

# HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH IN MAKING THE SHIFT: RESEARCH, EVALUATION, IMPLEMENTATION

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Introducing:

# MAKING THE SHIFT

Reimagining the Response to Youth  
Homelessness Through Social Innovation



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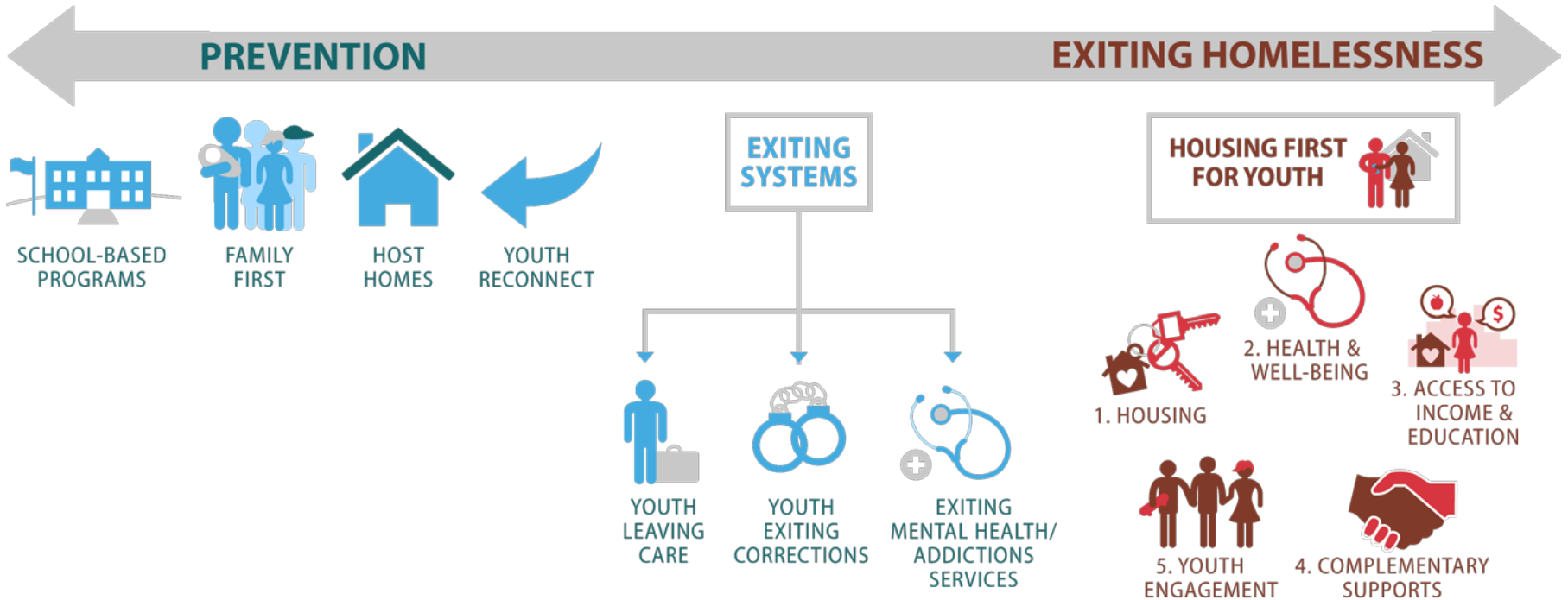
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# Building the Evidence Base



# MAKING THE SHIFT

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

1. Conduct a series of demonstration projects on evidence-based and evidence-informed youth homelessness prevention interventions.
2. Providing youth participants with an intervention that will prevent and/or end their experience of homelessness.
3. Developing and disseminating to communities across Canada a comprehensive knowledge base on systems-focused program models for youth.
4. Informing homelessness policy and practice to support the scaling of effective program models.

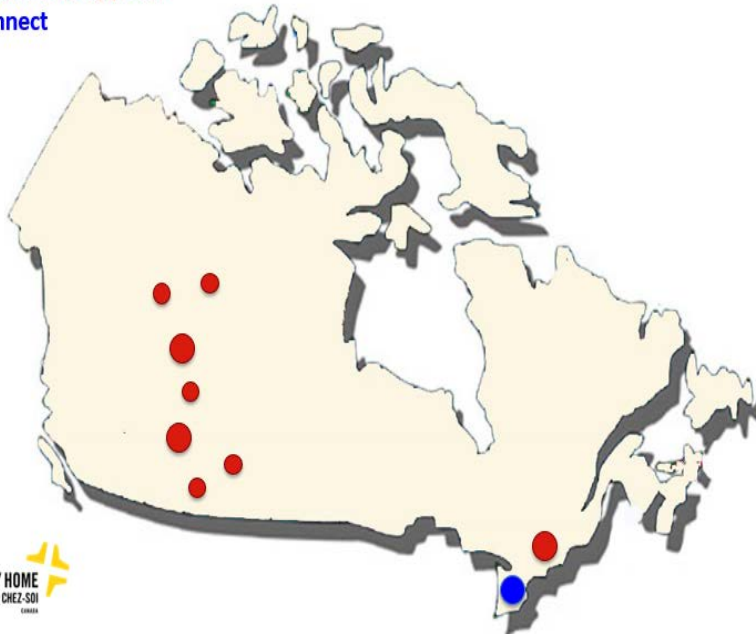


# MAKING THE SHIFT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

## *Prevention*

### **Family and Natural Supports** **Youth Reconnect**

- Family and Natural Supports
- Youth Reconnect



### **Alberta – The 7 Cities**

- Calgary
- Lethbridge
- Medicine Hat
- Grand Prairie
- Fort McMurry
- Red Deer
- Edmonton

### **Ontario**

- Hamilton
- Toronto



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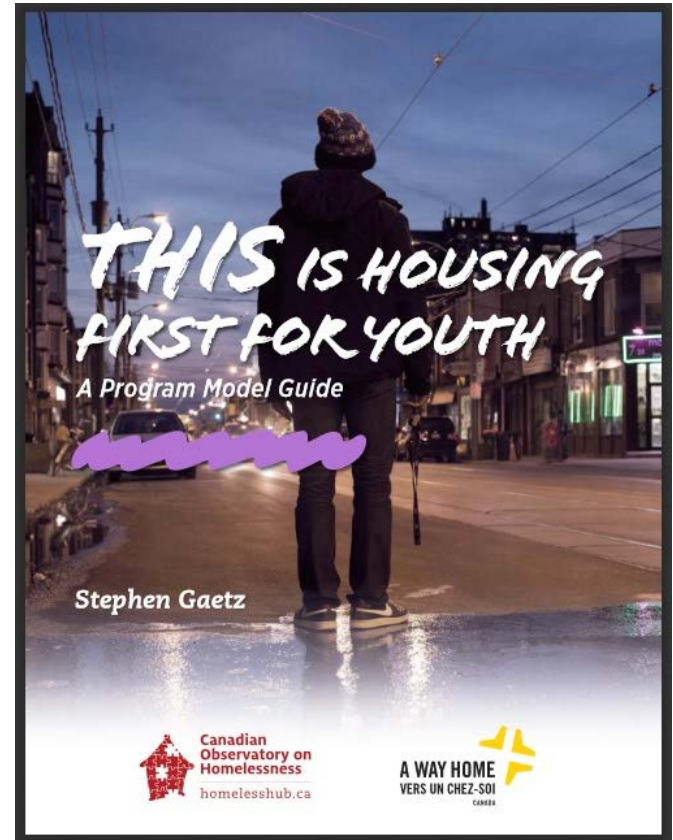
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# MAKING THE SHIFT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

## *Exiting Homelessness* **Housing First for Youth**

Ontario – 3 sites:

- Hamilton
- Toronto
- Ottawa



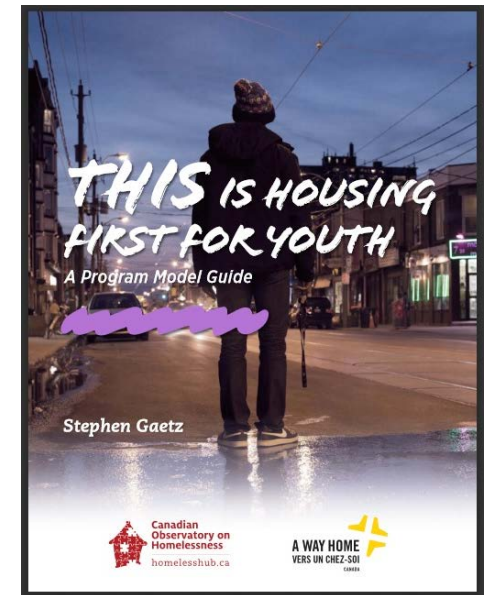
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# HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH (HF4Y) PROGRAM MODEL

*The core principles of HF4Y include:*

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.



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# MAKING THE SHIFT: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

*Exiting Homelessness*

**Housing First for Youth**

Research & evaluation methodology:

- Community-engaged approach
- Mixed methods approach
- Demonstration evaluation
- Outcome evaluation
  - *Randomized Controlled Trial*
  - *Indigenous-led Trial*



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# MAKING THE SHIFT: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

*Exiting Homelessness*

**Housing First for Youth**

Randomized Controlled Trial:

- Housing First for Youth intervention
- Treatment as Usual



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# MAKING THE SHIFT: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

*Exiting Homelessness*

**Housing First for Youth**

## **Hamilton**

- Indigenous-identifying youth aged 16-24 years
- Exiting systems (care, justice system, hospital, etc.)

## **Toronto**

- Youth aged 16-24 years
- Exiting care

## **Ottawa**

- Youth aged 18-24 years
- Newly homeless or in transitional/supportive living



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# MAKING THE SHIFT: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

## *Exiting Homelessness* **Housing First for Youth**

### Outcome areas



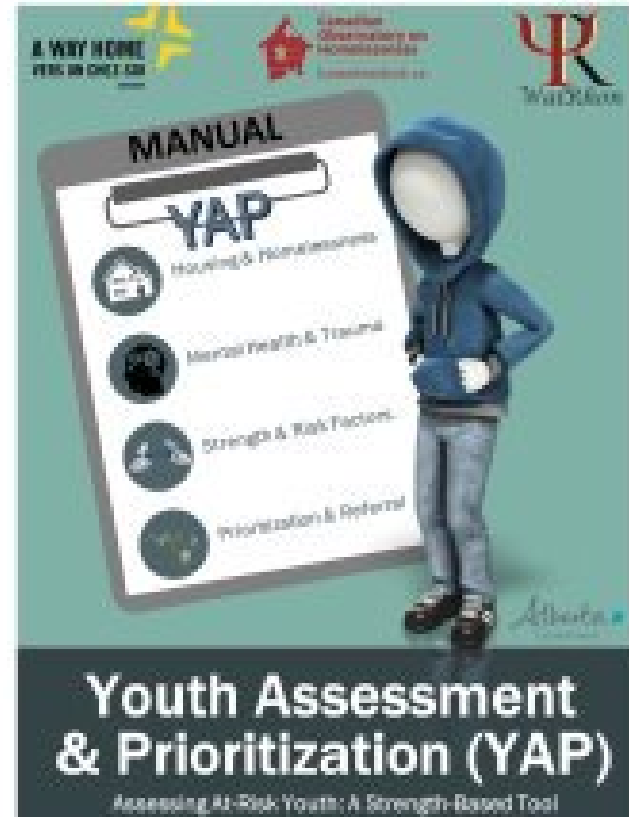
<b>Outcome domain</b>	<b>Example constructs</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Housing stability</b>	Housing referrals housing maintenance support eviction prevention	Residential Time-line Follow-back
<b>Physical and mental health well-being</b>	Physical health status and conditions mental health supports food security, quality of life, resilience	Brief Symptom Inventory GAIN-SS Resilience Scale-14 WHOQoL-BREF
<b>Complimentary supports</b>	Life skills training	Youth Life Skills Assessment
<b>Social inclusion</b>	Family relationships peer relationships social/recreational activities	Multidimensional Screener of Perceived Social Supports
<b>Education and employment</b>	School participation and achievement Employment training	Attitudes Toward School Vocational Time-line Follow-back

Measure	Administration Time Point (Months)								
	Baseline	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24
Demographics, Service, & Housing History	X								
Physical Health Conditions	X								
Access to Care	X								
Residential Time-line Follow-back	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vocational Time-line Follow-back	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Narrative interview	X				X				
Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire			X						
Food Security Survey	X		X		X		X		X
Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Short Screener	X		X		X		X		X
Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey - Form A	X		X		X		X		X
Brief Symptom Inventory	X		X		X		X		X
General Self-efficacy Scale	X		X		X		X		X
Resilience Scale-14	X		X		X		X		X
Herth Hope Index	X		X		X		X		X
Multidimensional Screener of Perceived Social Support	X		X		X		X		X
World Health Organization Quality of Life-Brief Form	X		X		X		X		X
Attitudes Toward School	X		X		X		X		X
Life Skills Assessment	X		X		X		X		X
Community Integration Scale	X		X		X		X		X

# MAKING THE SHIFT: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

## *Exiting Homelessness* **Housing First for Youth**

**Validation of the  
Youth  
Assessment and  
Prioritization  
(YAP) Tool  
(Czech, 2017)**



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# FORMATIVE EVALUATION

# Three Parts

- Program-level evaluation
- Community-level evaluation
- Fidelity assessment



# Program-Level Evaluation

- **What are we asking?**

- *What is the program theory?*

- Logic model

- *Is the program being implemented as planned?*

- Program eligibility, Referrals, Service offerings, Housing options, Strengths, Areas for improvement

- **How are we answering the question?**

- *Document review*

- *Key informant interviews with program managers*

- *Focus groups with staff*

- *Focus groups with young people*

- *Landlords*

- **When does this occur?**

- *Once the program has its footing*

# Community-Level Evaluation

- **What are we asking?**

- *How does the program fit within the greater community?*
- *What contextual factors are impacting service delivery?*
- *How has the program developed over time*

- **How are answering the question?**

- *Key informant interviews with a variety of stakeholders (e.g., municipal, community, agency) at regular intervals (every two months)*
- *Document review of meeting minutes, program documentation, etc.*

# Fidelity Assessment

- **Fidelity assessments** help to determine if a program is **adequately following** its **intended program design**.
- **Similar** to an implementation evaluation, but a fidelity assessment often includes a **checklist** that allows for a **numerical value** to be assigned to a **program's adherence** to various principles of its intended program model
  - **BUT** a fidelity assessment also includes *qualitative* components, which accompany the numerical scores!

# Fidelity Assessment

- **What does the process look like?**
  - *Occurs once the program has its footing*
  - *One - two day site visit*
  - *Team of assessors include experts in the program model, including individuals with experience in delivering the model*
  - *The site visit includes:*
    - Attending a team meeting
    - Interviewing staff
    - Interviewing young people
    - Chart reviews
    - Interviews with community partners
    - Informal feedback to the program at the conclusion of the site visit

# Fidelity Assessment

- After the site visit, the team of assessors convene to discuss the ratings
- What does the rating system look like?
  - Follows the five domains of HFfY
    - Choice over range of housing options
    - Choice over range of supports
    - Separation of housing and support
    - Support philosophy and practice
    - Program features

# Fidelity Assessment

		1	2	3	4
1	IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO HOUSING WITHOUT READINESS PRECONDITIONS. Extent to which program participants are not required to demonstrate housing readiness to gain access to housing units.	Participants have access to housing only if they have enough income, and/or have successfully completed a period in transitional housing or outpatient/inpatient/ residential treatment.	Participants have access to housing only if they meet several readiness requirements such as sobriety, income, abstinence from substances, medication compliance, symptom stability, or no history of violent behaviour or involvement in the criminal justice system.	Participants have access to housing with minimal readiness requirements, such as willingness to comply with program rules or a treatment plan that addresses sobriety, income, abstinence, and/or medication compliance.	Participants have access to housing with no requirements to demonstrate readiness.

# Fidelity Assessment

- Total score is calculated, as well as domain specific scores
- A fidelity report is provided to agencies, which includes the scores and qualitative findings to contextualize the scores
- Agencies have opportunity to provide feedback on the report and discuss the findings
  
- Current tool is being tested and modified
  
- Self-report adult fidelity tool currently being tested internationally – something to consider for youth programs!

# The Practical Challenges and Successes of Ongoing Implementation

Making the Shift - Housing First for Youth in Ottawa



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# The existing Ottawa landscape

- Starting with the Adult sector in 2015 Ottawa's homeless service delivery system has adopted a housing first philosophy including coordinated access.
- The youth sector followed shortly after and through a series of discussion and evolution of processes settled on:
  - Adopting the SPDAT as our common practice for assessment and referral.
  - Setting once a month meetings where agencies participate in coordinated access.
- This table is called the Prioritization and Matching group (P&M for short)
- Clients on the list are evaluated for prioritization based on their SPDAT score, age, LGBTQ2S+, First Nations or Inuit, Justice involved and Young Parents
- Case managers accept new clients based on caseloads availability.



# What agencies are involved in MTS HF4Y

## Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa

- Providing program administration and case management services

## CMHA Ottawa

- Providing case management services

## John Howard Society of Ottawa

- Providing case management services



# How we've organized ourselves

- The program administrator:
  - Researches and creates key process and elements of the MTS program e.g. 4<sup>th</sup> party agreements, Housing Allowance applications, referral forms
  - Plays a central role in coordinating referrals, administration of funding and general coordination.
  - Provides some direction and support to agencies while in a place to advise, support and monitor is not in a supervisory role over any staff.
  - Helps to establish shared protocols across all three agencies (move in checklist, unit inspection checklist etc.)



# How we've organized ourselves

- Agencies are responsible for hiring, training and supervising their own case managers.
- Case managers are responsible for:
  - Promoting the MTS HF4Y program in the community
  - Connecting with clients referred to the program and arranging for a screening and intake with a research assistant
  - Once clients are in the program they will be working towards finding housing with clients, teaching life skills and their rights and responsibilities as a tenant.
  - Working towards goals identified by the client and providing guidance to reorient the goals if they are no longer appropriate.



# How we've organized ourselves

- This structure allows the program administrator to focus solely on the program leaving the day to day with each agencies.
- We've been able to come together as a team to train and create a work plan to get the word out to the community.
- We will be conducting team meetings to address issues as they arise and keep communication open to share any program adjustments, systemic barriers and more importantly successes.
- Each agency brings a different focus and skill sets to the group which helps to break down silo's and learn from each other at all levels.



# Unique about HF4Y in Ottawa

*For our program we will have four **youth peer support workers** working with clients, case managers, the program administrator and researchers to develop, administer and inform the program.*

## Challenges:

- Hiring Y – PSW's with lived experience of homelessness is not as easy as it sounds.
- We've had to adjust how we advertise, working primarily through word of mouth to recruit.
- Lived experience is the key!

## Successes:

- We've created a training plan with a local organization, PSO, to develop our youth capacity to work individually and purposefully with clients.
- We've been able to extend this training out to our other existing youth peer support workers furthering our community of practice.
- Once the training is completed youth will have a hand in crafting their job description.



# How does MTS HF4Y fit into the existing system

From the onset of the program there concerns brought forward from the community. Some of the questions we faced:

- Is it ethical to take on a program that only supports youth for a short period of time?
- What happens to them once the program ends. Where will their financial support come from if they need it? Where will community based supports come from?
- How much should the Housing Allowance be? If we give them too much are we creating a gap they can't overcome?
- How are you going to inform a youth they've been chosen for the control group?
- What happens if a youth turns out to be higher needs than expected?



# How does MTS HF4Y fit into the existing system

At the City and Prioritization and Matching (P&M) table they were concerned with:

- Does this fit in with our existing system? Will there be enough clients for everyone? How will you support the city's existing efforts?
- What information are you collecting and will you be able to share any of you reports or data?
- What plans are in-place for youth who drop-off or disengage from the research project before it's finished?
- And lastly they also shared the concerns about the end date.





# Responding to the Community, City and P&M group

- Many of these questions were addressed through the profile we chose.
- AWHC and the researchers allowed for flexibility when setting the profile and we settled on:
  - Youth ranged 18 to 24
  - Mid range Tay VI SPDAT Score (4-7)
  - Can be new to the service system or existing clients in shelter or transitional housing in need of permanent housing.
  - Must have an identified need for case management.

# Responding to the Community, City and P&M group

With the community agencies this profile allowed us to set the youth up for success as. They would:

- Be able to comprehend the limits of the project and make an informed decision when choosing to participate.
- Because of their lower acuity have a higher likelihood at obtaining part time or full time employment or moving on to post secondary. Making up any difference in the housing allowance amount or not even requiring it.

- The lower case loads associated with the program will allow for clients to have more intensive and directed services.
- Case management while informed by youth choice and youth voice would be continually keeping next steps in mind.
- This was a very purposeful decision made by the agencies involved. It looks to mitigate the risk as much as possible.

# Responding to the Community, City and P&M group

- This profile also allowed us to support the City of Ottawa's existing HBCM services and P&M group.
  - With their P&M group focusing in on several key vulnerability indicators clients with these issues would always trump clients without them.
  - This led to a group continuously being bumped – which through our profile we were able to serve
- However we weren't able to respond to all the city's concerns:
  - The timing to have any formalized data sharing agreement wouldn't work out
  - Shared consents were a barrier, how each group would inter refer
- Eventually we settled on clients being submitted to the P&M group with MTS HF4Y being offered as another route for service if they met the SPDAT score.



# Ongoing Implementation challenges

- Developing at the same time as implementing...is actually more nerve wracking than it seems.
- To this day this remains the largest practical challenge we are facing.
- Many program pieces are being revealed or created as we near implementation and additional developments are still on the horizon.
- This comes with the added difficulty of not necessarily having a guide to follow for implementation. Items such as standardized forms to meet fidelity assessment.
- It can also present as an issue for the workers who may be changing processes over the course of the program.

# Challenge examples

- Timing – when to post based on if the researchers ethics submission comes back successfully. Depending on the revisions required there was a concern that we could have staff in place with little to do.
- Data collection – What processes need to be in place, what information is being collected, where are we duplicating questions and where can we shorten our assessments.
- Fidelity assessment – knowing what we will be evaluated against prior to starting would have been ideal. The ability to have pre developed processes and forms and the ability to train the workers rather than teaching new processes as we go.



## With all that to say...

MTS HF4Y presents us with a unique opportunity to learn, to teach, to create and be informed of how we can best serve our youth and develop our community.



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