

# Housing Program



Young people transitioning from the child welfare system face a range of unique challenges and a lack of consistent support from a family of origin or other networks significantly increasing their risk of experiencing homelessness. **According to a national study, 57.8% of young people experiencing homelessness had previous involvement with the child welfare system (Gaetz et al., 2017)<sup>1</sup>.**

However, supports can help young people navigate housing when in transition. Evidence demonstrates that financial supports for young people from care was correlated with them being less likely to spend a night without housing (Goldstein et al., 2011)<sup>2</sup>.

Children's Aid Foundation of Canada has also heard from partners and lived experts that young people transitioning from care need guidance and skills to be able to transition to and maintain safe, secure, and affordable housing. A research study from 2018 found that young people wanted accessible pathways to quickly obtain social assistance in addition to rent subsidies and emergency relief funds (Schwan et al., 2018)<sup>3</sup>.

## About the Foundation's Housing Program

The Foundation launched its Housing Program in 2012 to meet the short-term housing needs of youth in transition with the aim of reducing homelessness. The program helps young people transitioning to independence from permanent care find and maintain stable housing and is additionally geared towards skills and capacity development to maintain housing in the long-term. Meeting the urgent housing needs of young people in transition can help them focus on achieving their education and employment goals, giving them the opportunity to build a stronger foundation for long-term success.



**The program aims to provide young people from care with a streamlined support system as they transition into adulthood outside of care.**

**It has two pillars:**

- 1 housing navigators
- 2 financial support for housing related needs

Housing navigators are trained social workers with specialized knowledge of the housing system and available supports. They help young people understand their options, identify and pursue available housing, manage landlord relations, and connect them with a range of resources to support their transition to safe, secure, and affordable housing.

**Financial support for housing-related needs is available for young people in and from care who demonstrate financial need and are aged 16-29 at the time of request. Eligible housing related expenses include:**

- **First and/or last month's rent** to help secure a safe, affordable home.
- **Emergency funds** to assist youth when they come up short on their rent or utility bills.
- **Gift cards** for retailers like grocery and discount stores to purchase home essentials.
- **Moving fees and emergency storage** for belongings until housing can be secured.
- **Home essentials** such as bedding and furniture to furnish their home and make it livable.



<sup>1</sup> *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey* by Stephen Gaetz, Bill O' Grady, Sean Kidd and Kaitlin Schwan, 2017

<sup>2</sup> *Highlights from Youth on the Street and Youth Involved with Child Welfare: Maltreatment, Mental Health and Substance Use* by A.L. Goldstein, T. Amiri, N. Vilhena, C. Wekerle, T. Thornton and L. Tonmyr, 2011

<sup>3</sup> *What would it take? Youth Across Canada Speak Out on Youth Homelessness Prevention* by Kaitlin Schwan, Stephen Gaetz, David French, Melanie Redman, Jesse Thistle and Erin Dej, 2018

## 2022-24 HOUSING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



The Housing Program supported  
**614**  
young people  
transitioning from care



**\$485,227**  
was granted to young  
people to support  
housing needs



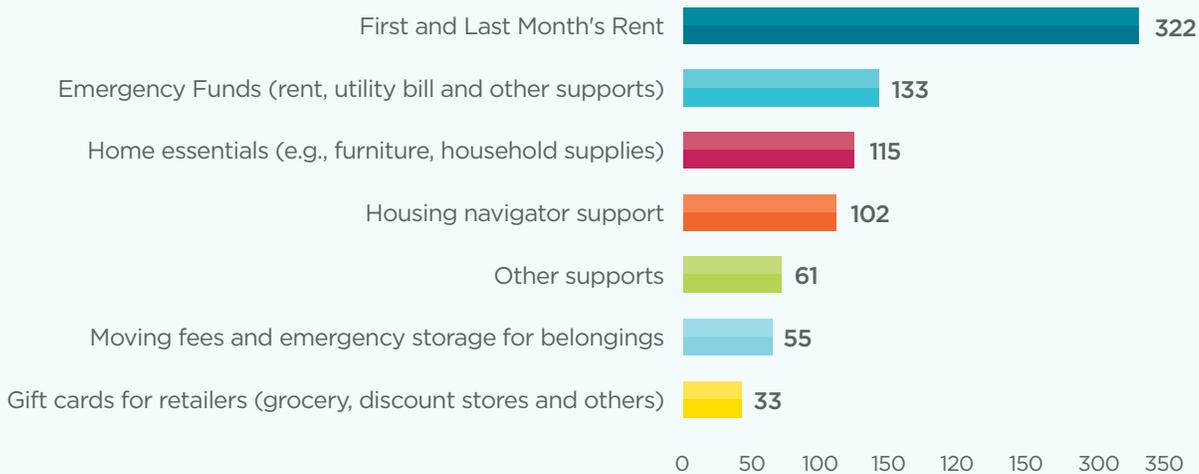
**13**  
youth-serving organizations  
delivered the  
Housing Program including  
**1**  
Indigenous-led organization



Youth in  
**5**  
provinces were supported  
by the Housing Program:  
New Brunswick, Ontario,  
Manitoba, Alberta  
and British Columbia

In 2022-24, young people received support from the Housing Program to address a range of needs:

### Number of youth receiving supports from the Housing Program



“ This individual received \$1,500 to support them with first/last month's rent and purchasing furniture. Tom's\* case worker facilitated a difficult, after-hours rental contract to secure his housing and the worker reports that she has never worked with a youth who has been so grateful. Tom consistently relays his thanks and says that without his worker and the Foundation supporting him, he would not have been able to escape homelessness. Now having a stable, safe home of his own, Tom can commit to more hours at his job and has a strong desire to make an honest living and become the first person in his family to become successful.”

- Snapshot of a 22-year-old male participant served by our partner, Children's Aid Foundation of Ottawa.

\* Names have been changed to protect privacy.

# Youth participant demographics

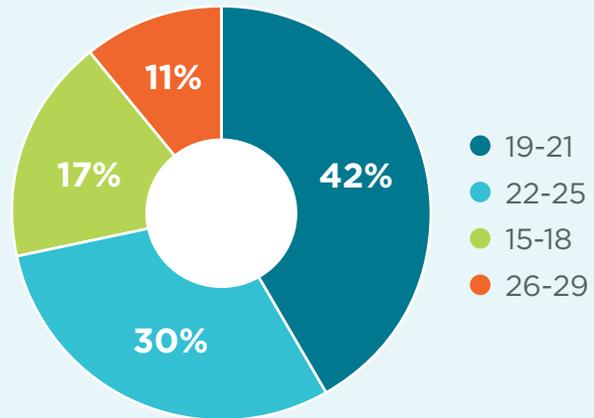
The Foundation collects demographic information to track learnings and outcomes to better understand the diversity of the youth we support and the extent to which we are reaching populations who are overrepresented in the child welfare system across the country.

Data from quarterly reports represents the following picture about the participants being served by the Foundation’s Housing Program:

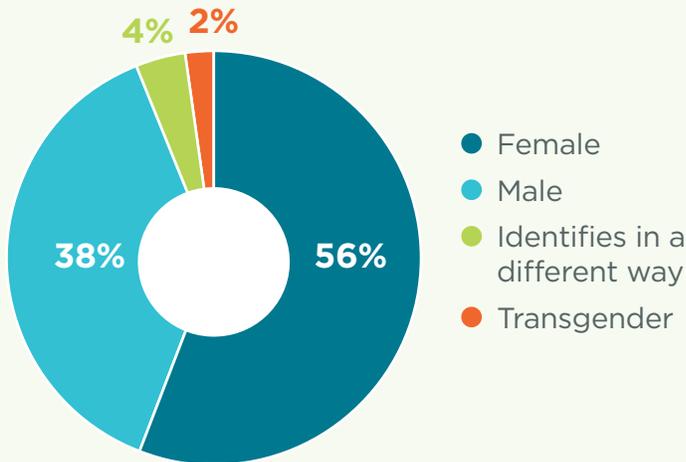
## Participants age

Participants aged 19-21 made up **42%** of the total young people supported by the Foundation’s Housing Program. This was followed by participants aged 22-25 at **30%**, 15-18 at **17%** and 26-29 at **11%**.

Age range of participants at program intake in 2022-24



Gender of young people served by the Housing Program in 2022-24



## Participants gender

Participants who identified as female made up the majority of the young people supported by the Foundation’s Housing Program at **56%**. Those who identified as male were **38%** of program participants. **4%** of program participants identified in a different way and **2%** identified as transgender.



## Housing: At the time of application

**20%** were unhoused (i.e., couchsurfing, emergency shelter, streets/living in car)

**37%** were precariously housed i.e., at risk of eviction, unstable or unsafe housing)

**44%** were in stable housing but required support (i.e., stable but requiring support, foster home/group home, transitional housing)

# Participants from populations overrepresented in the child welfare system

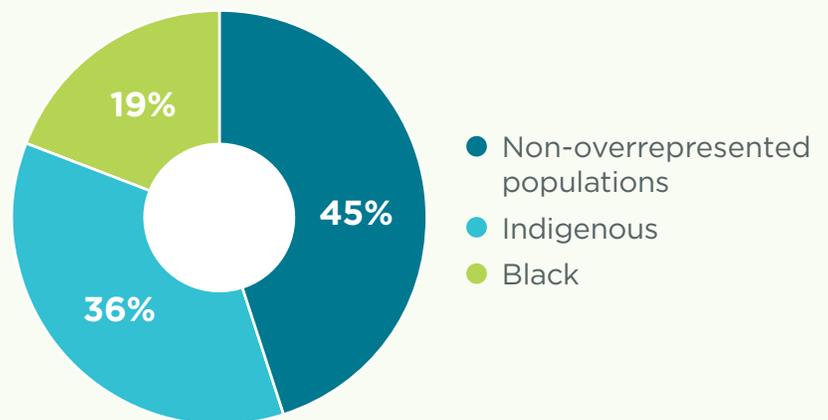
As a result of systemic racism and intergenerational trauma rooted in Canada's history of colonialism and slavery, Black and Indigenous youth are dramatically overrepresented in the child welfare system. In Canada today, over half (54%) of young people living in government care are Indigenous despite representing just 8% of Canada's child population<sup>1</sup>.

Black children are similarly overrepresented in care. In Toronto, for example, although just 8.5% of the city's population is of African descent, Black children represent 40% of kids living in government care<sup>2</sup>.

The Foundation is committed to developing and supporting targeted strategies that address the specific needs of Black and Indigenous children, youth, and families involved with the child welfare system.

The majority of young people supported by the Housing Program were from populations overrepresented in child welfare, i.e. Indigenous or Black, combined at **55%**. **36%** of young people served by the program were Indigenous and **19%** were Black.

Overrepresented and non-overrepresented populations served by the Housing Program in 2022-24



## Housing Program impact

The Foundation's Housing Program has robust evaluation frameworks. To help the Foundation gauge the broader impact and value of its Housing Program, program evaluation is completed using aggregate quarterly reporting and forms completed by individual participants and program staff.

Three months after receiving support, partners noted the following impacts:

Impacts of Housing Supports on Young People in 2022-24



<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada 2022. Table 98-10-0276-01 *Household and family characteristics of persons including detailed information on stepfamilies by Indigenous identity and residence by Indigenous geography: Canada, provinces and territories* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810027601-eng>

<sup>2</sup> *Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Addressing Disproportionality, Disparity and Discrimination in Child Welfare: Data on Services Provided to Black African Caribbean Canadian Families and Children* (Toronto: Children's Aid Society of Toronto, 2015)

The Foundation tracks the impact of the support on the living situation of program participants before and three months after being supported by the Housing Program. We additionally track outcomes on employment and education since the program aims to meet the urgent housing related needs of young people so that they can focus on meeting their educational and employment goals.

Data collected by the Foundation revealed that the fund had a significant impact on the needs of recipients as they related to their living situation, employment, and school status.

## Living situation of participants after support

Participants served by the Foundation’s Housing Program in 2022-24 were in a wide variety of living situations at the time of intake.



## Employment and education

The increased housing stability allowed more youth to access or focus on education or employment. Three to six months after receiving support

- **80%** of youth were making progress toward their educational goals, as compared to **49%** before receiving support; and
- **83%** were making progress toward employment goals, as compared to **59%** before receiving support

### Percentage of youth progressing toward education and employment goals before and after support



“ Youth have found the funds extremely helpful in bridging gaps in finance. Putting the money towards rent, has allowed them to pay for unforeseen expenses and bill arrears. In the majority of cases, it has allowed them to maintain housing security and avoid eviction. On a more personal level, the existence of the program and allocation of funds, acknowledges the struggles they have faced more generally as youth lacking parental support.”

- Pacific Community Resources Society (Housing Program Partner).



The majority of these funds goes towards helping individuals in our transitional housing programs. This program works with youth who were previously homeless or are exiting Child and Family Services care and seeking more independent living. The youth in these programs are provided with a place to live and the items they need to make those places into homes. This includes furniture, kitchen and cleaning supplies, televisions, air conditioners, etc. The youth are also provided with supports from their case managers including home visits, life skills workshops, recreational activities, food packages, and more.”

- Resource Assistance for Youth (Housing Program Partner).

## Lessons learned

The program model has been adapted over years of experience providing support to young people transitioning out of care and listening to the feedback provided by them and from our agency partners.

In addition to understanding the impacts of the Housing Program, the evaluation data gathered over the length of the program highlights the diverse experiences and needs within the population of young people from care.



### These data and learnings reinforce the importance of maintaining and strengthening housing supports for young people transitioning out of care, including the following key elements:

- Implementing approaches centered on young people from care that are flexible, tailored to breaking isolation and helplessness, and helping them realize that it is okay to ask for help and that they can trust others.
- Connecting young people to housing supports that will give them security and help them focus on their education and employment goals and address barriers such as their mental health.
- Supporting the needs of young people from care across the country, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of those aging out of care, with the current high costs of living expenses to decrease the risk of homelessness.
- Continuing to support program implementation partners in developing efficient and streamlined digital processes for disbursing payments.
- Creating more capacity at partner sites to be able to meet the need for supports from young people. The price of units in the private market and the higher cost of living makes it challenging for partners to find affordable housing for young people transitioning out of care.



We will continue to learn from our partners and the communities we serve for the best ways to increase the impact of our programming in helping young people navigate housing support and the resources available to them. Additionally, we wish to understand how the Foundation can use our wider influence in advocating for better outcomes overall for young people with experience of child welfare in pursuing education Canada-wide.

# Celebrating partner agencies and donors

Thank you to our incredible partner agencies across the country who worked tirelessly on the front line to deliver these housing supports. None of this work would be possible without our extraordinary community of compassionate, committed donors, and supporters. Thank you.

## Partner agencies

Catholic Children's Aid Foundation of Canada (Toronto, ON)  
Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba (Brandon, MB)  
Children's Aid Foundation of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)  
Children's Aid Society of Toronto (Toronto, ON)  
Connections Community Services (Toronto, ON)  
Covenant House (Toronto, ON)  
Jewish Family and Child Service (Toronto, ON)  
Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (Toronto, ON)  
Pacific Community Resources Society (Vancouver, BC)  
Partners for Youth (Fredericton, NB)  
Resource Assistance for Youth (Winnipeg, MB)  
StepStones for Youth (Toronto, ON)

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Robert Kerr Foundation



### Contact Us

25 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S9 Canada **Phone:** 416-923-0924 **Email:** [info@cafdn.org](mailto:info@cafdn.org)  
Charitable Registration Number: 108076480-RR0001 [cafdn.org](http://cafdn.org)