

Validation of a Brief Fidelity Self-Assessment Tool for Housing First (HF) Interventions for Youth: Pilot Testing

Ashley Ward (she/her)
Samara Jones (she/her)
Stephen Gaetz (he/him)

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MAKING THE SHIFT^{INC}
youth homelessness social innovation lab



**Tablelands, Newfoundland
and Labrador, Canada**



**Toronto Island and Toronto,
Ontario, Canada**

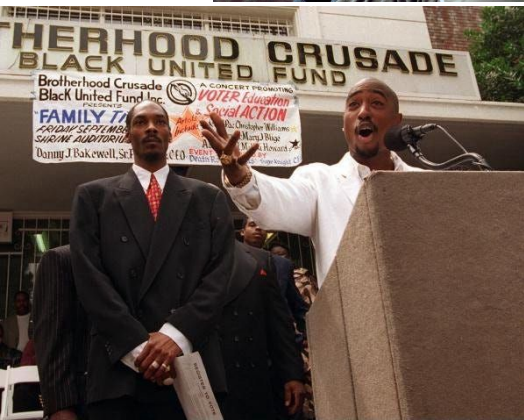


**North Saskatchewan River,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**



**And Lake
Bütgenbach, Belgium**

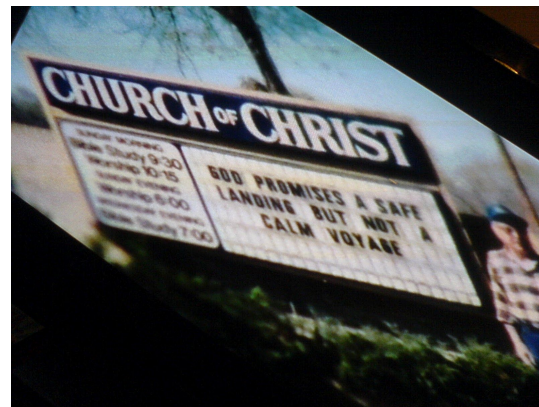
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Toronto Centre of Excellence on
Youth Homelessness Prevention
at York University

Hosted by York University and co-led by the COH, A Way Home Canada and our Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab, the Toronto Centre of Excellence (TCE) on Youth Homelessness Prevention at York University provides an opportunity to work internationally to contribute to the transformation of how we respond to and prevent youth homelessness.



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A WAY HOME
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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions & Next Steps
- Q&A

INTRODUCTION

Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) is distinct from Housing First for all ages: different supports and partnership networks are required for this approach to succeed.

HF4Y programs do not often have the financial means to develop evaluation or assessment tools, or to include extensive evaluation in their programming.

Evidence from HF4Y providers in Canada and Europe indicate a demand for support to ensure they are developing HF4Y programs and approaches that are true to the principles, often within less than ideal housing or policy frameworks.



INTRODUCTION

Program fidelity assessment is the evaluation of a program's performance in correspondence with its defined principles and practices.

Fidelity assessment can also be expensive and time-consuming; qualified independent assessors may additionally be challenging to access.

In response to these concerns, self-assessment is increasingly being recognized as a valid form of fidelity review.



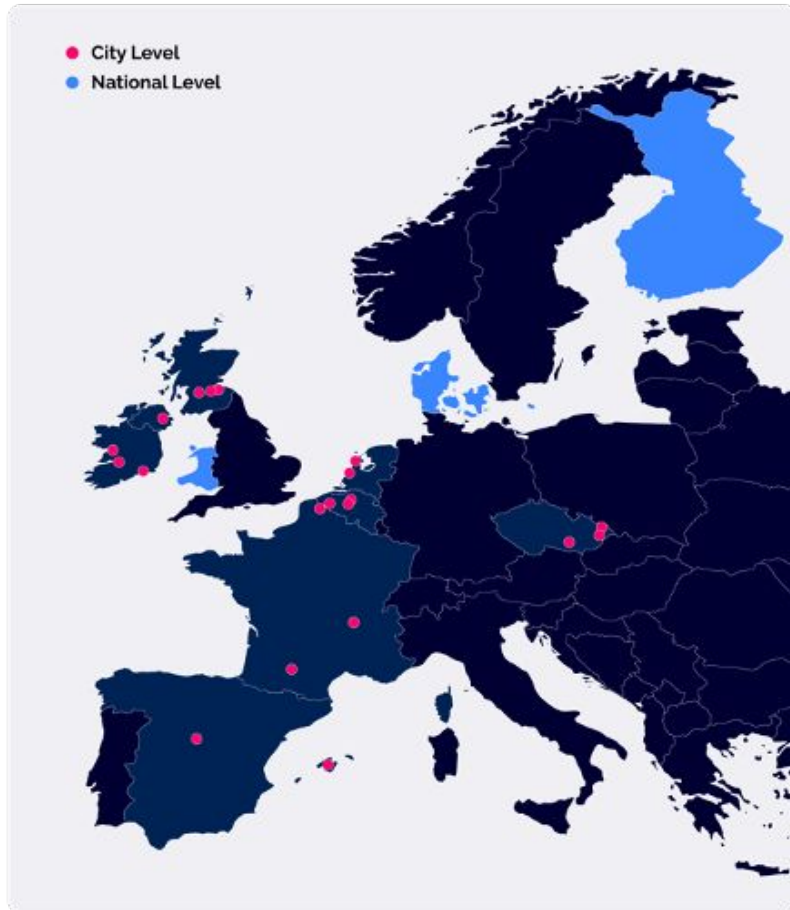
Photo by S.O. from a 2016 Photovoice project about youth living homeless in downtown Edmonton, Canada.

INTRODUCTION

Moreover, there is an increasing demand for support to launch and execute quality HF programs for youth, from networks such as the Housing First Europe Hub and A Way Home Canada. At the same time, most organisations do not have budgets to carry out the work (e.g., inviting external trainers; supporting staff to travel to train).

Self-assessment tools with professional training can help to reinforce good practice and fidelity to the core principles of HF4Y and connection to broader HF4Y network.

Geographic snapshot: HF4Y programs and approaches have taken firm hold in Canada, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, France, The Netherlands, Spain; countries including Belgium, Czechia, are starting; Finland applies a HF approach to youth work in housing.



European countries and cities with HF and youth programs:

- Belgium
- Czechia *in development
- France
- Ireland
- Netherlands
- Scotland
- Spain
- Finland

Implementation at the national level:

- Denmark
- Wales

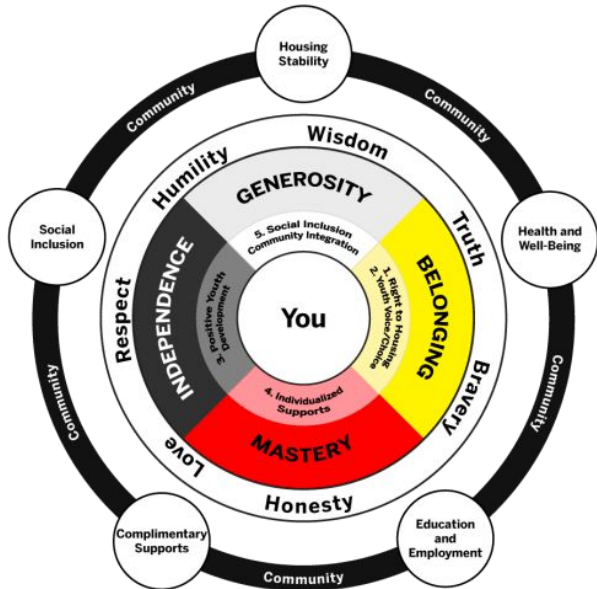
INTRODUCTION

Fidelity screeners cannot provide in-depth feedback, but they can provide a general snapshot of a program's model fidelity, and suggest program areas for improvement (e.g., a program's expansion to include a part-time housing locator on staff). Additionally, and importantly, fidelity screening and assessment is a professional issue for staff and managers, since the process often generates:

- Disagreement and conflict
- Confusion
- Significant challenges and/or difficult realities about the limitations of what the program can offer that require iterative discussion or problem-solving



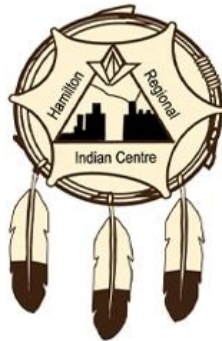
THE CURRENT STUDY



Hamilton Regional Indian Centre - Endaayaang Case Management Model

The goal of the current study was to conduct a pilot analysis for a program fidelity self-assessment tool for Housing First (HF) programs for youth.

It draws on data collected from a larger study examining program adoption, implementation, and practitioner innovation in HF programs for youth in Canada and Europe.



METHODS

Literature Review

- Factors related to program adoption and implementation success and failure
- Diffusion of program innovation
- Program fidelity and quality monitoring
- Evolving training and capacity-building needs

Document Review

- Policy and social welfare context
- Program context

Quantitative Analysis

- Descriptive summary of programs in Canada and Europe
- Fidelity assessment of program alignment with HF4Y core principles
- Descriptive summary of training and technical assistance need
- Fidelity tool validation

Qualitative Analysis

- Grounded theory (HF4Y, diffusion of innovation)
- Content analysis

METHODS



Research Design

Cross-sectional mixed-methods design



Participants

Leaders of host organizations
Service delivery team leads



Recruitment Strategy

- (1) email invitation via AWHC's Training & Technical Assistance Program
- (2) social medial platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- (3) recruitment flyer through newsletters and mailing lists
- (4) snowball strategy with interview participants

METHODS



Quantitative Measures

HF4Y Site Description Survey
Core Principles Checklist: HF4Y Program
Fidelity Self-Assessment
HF4Y Training & Technical Assistance
Questionnaire



Qualitative Measures

Individual and Focus Group
Interviews

CORE PRINCIPLES OF Housing First *4 Youth*

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

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS



Program Founders

n = 20 (10 Canadian, 10 European participants)

Impact of Gov't Mandates & Agendas
HF and Youth

Stakeholder Involvement & Engagement
Program Planning & Implementation
Barriers and Facilitators to Uptake



Service Team Leads

n = 20 (10 Canadian, 10 European participants)

Program Implementation
Team Training & Capacity-Building
Program Innovation, Impact on Youth, and
Contribution to Addressing Homelessness
Program Evaluation

METHODS

Plan of analysis: Pilot validation process of the Core Principles Checklist

3 Stages:

1. Initial feedback from “tool completers” as a research measure (i.e., Team Leads) - general tool construction and response analysis
2. Full tool pilot (inter-rater reliability OR rating repeatability: has the program changed? If so, in what ways?)
3. Full version release

RESULTS

Quantitative data analysis: Preliminary results

- ❖ 29 completed Qualtrics surveys from 10 participating countries
- ❖ Issues:
 - Technical: Scoring: item weighting; category summation of core principles and priorities; addressing issues external to the program
 - Practical or “real-world” issues impacting the technical:
 - Understanding the intersections of tool completion with staff roles
 - Addressing areas for further training (e.g., housing location)



RESULTS

Qualitative data analysis: Preliminary results

- ❖ Initial findings include consensus that HF4Y works for young people (homeless or at risk of homelessness) in Canada and Europe
- ❖ Young people in or exiting or with experience of the care system are particularly vulnerable; can benefit from HF4Y; partnership networks across care systems, HF4Y and other sectors are necessary for success
- ❖ Housing availability and on-going cost of living crisis in Canada and Europe is a significant obstacle to expanding and scaling up the HF4Y approach

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- ❖ Housing availability and ongoing cost of living crisis in Canada and Europe is a significant obstacle to expanding and scaling up the HF4Y approach

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

Social programs such as HF programs for youth, require time to gain stability, or “footing,” to demonstrate their effectiveness. (This means time in typical or expected operations.) Likewise, effective social programs require strong fidelity to their original program model in order to produce the desired outcomes for youth.

Fidelity screeners can provide important points of feedback that support program development, including staff development, program expansion, a redefinition of an intake or assessment system, etc.

And, at the same time, fidelity assessment must include real-world conversations holding everybody accountable to the original/intended program model. More practice-based research must be conducted to further understand training programs.



CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The next steps towards a full validation include:

- Conducting tests of validation to fully assess content and representation of HF programs for youth; test-retest reliability (e.g., program footing @ 6-9 months, then assessing again @ under 18 months) to assess program growth; etc.
- Scoring model: subcategory or principle item weight; optional items addressing common problems faced by HF for youth, including housing stock
- Final revisions and official screener release



QUESTIONS?

Visit us online:
makingtheshiftinc.ca

Dr. Ashley K. Ward

Senior Researcher
wardash@yorku.ca
1-905-730-3195

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New Horizons in HOUSING FIRST

HF EUROPE HUB CONFERENCE
DUBLIN, 19th & 20th November 2024

A conference gathering Housing First providers across Europe and beyond but also policymakers, housing providers and politicians to share and learn on Housing First.



Early event on the 18th November with a Workshop on Housing First for Youth.

Read the programme and register here

