



PART 1 Foyer Essentials
THE PROGRAM





lot has been learned through the development of Foyers around the world. The review of research and evaluation literature on Foyers in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom reveals the need for comprehensive programming and support which is, ideally, best provided through a combination of in-house resources, and services provided through partnership. The best solutions to homelessness involve integrated service models (systems of care) that facilitate engagement and connections with sector-based and mainstream service providers. So, in considering program options, one needs to think carefully about who is providing the service, and how the Foyer engages other service providers.

In this first of three sections on “Foyer Essentials” (the other sections focus on ‘accommodation’ and ‘organizational framework’), a summary of key features of an active and effective Foyer program are outlined, with follow up questions and comments for consideration. In this section, you will learn more about the following program components, which are considered essential in establishing a new Foyer:

- Intake
- Long-term residency
- Client-Centred Case Management
- Action Plans for Personal Development
- Life Skills
- Nurturing Environments that Support Positive Relationships
- Work, Training and the Importance of Education
- Mental Health
- The Arts
- Program Fees
- Aftercare

Intake Process

A carefully considered intake process is required to determine the eligibility of youth applying to the program. Several factors should be taken into account including the youth’s social, psychological, medical and criminal histories, in order to determine their suitability for a program such as a Foyer. While the youth should demonstrate a commitment to engaging in work, education and/or training, it is recognized that many homeless (and at risk) youth may be suffering from trauma or be sufficiently disengaged from education to require additional support to help them achieve these outcomes. In order to support homelessness prevention, a Foyer’s intake process should also facilitate referrals from child protection services and corrections (juvenile detention) to ensure that young people fleeing care have access.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) What mix of clients do you want in the Foyer, and how will your intake process address this?
This means establishing clear eligibility criteria.
- 2) What practices will be put in place to ensure the Foyer does not engage in ‘creaming’ (i.e. focus on the easiest to serve clients)?
- 3) What is the intake process?
How do people get identified?
Are there referrals and if so, how does that work?
- 4) What other potentially more suitable options for accommodation and support are available, and does the young person have choices?



Southern Youth and Family Services (Australia) www.syfs.org.au

Longer Term Residency

Many transitional housing providers limit the stay to one year, and this is often determined by funding frameworks. This limitation in terms of length of stay is particularly challenging for young people in the throes of adolescent development.

One of the main attractions of the Foyer is the secure accommodation it provides and the extended opportunity to learn adult skills and responsibilities in preparation for independent living.

Stable housing enables young people to concentrate on their education and training needs, and this facilitates a smoother transition to adulthood. Most traditional Foyers have a two-year residency limit, and research suggests that many young people leave before the two years are up.

However, because the developmental needs of young people vary (for instance, the needs of a 16 year old may be significantly different than those

of a 20 year old), it is argued here that young people should be offered the opportunity to stay in a Foyer beyond two years, based on their needs, readiness for independent living, and their financial stability. Young people still enrolled in school may not have the financial security to live independently, for instance.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) Are there local funding mechanisms in place to support longer term residencies?
- 2) Longer term residencies invariably mean fewer young people can access the services. Is this a sustainable model?
- 3) Will young people who leave the Foyer be able to return if things do not work out? What can be done to support young people in such circumstances?

Client-Centered Case Management

Young people who experience homelessness have typically faced many challenges, and may have had experiences that failed to instill in them trust in authority figures. Youth will all have different strengths and challenges, and any approach to case management must be flexible and responsive to a young person's needs and abilities. In an evaluation of the British Foyers, the authors noted "many required quite intensive support; and a flexible, client-centered approach was essential"¹. A Positive Youth Development framework should also be implemented; that is, one that is an assets-based approach, rather than one that merely focuses on risk and deficits.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) In what ways does your organization support (or not) client-driven, case management?
- 2) What kinds of boundaries will your organization place on client choice?
- 3) Can you integrate a Harm Reduction approach, and if so, what will this look like?
- 4) What will be your 'Plan B' for youth who do not thrive in the Foyer?

ONE OF THE MAIN ATTRactions OF THE FOYER IS THE SECURE ACCOMMODATION IT PROVIDES AND THE EXTENDED OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ADULT SKILLS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING.

Action Plans for Personal Development

Foyers utilize a client-driven model of planning and goal setting. Action plans, developed with support from a case manager, outline an individual's goals, as well as the activities, resources and supports that will help them achieve those goals. Such plans should be "youth-driven and flexible, accommodating incremental progress and age-appropriate change in plans"². The focus of the plan is on the individual's goals regarding education and training, career, housing, health and wellbeing, and other personal goals defined by the individual. When a young person enters the Foyer, they usually develop a plan for the first 30 days, and this gets reviewed and renewed regularly through discussion with the case manager. Action plans can be supported by data management and evaluation systems such as the Outcomes Star*.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) The Foyer Federation has a range of toolkits and resources to support personal development. [MyNav](#) is an online platform bringing together new media technology and informal learning opportunities to deliver a personalized package of support to young people.
- 2) Resources for the Outcomes Star can be found on the Homeless Hub: [Program Evaluation Topics: The Outcomes Star](#)



Miller Live'n'learn campus
C/o Wendy Malycha, St. John's
Youth Services, Adelaide, Australia.
Powerpoint: ANGLICARE WA
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS FORUM
PRESENTATION
Foyers – International learning and
relevance to Australia.

Life Skills

Connected to the action plan is a focus on life skills. All Foyers offer life skills development, in some cases provided in-house and in other cases by external providers. The [Live N Learn](#) Foyer (Australia) provides a good example. They offer a range of activities and workshops on budgeting, life skills, fire safety, health, nutrition, cooking, repairs and maintenance, skin and hygiene, environmental awareness, community contacts and First Aid. They also have three ongoing programs:

- [Live 'n' Learn as an Individual](#) – covering self-esteem and positive affirmation, healthy living and emotional wellbeing, family and relationships and includes a women's group.
- [Live 'n' Learn in the Community](#) – a recreational program including game and movie nights, judo and Sunday lunch.
- [Live 'n' Learn at Work](#) - an optional course aimed at younger residents (under 19). This course runs for seven weeks and covers activities such as resume writing, mock interviews, literacy, numeracy and IT skills, career guidance, and study support. Young people also have compulsory individual meetings and

monthly campus meetings. Training opportunities also provide links between young people and potential employers (such as hospitals, councils, etc.).

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) The Foyer Federation has a range of toolkits and resources to support life skills development, including:

[Foyer Health Toolkit](#) – Enhancing health of young people in Foyers

[Lifetracks](#) – Providing supports for young people to make informed choices about learning, training and work.

[Connect Yourself](#) - A program that aims to enable young people to connect themselves to opportunities that identify, develop and promote their talents and achieve their future goals.

[Feeling Good](#) – A program to support the development of resilience in young people in Foyers in the United Kingdom

[Teenage Parents](#) - The identification of good practice in enhanced housing support for teenage parents.

* The Outcomes Star is a client-based case management and evaluation system incorporating a Stages of Change approach. Originally developed by St. Mungo's in the UK, the Outcomes Star has been adapted by many communities in Canada. For a comprehensive list of resources, see the Outcomes Star topic on the Homeless Hub.



Nurturing Environment That Supports Positive Relationships

The social and physical environment of the Foyer is crucial to facilitating youth engagement. Youth need to feel that they are welcome, comfortable and belong. Young people should be given the opportunity to develop and nurture meaningful relationships not only with staff (adults), but also with other young people, in a supportive environment. A case management approach that includes developing anger management and conflict resolution skills, plus the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and work through the challenges that such relationships bring, will foster the development of resilience and increase the likelihood that young people will develop positive relationships as adults.

The nature of the relationship between staff and residents must be nurturing and support the development of positive relationships. Foyer staff need to engage and relate to the youth; they need to be committed and responsible adults who believe in the integrated and holistic approach and who understand the reasons behind youths' struggles. Staff need to be positive role models for youth and enable and empower young people to achieve their full

potential. Staff / client relations must be nurtured so as not to replicate the rule-bound model of many group homes. Instead, the existence of rules, roles and expectations must be balanced with opportunities for young people to explore, become independent, make mistakes and achieve success. This is a model based on adolescent development rather than institutional care.

Young people should be supported in developing positive relations with other young people, not only within the Foyer, but also in the communities in which they live. Finally, there should be support for family reconnection. For some young people the goal may be to support their return home. For other young people this goal may not be desirable or even possible. In either case, the intent is to help young people stay connected with their communities, and assist them in developing and nurturing positive relationships with family members (parents, siblings, relatives, etc.) and learn to manage conflict. All of this is important, as family can potentially be an important resource to be leveraged as young people move into adulthood and become more independent³.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) For young people who have exited child protection, corrections or mental health in-patient care, how will a safe and supportive social environment be attained?
- 2) What steps will be put in place to ensure that the Foyer does not become a rule-bound institution that contributes to young people's marginalization?
- 3) What qualifications, training and professional development and staff support do you envision will be necessary to ensure a safe and caring environment?
- 4) What would incorporating a family reconnection orientation require?
- 4) How will your organization's philosophy, policy and practices ensure that young people are safe and supported, and that there are anti-discriminatory practices in place (to combat homophobia and racism, for instance)?

Work, Training and the Importance of Education

As an expectation of residence, youth should be encouraged to be involved in training or employed, and/or be offered support to continue education in a field of their choice. While participation in education should be a top priority, it is recognized that some young people may be disengaged from education, or may not be ready for the changes that are required to move forward. As suggested above, this may represent a challenge in working with some young people, so a flexible system that supports reluctant young people in moving towards this goal is important. This is also consistent with a youth development approach, as we would not recommend any young person in Canada (whether or not they have a history of homelessness) lose their housing because of their failure to participate in such activities.

Foyers should also facilitate opportunities for participation in employment training. By providing youth with support in essential work skills, like resume writing and interviewing, as well as links to employers, youth will be better

prepared for work. However, we know from research that training alone is not sufficient to help marginalized and homeless youth move forward, because their predicament is not simply a consequence of their lack of skills or motivation.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) Working with schools and school boards can be challenging, and there may be some level of resistance. Does your organization have an existing relationship with local schools, and if not, how will you approach this?
- 2) What can your organization offer the schools in return, such as workshops for students and teachers?
- 3) What kinds of links with existing training programs can you put in place?
- 4) What will be your approach to working with young people who are disengaged from education, work or training?
- 5) The Foyer Foundation has a key document called Working Assets - Working Assets is about improving young people's employability outcomes by using a positive approach that develops their skills, assets and talents for the world of work.



Mental Health Supports

Mental health issues are common among people experiencing homelessness and unemployment. Mental health challenges can impact a young person's ability to work and live independently; therefore services must be in place to help young people deal with existing mental health issues. Activities that promote positive mental health are also important.

How mental health supports are accessed is an important question. While staff should be knowledgeable about mental health issues, recognize symptoms, and facilitate access to support, it is not necessarily the best approach to rely on 'in house' supports. The Chelsea Foyer (New York), which reported that 21% of participants had a diagnosed mental illness, chose to have

no medical or mental health services other than a part-time nurse whose salary was supported through funding streams that require this service. This was intentional; they felt that mental health services were widely available in the community, and to deliver mental health services themselves would make the Foyer too much like many of the residents' previous experiences in care.



They concluded that “young people with serious mental health challenges are not effectively served by the relatively unstructured Foyer environment”⁴.

A key challenge of implementing a Foyer then is how to integrate necessary and appropriate mental health supports through a ‘systems of care’ approach that embeds the Foyer in a network of mainstream and targeted services.

The Arts – For Living Life

Recent research describes the benefits of the arts for engaging youth, as well as improvements in cognitive function as a result of participating in arts-based learning and initiatives⁵. The arts are a creative and engaging way of enabling people to express themselves, which is crucial for mental health and cognitive development. Many young people have had traumatic experiences that affect their ability to learn, and to connect with others. The arts provide an opportunity for young people to tell their stories through music, painting, poetry, photography, dance, etc., and can be a source of stress-relief in an otherwise stressful life. The arts bring people together and provide an opportunity to connect through mutual interest.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) What kinds of mental health supports are available for youth in your community, and how will you access them?
- 2) How will you nurture mental health through your program’s philosophy and service delivery model?
- 3) How will you ensure that young people receive the proper assessments for mental health and learning disabilities? There is often a cost for testing and this should be planned as a budget item.
- 4) What will be the training needs of your staff, and how will this be accomplished?
- 5) How will you consider your program’s philosophy and service delivery model as a means of supporting a non-discriminatory and stigmatizing environment?

A KEY CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING A FOYER IS HOW TO INTEGRATE NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS THROUGH A ‘SYSTEMS OF CARE’ APPROACH THAT EMBEDS THE FOYER IN A NETWORK OF MAINSTREAM AND TARGETED SERVICES.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) How can this kind of programming be offered through creative partnerships with local organizations?
- 2) The Foyer Federation’s Open Talent programming supports arts based youth engagement.
- 3) Though not part of existing Foyers, two interesting arts-based programs for homeless youth provide excellent models of how to engage young people in the arts:
 - Sketch (Toronto)
 - Roaddawgz (San Francisco)



Open Talent – Yeovil Foyer, Somerset UK.
SWEET SOUNDS: The Foyer band, brothers Simon and David Gaylard, perform at the launch of the Open Talent campaign at the Foyer in Yeovil.

Photo: Jennie Banks, Western Gazette, North Dorset
www.thisissomerset.co.uk/Students-thrilled-look-vibrant-gypsy-culture/story-16522898-detail/story.html

Program Fees: A Model That Does Not Penalize

Having young people work and pay a small fee to be part of the Foyer is seen as necessary to build young people's capacity to live independently. However, in order to be sustainable, the program fee charged to residents needs to be affordable and geared to income. In the UK, young people who work pay higher program fees than those on public assistance. In some cases, the program fee was more than the youth could reasonably afford and some youth were going into debt. This forced some youth to leave their jobs and rely on public assistance. The funding model must be geared towards helping young people become self-sustaining.

At the New York Foyer, residents pay a program fee roughly equivalent to 30% of their income. The money is deposited into an account that residents can use at the end of their stay to contribute to a rent deposit. This is a significant advantage for residents – not only do they get the practice of paying 'rent', but they are in a much better position to secure housing when they leave the Foyer.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) It is recommended that the model followed in New York be adopted.
- 2) What other forms of financial literacy training and support for residents might you provide?



Ladder Huddle St. Mentoring

Photo courtesy of Inner North Community Foundation www.innernorthfoundation.org.au/node/156

Aftercare

Although the Foyer approach addresses many youth needs, once youth leave the Foyer to live independently, they may still require some level of ongoing support. Plans to engage youth in aftercare should be a part of the discharge planning process. The transient nature of the population means that contact phone numbers often change, and it is important to collect all contact information from youth before they leave. The New York Foyer has employed innovative ways of maintaining contact with youth including via social media sites like Facebook, and by developing a partnership with a local college that provides an intern to coordinate aftercare contact, in the absence of funding to support an aftercare staff person. The level of contact required depends on the needs of the youth, and should be decided in collaboration with

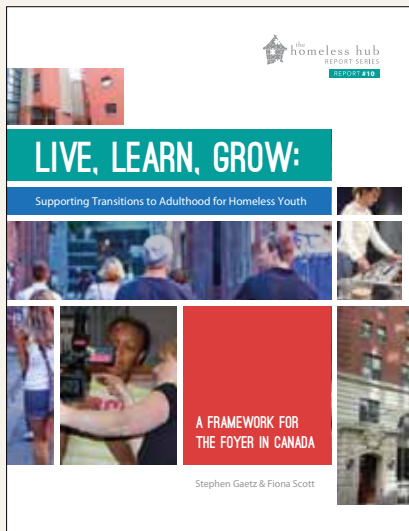
youth and staff as part of the discharge planning process. Youth need to be engaged not only in follow up conversations with staff, but also with events and activities that continue to support them in building relationships and networks. Program staff should be in contact with former participants within a reasonable time frame post discharge in order to maintain a relationship.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- 1) What funding needs to be in place to ensure aftercare is provided?
- 2) For high needs clients, in what ways can aftercare supports be transferred to other providers?
- 3) What strategies need to be in place to ensure no one is discharged into homelessness?

THE FUNDING MODEL MUST BE GEARED TOWARDS HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME SELF-SUSTAINING.

READ MORE



READ THE FULL REPORT

TOOLKITS

- #1 What is a Foyer?
- #2 The Foyer and Transitions to Adulthood
- #3 The Philosophy and Principles of the Foyer
- #5 Foyer Essentials Part 2: Accommodation
- #6 Foyer Essentials Part 3: Organizational Framework
- #7 Foyer Case Studies
- #8 Resources from the Foyer Federation (UK)

References

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 2. Common Ground Community and Good Sheppard Services. (2009). The Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher at Five Years: Lessons in Developing Stable Housing and Self-Sufficiency For Homeless Youth and Youth Exiting Foster Care. New York, NY: Good Shepherd Services.
 3. Winland, Daphne; Gaetz, Stephen & Patton, Tara (2011). Family Matters: Homeless youth and Eva's Initiatives "Family Reconnect" Program. Toronto: Homeless Hub Research Report Series #3.
 4. Common Ground Community and Good Sheppard Services, *ibid.*
 5. Gazzaniga, M. (2008). Arts and Cognition: Findings hint at relationships. In: M. DeLong & T. Wichmann (Eds.), *Learning, Arts, and the Brain*, 7-11. Washington, DC: Dana Press.
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