



Child Welfare History among Calgary's Street-Involved Youth

Calgary Youth, Health and the Street - Fact Sheet #8

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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.

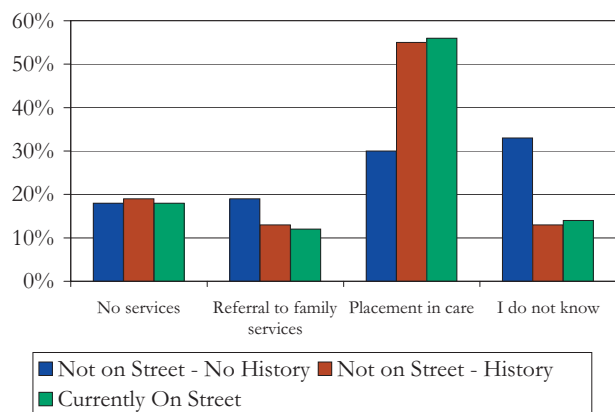
Between June and December 2005, 355 surveys were completed by street-involved youth on their street experiences in Calgary, and 40 interviews were conducted to provide a more in-depth look at these experiences. Youth targeted for the study were between the ages of 14 and 24, and involved in the street 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*).

Contact with the Child Welfare System

Over 60% of all street-involved youth said their family had been in contact with a child welfare worker, including 59% of those *Currently On Street*, 79% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 40% of those *Not on Street – No History*. Reasons for contact included family conflict (52%), family violence (49%), emotional abuse (39%), neglect (32%), parent substance abuse (27%), physical abuse (25%), and sexual abuse (11%). Youth whose families had come into contact with child welfare were also asked what service they were provided as a result. The largest group of youth (52%) said their contact resulted in placement in care, while 19% received no services, and 13% were referred to family services. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Child Welfare Service Result by Level of Street Involvement **



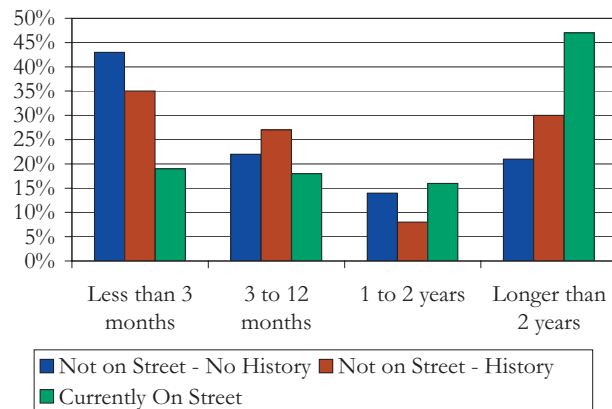
Based on a sample of 196 street-involved youth in Calgary.
** Expected counts in 25% or more of the cells were less than 5. Care should be used in interpreting results.
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 67

Amount of Time in Care

Participants who had spent time in foster care or a group home were asked about their length of stay. Overall, 28% of youth had spent less than three months in care, 22% had spent between three and 12 months, 13% had spent one to two years, and 37% had been in care for longer than two years.

A significantly larger percentage of youth *Currently On Street* reported having spent longer than two years in care (47%), compared to 30% of youth *Not on Street – History*, and 21% of youth *Not on Street – No History*. Those youth *Not on Street – No History* more often reported having spent less than three months in care (43%), compared to 35% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 19% of those *Currently On Street*. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Length of Stay in Foster Care or Group Home by Current Level of Street Involvement *



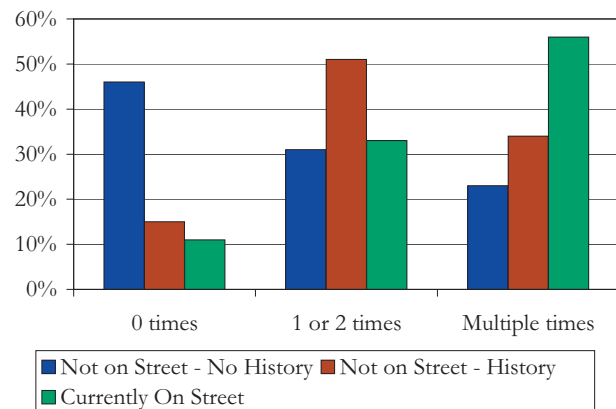
Based on a sample of 211 street-involved youth in Calgary.
* Significance level ≤ 0.05
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 69

Youth Currently On Street spent significantly longer time in care, and had been in care more often than any other group of youth. While 47% of those Currently On Street spent longer than two years in care, 56% reported being in care multiple times.

Number of Times in Care

Youth were also asked how many times they had been in foster care or a group home. Overall, 18% said they had spent no time in care, 40% had spent one or two times in care, and 42% had been in care multiple times. Those *Currently On Street* more often reported multiple times in care (56%), compared to 34% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 23% of those *Not on Street – No History*. In contrast, 46% of youth *Not on Street – No History* had spent no time in care, compared to 15% of those *Not on Street – History*, and only 11% of those *Currently On Street*. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Number of Times in Care by Current Level of Street Involvement *



Based on a sample of 205 street-involved youth in Calgary.
* Significance level ≤ 0.05
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 70

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>