

APPENDIX E: HOUSING TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

HTD's Staff Recommendations for Program Development

-August 2005

Staff development and support needs:

The skills, training and support needs identified by staff generally mirror those for youth. Staff identified wanting to develop facilitation, leadership, interpersonal/ communication skills and a greater understanding of how we role model. Stress management/ self care, healthy boundaries (learning not to take things personally) and recognizing our triggers were also areas staff were interested in developing in.

Staff also recognized the need for more community partners and resources in their work with youth.

Redefining the roles of the front line shift to incorporate the evolution of the program was identified as well, with the need for time 'off shift' built into the schedule to allow for uninterrupted time.. So that staff would be able to focus on their work with their caseloads around assessment, counselling and more structured goal development and follow up. As well as participating more in the development and facilitation of programming and resources.

Also identified:

1. In depth training beyond what the hostel training centre offers
2. More assessment and counselling tools to identify client needs, resources and referrals to help people move from intake to move out
3. More training for staff around risk factors and counselling tools"
 - i. Harm reduction
 - ii. Motivational counselling
 - iii. Gerstein workshop
 - iv. Mental health, how to talk about it with youth
 - v. Crisis resolution
 - vi. Immigration training
 - vii. Suicide intervention/ prevention training
 - viii.ID
 - ix. Community leader training
 - x. Mediation/ conflict resolution training
 - xi. Cross training with Family Reconnect Program

4. Opportunities to upgrade skills without being penalized e.g. losing full time to go back to school, not losing pay for attending some night school classes etc.
5. Explore the possibility of hiring a substance use counsellor
6. More info on how to work within the restriction of the city/ hostel standards
7. Create an open dialogue and improve communication within the team to improve work with clients and keep developing the vision of the team

Rules and Responsibilities Development:

Overall, it was felt that the rules do not reflect our understanding of the risks/ barriers youth are working with, or our vision of the program. The rules are more punitive than they are a chance for youth to learn other ways of doing, or to take responsibility for the impact their behaviour has on the community.

Key points:

1. Rules need to be modified to reflect the understanding that problem behaviours are largely a result of risk factors, and that disciplining or penalizing them doesn't address the learning/ change aspect properly
2. Rules are to keep youth safe
3. This age group is in the process of some large transitions in addition to the instability of their lives (becoming an adult, figuring out what they want to do etc.)
4. Behavioural issues need to be dealt with by the community through governance, house meetings, shelter/ community meetings
5. Need to build in the possibility of working off warnings, or erasing them after time has passed to make them reflect progress, change and learning on the part of youth
6. If you do something that affects the community of the building, having the option of making reparations and 'pay back' the community for the damage you did as an alternative to receiving a warning
7. Having a graduating system to move through each quarter of their year, to provide more structure, support and a more manageable chunk of time to focus on
8. Rewards when achieving a milestone in their timeline
9. Graduated privileges (o/n's only after you've done the first five basic tasks/ done the first three months of the program etc.)

10. Ensuring more fun events/ programming would mean more community buy in and youth feeling safer, sooner
11. More resident/ staff contact beyond rules and admin to build rapport so that conflict resolution with youth is more effective
12. Build in ways of recognizing when youth start making different choices/ reactions, we need a way to document and illustrate this change for the youth

Risk factor response development:

A variety of ideas were presented to enhance our response to the risk factors found in the evaluation, next steps would be to decide specifically what we want to do:

1. Someone needs to be responsible to maintain current and relevant resources
2. Need to disseminate info/ resources/ expertise so that all staff are aware
3. Suggestion of a resource shift
4. Suggestion that staff take turns researching resources to share with the rest of the team and make sure whole team is aware
5. Include info from youth after they've used a service
6. 1x month review resource sharing with whole team
7. Have staff(s) become 'experts' in a risk area, take point on compiling resources, establishing community partnerships and receiving specialized training in their area to be a resource for the team
8. Need to define categories of risk to help conceptualize and assign tasks
9. PW's with personal expertise in an area would be responsible for that program or resources

Resident participation and leadership development:

We know that the youth who participate and take leadership are the people who generally get the most out of the program. Youth participation and leadership is key to the youth's success, the programs success, as well as the health of the community.

1. The need for all staff to help build resident participation into their caseloads stay, not just the HSW

2. Have youth skilled in an area present/ co-facilitate workshops
3. Youth access to skills building workshops outside of Phoenix i.e. public health
4. Make it feel more like it would outside Phoenix- practice independent living
5. Incorporate peer mentors throughout program and training
6. Use individual strengths of youth to develop peer mentorship opportunities
7. Peer mentors around community building i.e. tour of neighbourhood, grocery stores, newer residents paired with older residents
8. Substance use- use peer mentors as 'go to' people, open table discussions about drugs with staff and peer mentors etc.
9. Make committee membership a mandatory part of the program/ for part of the year (i.e the first three months to build buy in and activity from day one)
10. Seeing peers in leadership roles would increase ownership of the community

Program development:

The programming at Phoenix provides the structure for the community that youth are learning and practicing within, the counselling time line is intended to measure and follow up with this learning and practice.

Programming is made up of mentorship, committees, workshops and events. We know that in general, the more youth participate in these areas, the more they are invested in the community. They are more likely to have built rapport with staff and have more of a chance to learn and practice all the skills that build resilience, confidence and healthy boundaries.

1. Regular and consistent programming, not so much reactionary programming as this comes across as punitive
2. More creative programming/ workshops in common areas of building to encourage its visibility and presence as part of the program
3. Workshops for those that need them, led by other youth with the skills-cooking, budgeting, cleaning, hygiene etc.
4. Communication and conflict resolution skills development through housing meetings and formalized conflict resolution/ mediation

5. Use peer mentors for work with youth besides checking chores
6. Have front line co-facilitate workshops as another way of interacting and building rapport
7. Bring in students to run groups and programming
8. Family Reconnect to do programming at Phoenix
9. Increase staff using their own skills, hobbies etc. for programming, events and workshops
10. More fun stuff in the building (game nights, guest speakers)
11. Orientation is not over until residents have met with their EC (no overnights till...)
12. Teaching healthy coping mechanisms and how to make healthy choices
13. Well-rounded lifestyles/ activities with event planning, writing, resources
14. Hold youth accountable for their actions in a learning way, not a penalizing way
15. Rules may need to be modified to reflect the above point--potential to work of warnings or have them erased after a certain amount of time has passed
16. Look at extensions and two year stays
17. Importance of having all staff know the many details and changes that happen (program calendar etc.)
18. Have a more clearly defined mandate for the Phoenix site

Counselling Time Line Development:

The counselling time line is how we structure a youth's year and make sure all four program components are being addressed as we learn more about a youths abilities and see how they navigate structures and interact within the community.

The co-case management and individual PW and youth meetings are how we follow up with the goals and risks youth are working with. The counselling time line includes the work of all program components and all workers, from intake to community follow up.

Suggestions for developing the CTL include:

1. The goal setting at intake is to be built into action plans in the first meeting with PW to begin planning around risk factors and goals
2. CTL as a way of structuring youths stay for both workers and youth
3. Choice within our program requirements- time period within which to attend a certain ## of workshops and programming etc.
4. Build in measurable checkpoints and actions around identifying/ assessing needs and problems, building and practicing new skills
5. Youth to drive their own action plans; we provide lists of suggested actions/ activities from CTL framework, with some 'mandatory' tasks around ID etc. Creating realistic goals with youth and working at their pace
6. Youth to establish own consequences for not meeting goals or action plans, we provide options to initiate discussion
7. Use CTL to structure counselling sessions, with specific requirements from each meeting, action plans and checklists for counselling sessions and co-case (did you cover programming? etc.)
8. Need a way to document and illustrate change in the youth when we see them start making different choices/ reactions as they develop their skills --build in recognition
9. Regular defined "introductory" period to complete certain tasks/ workshops, regular evaluations with youth, cannot graduate formally to the next period of their stay without having completed their tasks.
10. Expectations of the first three months need to be very task oriented as it is the make it or break it time period for risk factors to lead to discharge- keep youth busy and moving forward on small successes to keep motivation up, build rapport and a sense of belonging in to the Phoenix community
11. Look at the possibility of extensions and two year stays
12. Acknowledge the specific difficulties of each time period of youths stay, and recognize successes in this context. Recognize and respond to the idea that the first three months can be the most difficult for youth
13. Build workshop participation into action plans
14. Include expectations around programming in outreach material, review at intake, and build into action plans

Documentation and Systems:

1. What documentation systems do we need to help us measure how we are moving residents forward with their work on their risk areas?
2. Need to differentiate between to do lists, action plans, goals setting and CTL
3. Counsellors need regular communication and documentation from other supports/ workers externally and other workers internally to stay on top of risk areas or behaviours that could lead to discharge
4. More user-friendly documentation tools- action plans, living CTL, structure for meetings etc.
5. How do we document success? How youth sees it, how we see it?
6. Need to develop benchmarks to help see progression for both youth and staff
7. Better communication as a team
8. Need a way to document and illustrate change in the youth when we see them start making different choices/ reactions as they develop their skills

Ideas to keep in mind:

1. Working from the perspective that 'problem behaviour' has logical sources for youth
2. Recognizing how invasive our process is, acknowledge this with youth and work to minimize it
3. Contradiction of being able to discharge someone and also be his or her safe person, confident and counsellor
4. Flexibility and an understanding that things change, all the time
5. More outreach, assisted by other housing staff
6. Being aware of how we present the program with all its components and expectations
7. Resident handbook for support and information
8. Use secondary workers to better follow up
9. Concern that we are sending mixed messages- harm reduction with little supports; say we are semi independent when we are really a shelter etc.

10. Contradiction between telling people that we have structured expectations with the lack of structure at Phoenix compared to other emergency shelters-- need to be prepared to work independently or actively seek out help to move through program

Housing Team Day Suggested Next Steps:

1. Rule changes need to happen now
2. Staff/ youth events for bonding need to happen now as well
3. Start on resource/ referral work
4. Start figuring out "introductory" period that would have to go through management as it will probably take the longest to implement given we'd be changing our "year"
5. From today's work, brainstorm the CTL benchmarks and a timeline of program development tasks
6. Match our programming to our program goals and our understanding of the risk areas