



# Service Use among Calgary's Street-Involved Youth

## Calgary Youth, Health and the Street - Fact Sheet #7

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### Background to the Study

Street-involved youth have been identified as an at-risk group for numerous health issues, including alcohol and drug abuse, STIs and HIV, pregnancy, and suicide. Working in partnership with many youth serving agencies, AIDS Calgary and researchers from the University of Calgary developed the *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street* study to examine the health and HIV risks, coping mechanisms, and service needs of the broad spectrum of street-involved youth. This fact sheet is one in a series highlighting key findings from the study.

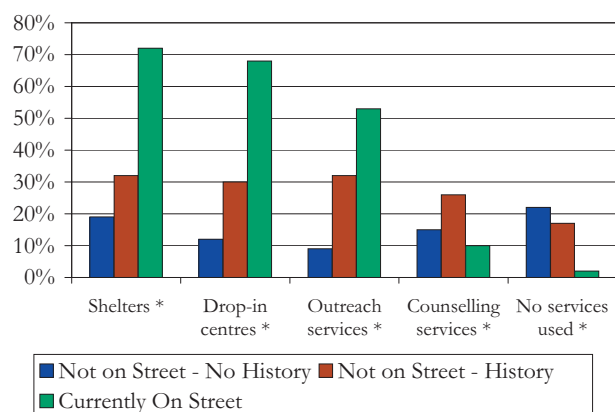
Between June and December 2005, 355 surveys were completed by street-involved youth on their street experiences in Calgary, and 40 interviews were conducted to provide a more in-depth look at these experiences. Youth targeted for the study were between the ages of 14 and 24, and involved in the street to varying degrees. Thus, in this study the term 'street-involved youth' included youth who were currently living on the street; youth who were not living on the street but who had lived on the street in the past; and youth who were involved with street culture but were not currently living on the street and had no history of living on the street. This last group primarily included youth who spent time on the street or in public places during the day.

A total of 47% of survey participants were currently living on the street (*Currently On Street*); 33% were not living on the street but had lived on the street in the past (*Not on Street – History*); and 20% were involved with street culture but were not currently living on the street and had not lived on the street in the past (*Not on Street – No History*).

### Street Service Use

Youth reported using a variety of services within the past three months. Among services used most frequently were shelters (48%), drop-in centres (44%), medical clinics (41%), outreach services (37%), and food banks (32%). Youth *Currently On Street* reported greater use of shelters (72%), drop-in centres (68%), and outreach services (53%) than other youth. Those *Not on Street – History* more frequently reported using counselling services (26%), compared to 15% of youth *Not on Street – No History*, and only 10% of youth *Currently On Street*. Finally, youth *Currently On Street* reported the greatest use of services overall, whereas youth *Not on Street – No History* reported using services the least. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Street Services Used in the Past 3 Months by Current Level of Street Involvement**



Based on a sample of 333 street-involved youth in Calgary.

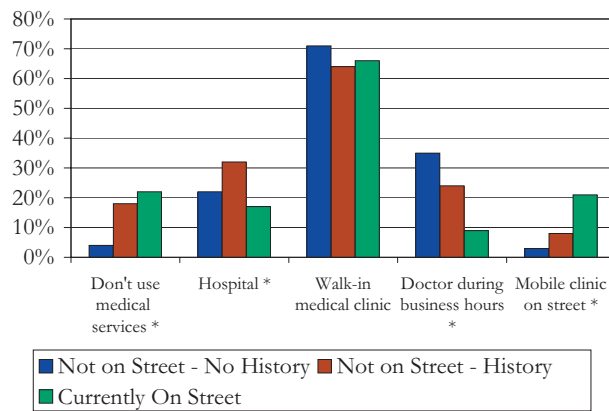
\* Significance level  $\leq 0.05$

Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 78

## Medical Service Use

Significant differences were found between level of street involvement and types of medical services used among youth. Those *Currently On Street* more often reported not using any medical services (22%), compared to 18% of youth *Not on Street – History*, and only 4% of those *Not on Street – No History*. Those youth *Not on Street – History* more often reported using hospitals (32%), while youth *Not on Street – No History* more frequently reported using a doctor during business hours (35%), and youth *Currently On Street* more often used a mobile clinic on the street (21%). See Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Medical Services Used by Current Level of Street Involvement**



Based on a sample of 347 street-involved youth in Calgary.

\* Significance level  $\leq 0.05$

Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 71

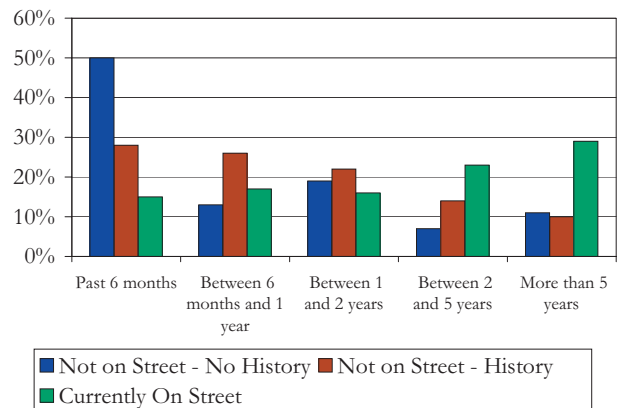
Youth were asked what problems they had encountered when trying to use medical services. The greatest problem noted was waiting times (47%), while 37% said there were no problems. Examining differences between groups, a significantly smaller percentage of youth *Not on Street – No History* said they had problems needing a health card or insurance (7%), compared to 21% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 19% of those *Currently On Street*. These youth also reported fewer problems with staff attitudes (6%), compared to 19% of both youth *Not on Street – History* and *Currently On Street*.



## Dental & Medical Care

Medical and dental care varied among youth. Overall, 19% had received medical care within the past week, 18% between one week and one month ago, 33% between one and six months ago, 13% between six months and one year ago, and 17% more than a year ago. For dental care, youth *Not on Street – No History* reported seeing a dentist within the past six months significantly more than other youth (50%), including 28% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 15% of those *Currently On Street*. See Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Last Dental Care by Current Level of Street Involvement \***



Based on a sample of 347 street-involved youth in Calgary.

\* Significance level  $\leq 0.05$

Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 74

This fact sheet is based upon the report, Worthington, C., MacLaurin, B., Huffey, N., Dittmann, D., Kitt, O., Patten, S., & Leech, J. (2008). *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street - Final Report*, Calgary: University of Calgary.

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For more information, please visit the following websites: <http://www.aidscalgary.org>, <http://fsw.ucalgary.ca>



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