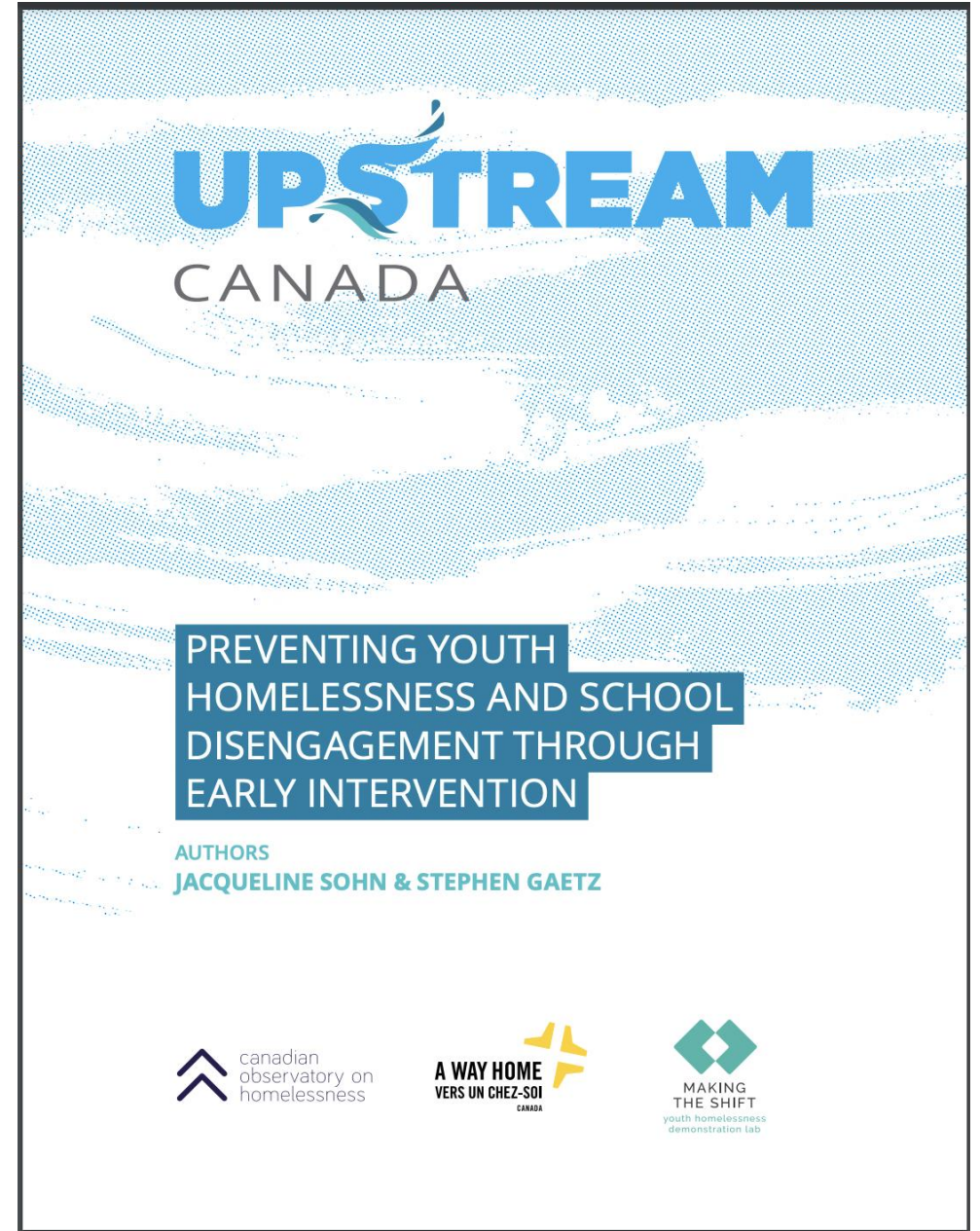
# 4 Enhance school engagement

“A lot of people on the verge of dropping out of schools. YR would be a helpful response for those youth...A lot of people hesitate (to reach out for support) and the more they hesitate they aren’t going to do anything. They are ashamed of the situation.”

Youth Reconnect Participant

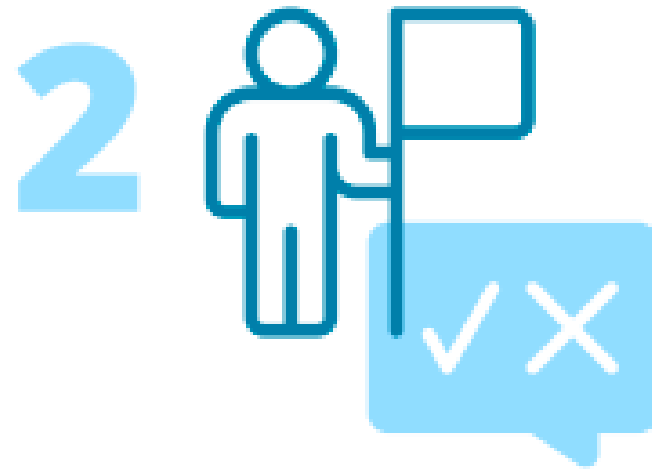
3

**THE  
UPSTREAM  
PROJECT  
CANADA**





Students complete a standardized assessment;



Based on the results, students who are flagged for potential risk have the opportunity to participate in validation interviews with case managers;



Once needs are determined, a collaboratively developed care plan is established and students are connected to supports.

# 4

# Helping youth *exit* homelessness for good!

Housing First  
*4 Youth*



# The Core Principles of HF4Y

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Promoting housing stabilization, well-being, social inclusion and positive transitions to adulthood.



● 1. A Right to Housing with No Preconditions



● 2. Youth Choice, Youth Voice, and Self-determination



● 3. Positive Youth Development and Wellness orientation



● 4. Individualized, Client-driven Supports with no Time Limits



● 5. Social Inclusion and Community Integration

# Housing First 4 Youth

1

**Currently  
homeless  
youth**

2

**Early  
Intervention:  
youth leaving  
care**

3

**ENDAAYAANG  
Supporting  
Indigenous youth**

4

**Knowledge**

**Mobilization**

# The **CHALLENGE**

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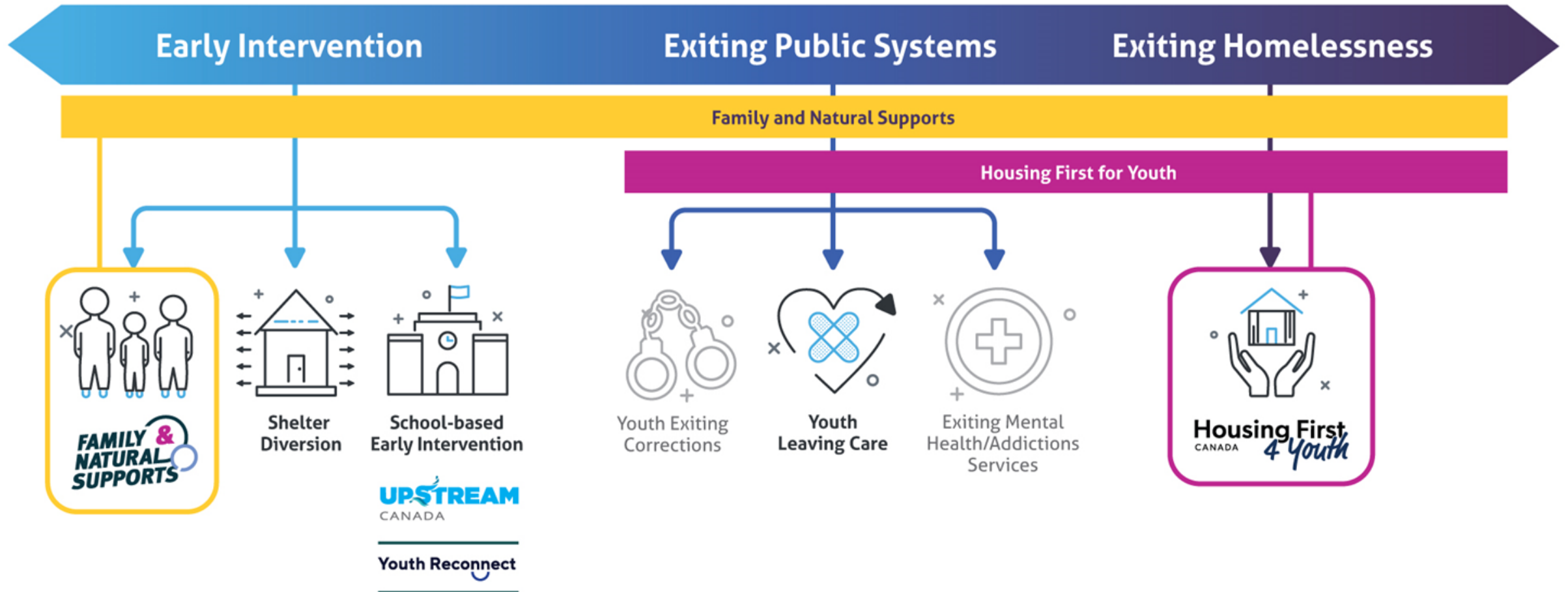
The *shift to prevention* means taking innovation to scale. This requires:

- **Evidence** for effective prevention is developed
- **Knowledge base** is mobilized to increase uptake
- **Policy and funding are** aligned to support prevention
- **Capacity building:** Local government and not for profit sector are supported to make the shift
- **Shift hearts and minds:** *Just do it!*
- **PATIENCE!!!**



# Preventing Youth Homelessness

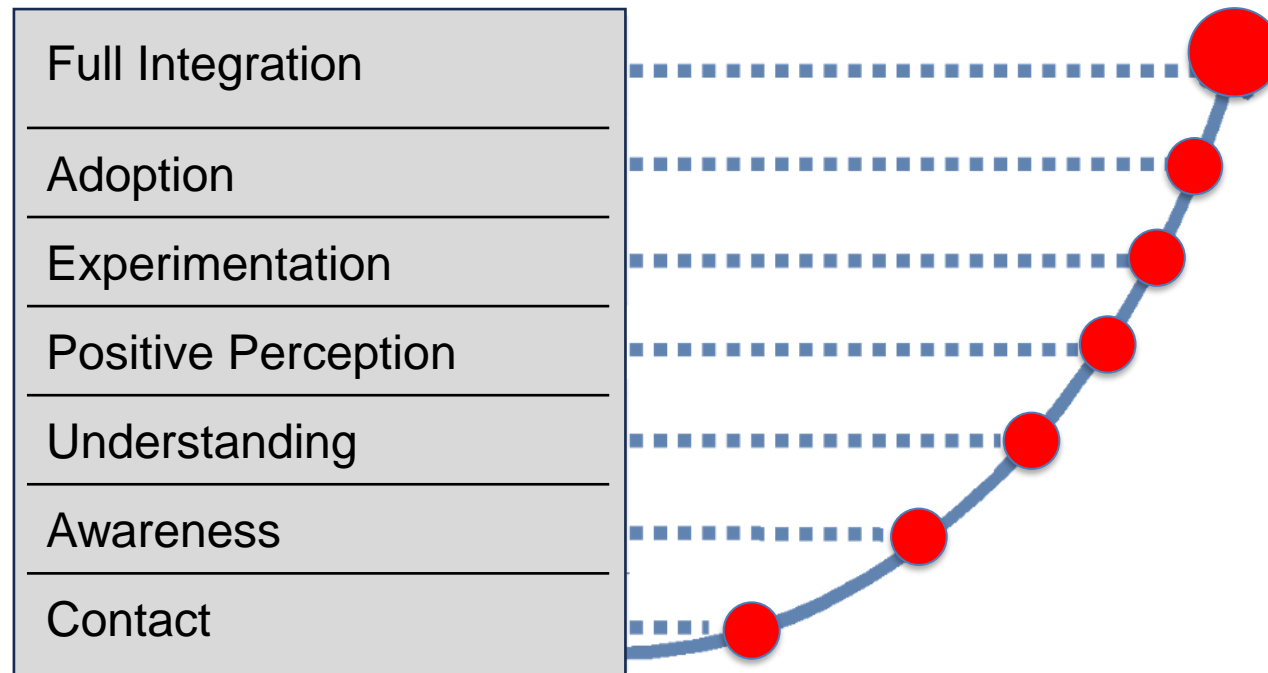
## What you can do in *your* community

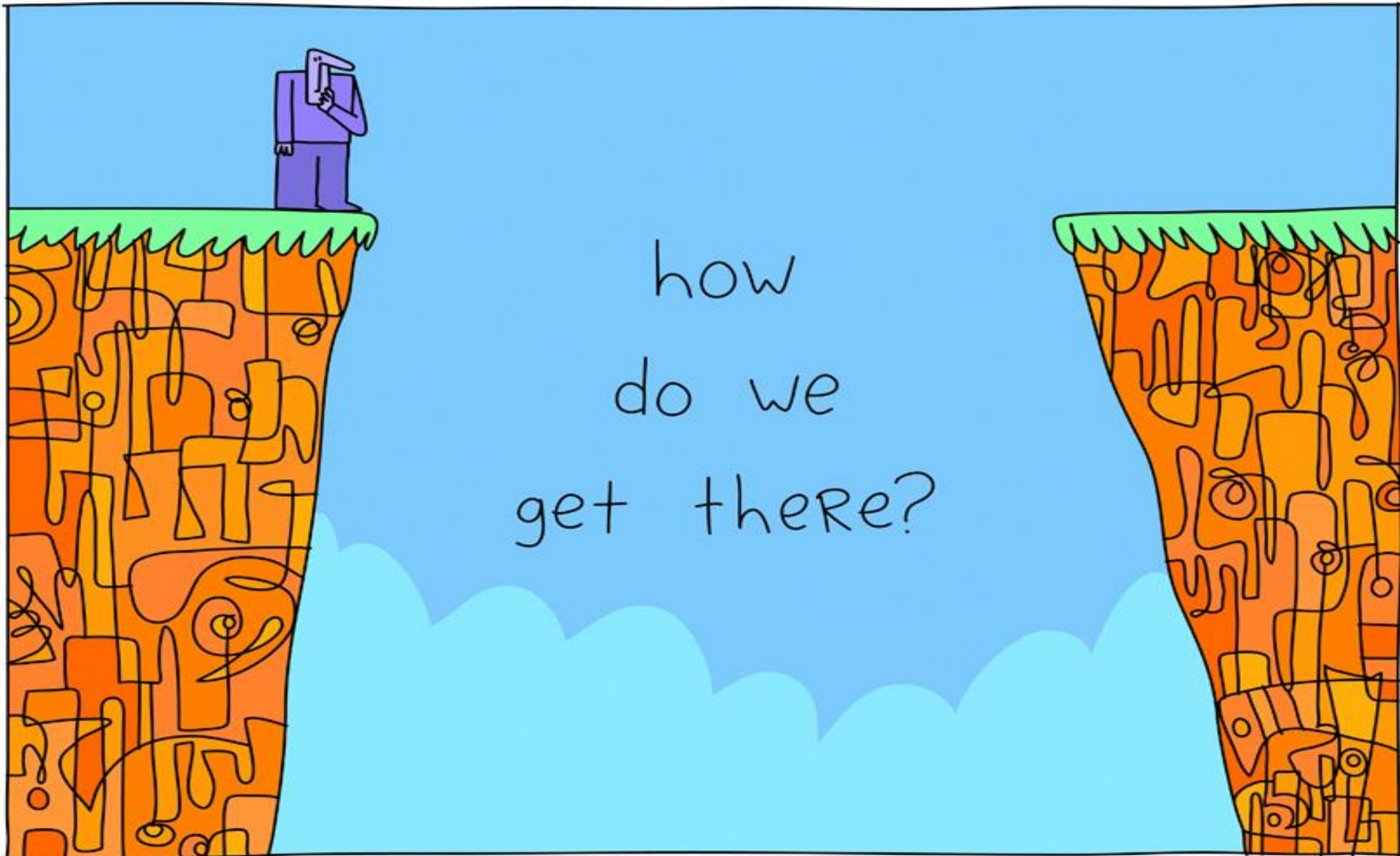


# Our task:

## *Influencing a move up the Commitment Curve*

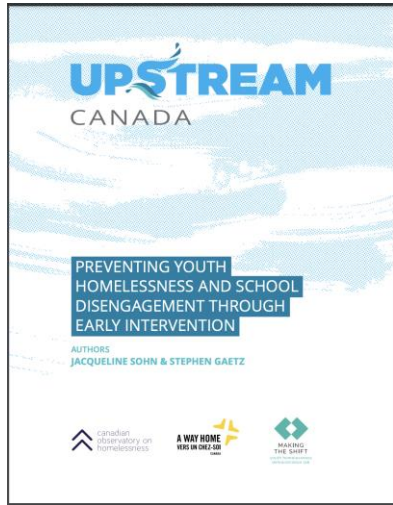
- Reflects change that may happen among or within organizations
- The commitment curve is a way of assessing the commitment of stakeholders to changes in policy and practice.



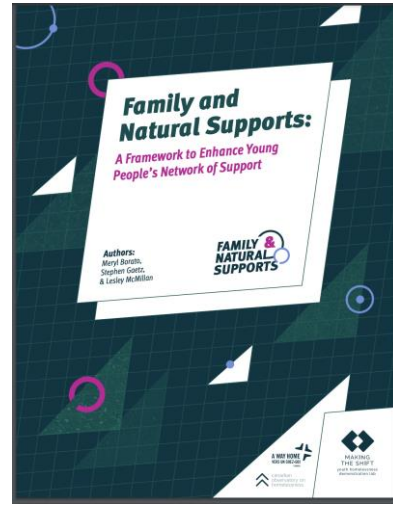


how  
do we  
get there?

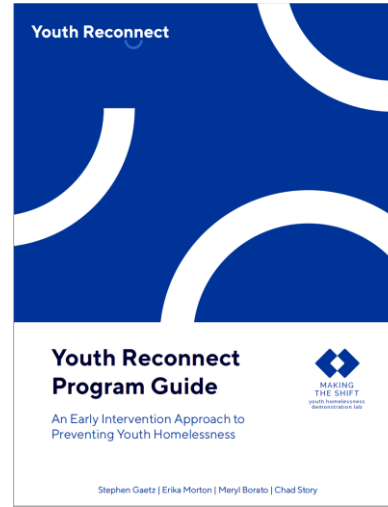
# Public facing resources



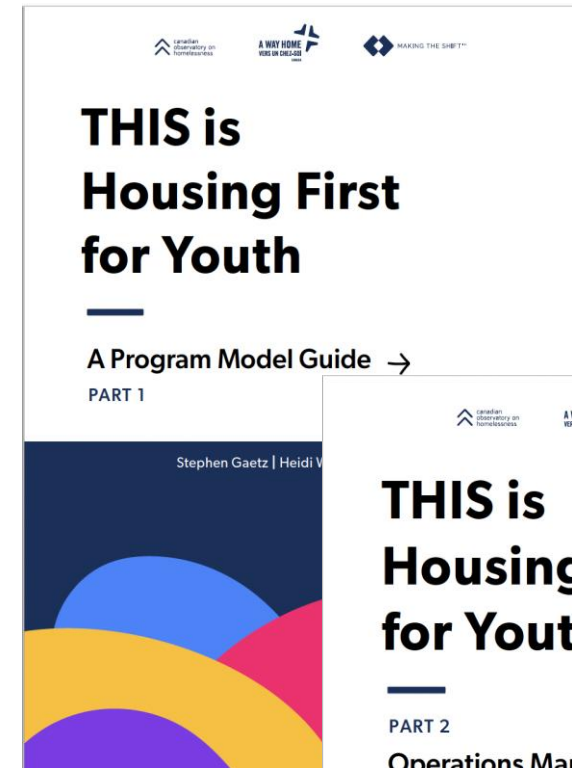
**UPSTREAM**



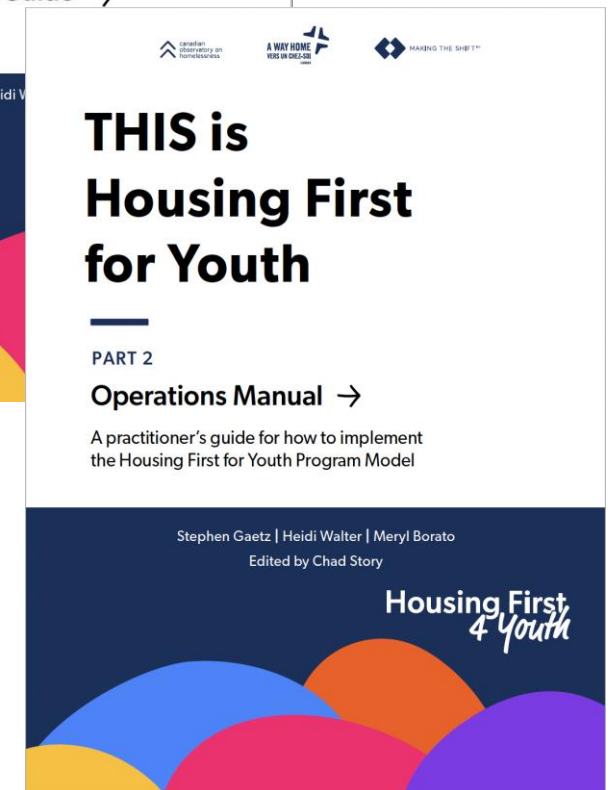
**Family and  
Natural  
Supports**



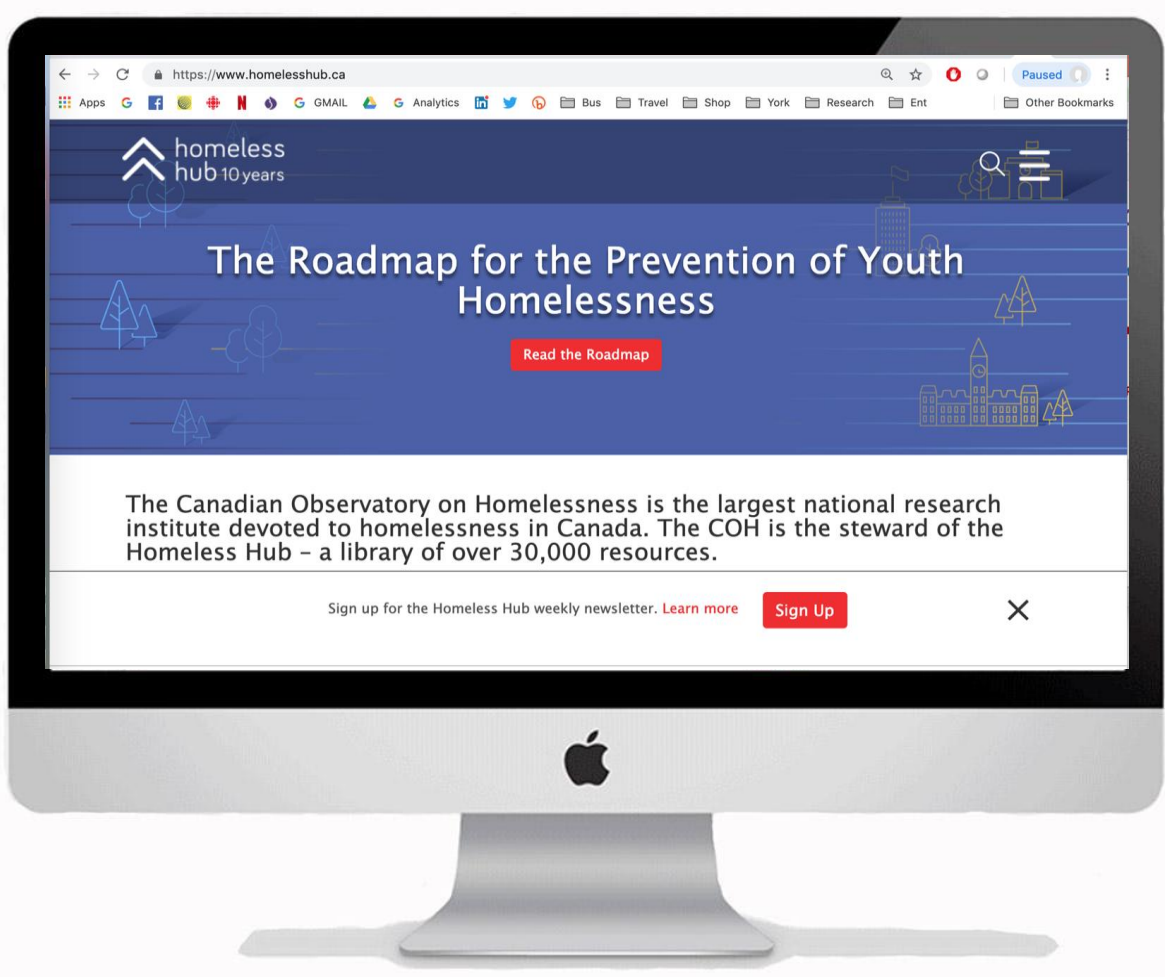
**Youth  
Reconnect**



**HF4Y  
Program Model  
Guide +  
Operations  
Manual**



# Communications Strategy & Design Thinking



# Productive Interactions



- All orders of government
- Service providers
- Community entities
- Funders



# Training and Technical Assistance

## ***Shifting Practices***

Building capacity at the frontlines to deliver prevention-based services that improve the well-being of young people.

## Get support:

- 1 Training & Technical Assistance offerings:
  - Housing First for Youth
  - Family & Natural Supports
  - Program Implementation
  - Systems Planning
- 2 Community of Practice calls
- 3 **FREE** Online training/resources on the Homelessness Learning Hub



# International Engagement

UN Geneva Charter  
Centre of Excellence



**UNECE**

**YOUTH  
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION**  
York University



ANY  
QUESTIONS?

