

EDMONTON ● ● COORDINATED ● YOUTH RESPONSE ●

kanawayim oskayak
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**The Coordinated Youth Response: How 30
Agencies used Youth Led Data to work towards a
City Collaboration in a Global Pandemic**



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Introduction

- Established September 2020
- To provide youth support during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Edmonton Coordinated Youth Response (CYR) is a collaborative effort to integrate and coordinate support and services for young people aged 15-24 experiencing crisis and/or and housing instability during the pandemic.
- This trial run of a city-wide collaboration shows signs of being a model that could work as the longer-term solution to unite youth agencies in their efforts to alleviate youth homelessness and empower young people to identify and achieve their goals.

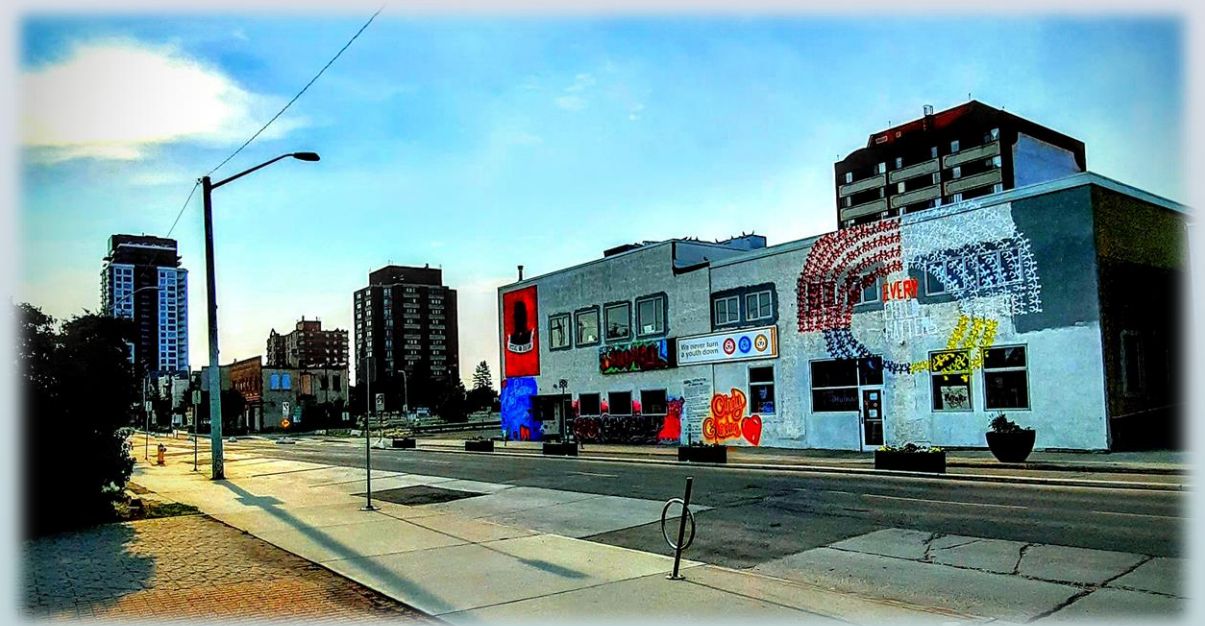


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Background

- Beginning in 2018, youth serving agencies began meeting together to find common ground to create a city-wide alliance that would find more strategic and collaborative ways to support young people in Edmonton who were experiencing crisis and/or housing instability.



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Background

- In 2019, the Youth Agency Collaboration (YAC) project was launched with support from the City of Edmonton's Family and Community Social Services. This initiative started with five agencies: Boyle Street Community Services, Edmonton John Howard Society, iHuman Youth Society, Old Strathcona Youth Society, and Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS).
- The YAC Project found funding through Family & Community Support Services to support the agency leaders, so the project had people power behind it and did not end up being run off the sides of everyone's desks



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Background

- The YAC Project is an exploratory research initiative aimed at improving the delivery of youth services and to better understand the larger system within which youth services are offered in Edmonton.
- The YAC Project has continually met since this launch and will have produced two final reports for the 2020 and 2021 years.
- The Edmonton Coordinated Youth Response came out of the YAC Project's working group.



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Background

- During the early months of the Pandemic, the City of Edmonton's response to supporting people experiencing homelessness and crisis focused on enabling inner city agencies to increase efforts. Although youth were welcomed within the response, youth specific programming was not specific to the response.
- Stemming from the efforts of YAC and out of a need to provide specific youth support during the Pandemic, the Edmonton Coordinated Youth Response (CYR) was formed.
- The intent of the CYR was to support youth during lockdown as well as to create an experimental coordination project where agencies could practice the coordination recommended through the YAC work.

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Operations

- This growing group of youth-serving agencies from across Edmonton is committed to ensuring that young people receive timely access to basic needs, pandemic support, and virtual connections to other agencies.
- As a collaborative, we recognize the importance of creating safe spaces for young people and offering services in a culturally appropriate way that utilizes trauma-informed care, harm reduction, and an intersectional approach.



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Operations

- When youth show up at participating agency, the agency conducts an initial assessment, provides COVID isolation planning, provides services to youth, and connects the youth to other services and supports while using a trauma-informed approach so as not to cause further harm to the young person.
- A record of the young person is created and shared among the participating agencies provide services and supports. This will be done only for youth who consent to their information being shared and who understand the purpose and benefit to the sharing of their info. These procedures were developed with the Privacy Commission to ensure data security.
- Participating agencies can connect youth to other agencies in Edmonton in our coordinated network by arranging video/phone conference calls for real-time referrals.

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Outcomes for Young People

- 1) reducing the risk of entry into homelessness
 - implement consistent screening and referrals to resources across youth-serving systems
- 2) expanding access to safe housing options
 - ensure isolation options for youth suspected of having COVID or testing positive



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Outcomes for Young People

- 3) reducing the risk of COVID transmission among youth in shelter
 - implement shelter policies based on public health guidance to reduce risk of transmission
- 4) improving access to health and social services during the pandemic
 - collaborate across systems to facilitate early identification and integrate and streamline resources for youth during the pandemic



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Naming Ceremony

- In January 2021, CYR was given an Indigenous name by Elder Kokum Rose Wabasca: “kanaweyim oskayak” (pronounced CAN - ah- WEEM oh-SKY-YAK), which translates into English as “taking care of the youth”.



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Demographic Information

- 2,000 interactions with youth September 2020 to June 2021
- Age: 16 to 24
- Gender: Males (50%) Females (39%) Trans (4%) Undisclosed (13%)
- Ethnicity: Indigenous (52%) Unknown (20%) White (18%) African Decent (11%)
- Services Accessed: Basic needs (food, shelter, hygiene) - 41% Addictions - 17% Mental Health - 12% Recreation/Art -11%
- 34 Young People Utilized the Isolation Rooms Offered at YESS



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Participating Agencies

- 211, Advancing Futures (GoA), Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Boyle Street Community Services, C5 North-East Community Hub/Ubuntu, C.H.E.W. Project (U of A), Children's Services, Edmonton John Howard Society, Edmonton Police Services, The Family Centre, Family Futures Resource Network, iHuman Youth Society, the HYPE @iHuman, Old Strathcona Youth Society, Pride Centre of Edmonton, The Terra Centre, and Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS)

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Lessons Learned – Initial Barriers

- Territoriality & mistrust
- Risk aversion
- Lack of internal capacity in the agencies
- Lack of understanding of other agency's programs & services
- Agencies have different visions & approaches for working with young people



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Lessons Learned – Window of Opportunity

- March 2020 – Covid-19 Pandemic
- Increased desire to collaborate & problem solve
- Decrease in risk aversion
- Decrease in territoriality & mistrust



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Lessons Learned – Challenges Encountered During Pilot Project

- Agencies have varying capacities and we decided to meet each agency where they were at
- Capacity for data entry
- When intakes were done many agencies kept information in-house and did not input into data sharing platform
- Communication struggles within agencies about CYR and between agencies



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Next Steps

- Keep Momentum Going
 - Show Successes & Build Engagement
- Creating a central organization that will oversee the collaboration focusing on:
 - interagency complex case management,
 - collaborative funding strategy,
 - coordinating government relations,
 - initiating standards of practice, and
 - community mapping process.



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