

Where does Toronto Stand on Youth Homelessness and Supports?

Not only is Toronto one of the wealthiest, largest cities in Canada, it also has the largest homeless population. The National Youth Homelessness Survey revealed that 20% of the homeless population in Canada consists of youth aged 13-24 (S. Gaetz, T. Gulliver, and T. Richter. 2014.) 74% of youth in Toronto shelters identify as a member of a racialized group, and 14% of youth identify as indigenous. **There are up to 2,000 youth experiencing homelessness every night in Toronto (Youth Without Shelter, 2021).**

Similarly, with Toronto's high youth unemployment rate at 43.5%, many young people face difficulties finding jobs (S. Geobey. 2013.).

Although the typical length of stay in an emergency shelter is intended to be of short duration, this is not usually the reality due to the shortage of affordable housing in Toronto (Zhang, B, 2020).

Emergency shelters serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness whether they have a referral or not. Clients for both emergency shelters and youth emergency shelters are able to self-refer in person or over the phone. However, transitional housing is only possible through direct referrals from emergency shelters, central intake, and other agencies.

The average length of stay in a **transitional home** is intended to be of longer duration in order for clients to address what it is they require from housing. However, Transitional housing is usually backed up forcing youth to remain in shelters, or wait upon the extensive Toronto Housing list (Pinki, D. B, 2019).

"How does this all impact the quality of programming within emergency housing?" Programming may not be seen as of importance considering that emergency shelters are intended to be temporary housing. Therefore, programming designed to accommodate the needs of youth entering emergency services, the way they need to be supported, may not exist. This is an interesting way to understand the strain that transitional housing, as well as Toronto's housing crisis, burdens the emergency shelter services.

About the Youth Shelter System:

There are approximately 489 youth beds across the city of Toronto, and most youth shelters intake youth aged 16-24 (Toronto Shelter Standards, 2015).

provide longer-term accommodation however, there is no standard length of stay in a shelter (City of Toronto, 2021). Comparatively, the number of homeless youth to the number of youth beds in Toronto is insufficient. There aren't enough beds to accommodate the 850-2000 homeless youth on any given night in the city.

The average youth shelter in Toronto holds approximately 25-50 beds, and the length of one's stay depends upon that client's circumstances (Toronto Shelter Standards, 2015). I will be exploring how the system can close some of these identified gaps.

Found this interesting? Want to read more on this topic? Stay tuned for the final report at the end of May.

Upon reviewing the City of Toronto Website, there are currently over 7,000 beds across 63 shelters in Toronto. Shelters for youth offer short-term accommodation as well as supports like counselling, meals, recreation and emergency transportation. Some shelters also

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