

Youth Housing Services: “Being the Dad I Never Had”

FINAL Report

A Research Project by: iHuman Youth Society and
Terra Centre

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Executive Summary	3
Engagement Purpose	5
Environmental Scan and Agency Review	8
Other Secondary Research.....	14
Focus Group Findings.....	16
Conclusions and Recommendations	29
References.....	31
Appendix A: Focus Group Protocol.....	32
Appendix B: Agency Data Collection Protocol	33

Executive Summary

ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

iHuman Youth Society and Terra Centre offer support services and programming to youth in the city of Edmonton. Over time, iHuman and Terra have "received reports from their clients and observed difficulties young fathers have gaining access to visitations with their children". Homeward Trust Edmonton provided funding to iHuman Youth Society and Terra Centre to explore the question:

What programs or services are offered specifically to young fathers whose behaviours or lifestyle choices compromise or challenge their ability to secure sustainable housing and therefore effectively parent their children?

The overall purpose of this engagement is exploratory, with the specific objective to conduct a focused set of primary and secondary research activities toward 1) the preparation of a concise description of the demand for housing and/or other support services among young fathers served by iHuman and Terra, and 2) the identification of potential models or services directed toward similar needs in other jurisdictions.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN – HOUSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

A set of 10 programs in other jurisdictions with potential learnings for this engagement was identified in order to describe models or approaches that could have relevance for the development of housing and/or support services for young fathers served by iHuman and Terra. The housing and/or related programs and service that were sourced with potential relevance to this engagement were quite limited; programs were generally 1) targeted to or inclusive of fathers (not young or teen fathers); 2) focused on maintaining the family unit (primarily families of single mothers); and 3) serving teen parents (typically mothers). Program and services that may be applicable for Edmonton include:

- Housing – Dedicated residences for homeless single fathers; subsidized transitional housing for homeless fathers; recreational/meeting space with co-located child support to allow fathers and children to gather and meet other young dads in a common location
- Housing support services – Assistance to fathers to access appropriate transitional housing; secure and retain employment; enhance parenting skills; and address carriers such as mental health and chemical dependency

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Research and analysis of the factors or approaches associated with successful parenting outcomes for young fathers and their children are beyond the scope of this engagement. During the environmental scan and literature review of specific programs and services, a number of informative studies and resources were sourced as a result of the keyword searches and could inform the development of programs and services for young fathers.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG FATHERS

Two focus groups were held with young fathers in varying degrees of contact with iHuman and Terra. A total of 20 youth, ranging from an estimated age of 15 to 23 years participated. Two were expecting the birth their first child, one had eleven children, and others were parents to infants, toddlers and older children. The majority of participants indicated:

- A desire to actively parent their child(ren), spend more time with them, or reside with them;
- A series of challenges in achieving a stable household when attempting to find suitable employment, continue schooling, and/or parenting;
- A number of barriers to obtaining housing given a lack of credit history, employment or tenancy referrals;
- A degree of isolation from other young men in the same situation with similar life goals or parenting objectives; and
- A lack of role models, mentors, services and/or supports to improve their parenting or coping skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of the scope, purpose and findings of this engagement, three recommendations are provided to Homeward Trust Edmonton:

- Continue to investigate, develop, trial and implement programs and services, including the improvement and/or redirection of existing services, to address some of the barriers experienced by young fathers seeking to achieve a stable household and visitation with their children. Continue to support opportunities for young fathers to meet and, in turn, also provide agencies opportunity in these forums to further explore the range of needs and potential programming options for this diverse set of young fathers.
- Support next steps beyond the exploratory work initiated in this engagement toward the development of potential options for a young father housing program / residence which would be inclusive of young fathers and young family units and may include some of the on-site support services and links to employment and education similar to those delivered by organizations in other jurisdictions.
- Support additional research to build upon this current engagement, including 1) a broadened environmental scan to document existing knowledge on the needs of young fathers in other jurisdictions, 2) a literature review of the specific father-specific factors affecting successful parenting or family outcomes, and 3) additional secondary research focused on quantifying and describing the potential young father subpopulations to scale and characterize potential demand for the housing and support services under consideration.

Engagement Purpose

1.1 ABOUT IHUMAN YOUTH SOCIETY AND TERRA CENTRE

iHuman Youth Society and Terra Centre offer support services and programming to youth in the city of Edmonton.

Terra Centre is a non-profit organization that has been serving pregnant and parenting teens in Edmonton since 1971. With support from individuals and groups in our community, Terra helps more than 600 young people cope with the issues surrounding teen pregnancy each year. Terra supports pregnant and parenting teens residing in the Edmonton area in developing the skills and confidence to succeed. Terra's programs and services include:

- Individual support: Outreach and home visitation services as well as assistance with setting and reaching personal goals.
- Services for young dads: Home visits, individual counseling, parenting education and support, referral and advocacy, goal planning, drop-in services.
- Group support: Prenatal classes and weekly support sessions.
- Education support: In partnership with Edmonton Public Schools, education and support services at Braemar School for young women up to 19 years of age who are pregnant or parenting.
- Child development services: Parenting education programs as well as on-site childcare for mothers attending Braemar school.
- Housing support: Secure, safe and affordable accommodation and housing support services.
- Ambassador program: Leadership opportunities for teen parents to develop public speaking and advocacy skills.

Since its inception in 1997, iHuman Youth Society is dedicated to assisting at-risk and youth exhibiting high-risk behaviours. iHuman serves 500 registered youth members annually between the ages of 12 and 24. With its focus on harm reduction, iHuman utilizes arts-based programming, outreach programs, crisis intervention and supportive services to engage youth exhibiting high risk behaviours and pursue their connection to, and re-integration into, community.

- Individualized support: Outreach and crisis intervention services as well as assistance with setting and reaching personal goals including accessing treatment services, securing housing or financial supports.
- Services for young moms: Home visits, individual counseling, parenting education and support, referral and advocacy, goal planning, child care during curriculum.
- Mental health services: Private or group counseling daily offered by Masters and PhD students under supervision of qualified preceptors.
- Physical health services: Bridging youth to health services through network of physicians, dentists and other medical or wellness professionals.
- Arts mentorship/creative services: Arts-based activities which build skills competencies while also exploring/releasing trauma thereby facilitating increased self esteem and healing
- Mentorship program: Leadership opportunities for young people to develop public speaking and advocacy skills through creative endeavors such as *Uncensored*, a curriculum developed by

youth to train social service providers and authorities how to engage street youth in non-adversarial communication and strategies.

1.2 YOUNG FATHERS AND SUSTAINABLE HOUSING

Over time, iHuman and Terra have heard reports from their clients and observed the difficulties young fathers have in gaining access to visitations with their children:

Often times, the young men have been working on improving their stability through job search or schooling or completion of treatment programs. As a result, they feel empowered to continue to work on their issues towards the goal of contributing, in some way, to the lives of their children. Repeatedly, the lack of housing options presents a significant barrier to their plans. Without access to reasonably safe and affordable housing, these dads struggle to maintain stable housing. In turn, the opportunity to engage or re-engage in positive parenting activities with their children slips from their fingers. Word-of-mouth among youth exhibiting high risk behaviours currently, or previously in contact with iHuman, has contributed to ongoing referrals of young dads. (iHuman 2013)

Homeward Trust Edmonton's 2012 homeless count of 2,174 individuals included 233 dependent children, 119 caregivers, and 56 youth under 16 years of age without a caregiver (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2014). iHuman and Terra indicate a subset of their young father population is homeless and could be included in these counts.

1.3 ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Homeward Trust Edmonton has provided funding to iHuman Youth Society and Terra Centre to explore the question:

What programs or services are offered specifically to young fathers whose behaviours or lifestyle choices compromise or challenge their ability to secure sustainable housing and therefore effectively parent their children?

The overall purpose of this engagement is exploratory. The specific objective for this consulting engagement was to conduct a focused set of primary and secondary research activities toward 1) the preparation of a concise description of the demand for housing and/or other support services among young fathers served by iHuman and Terra, and 2) the identification of potential models or services directed toward similar needs in other jurisdictions. This engagement, and research performed, are highly targeted and intended to support the development of proposed housing and/or support programs to be undertaken either collaboratively or independently by Terra and iHuman to address the perceived gap in supports for young dads. Consulting activities included:

- Collection of descriptive information from iHuman and Terra representatives about perceived gaps in housing services and/or issues reported by the individuals iHuman and Terra serves;
- Two focus groups with current and former iHuman and Terra male clients with children who have required housing services and/or experienced challenges with accessing or maintaining appropriate housing in the city of Edmonton.

- An environmental scan, where applicable, of selected major urban centres in Canada (maximum of 10), elsewhere in North America, Northern Europe, Australia and New Zealand to identify potential housing and support programs directed to young fathers.
- A literature review of information readily available for shortlisted programs identified for further investigation in the environmental scan.
- Structured interviews with, and/or further secondary research of, a maximum of four agencies currently providing services to young men and young fathers, and particularly young fathers exhibiting high-risk behaviours.

The scope of this engagement was a total of 98.50 hours (approximately 13 days) of consulting effort directed toward the development of this succinct summary document.

Environmental Scan and Agency Review

Given the targeted nature of this engagement, a general Internet-based scan of keywords, followed by jurisdiction-specific key-word scans, were performed to identify potentially comparable programs. In the interest of generating a mix of approaches and housing services and support service concepts for consideration, these jurisdiction-based scans include keyword searches leading to five US states (California, New Jersey, Minnesota, New York, Washington); two Canadian provinces (Ontario, Saskatchewan), as well as four international jurisdictions (United Kingdom; Scandinavia, primarily Sweden; Australia and New Zealand).

2.1 IDENTIFIED PROGRAMS OR SERVICES

From this initial scan, a set of 10 programs with potential learnings for this engagement was identified with the primary objective to describe a number of models or approaches that could have relevance for the development of housing and/or support services for young fathers served by iHuman and Terra. Follow-up interviews were pursued with the following 4 organizations: Door of Hope (CA, USA), CoAbode (CA, USA), Quint (SK, CA), and UIF Family Partners (NJ, USA). Program descriptions below include information from these interviews where discussions provided additional relevant detail. The programs and services are grouped into three categories:

- Targeted to or inclusive of fathers;
- Focused on family unit; and
- Serving teen parents.

HOUSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TARGETED TO OR INCLUSIVE OF FATHERS

#1 - Door of Hope - Pasadena, California – Services for Homeless Single Fathers

Door of Hope’s Pasadena housing program provides four to six months of transitional housing for homeless families including two-parent married families with children as well as single fathers with children. Participants focus on the pursuit of full-time employment. A full-time after school program for school-aged children is provided.

In 2009 Door of Hope had the distinct pleasure to announce its new addition with a location that was able to accommodate single mothers. With this new addition there was room for Door of Hope's Pasadena location to include single fathers, a sub-population of the homeless community that has been looked over for many years.¹

After more than a quarter century of housing homeless families, the Northwest Pasadena shelter, Door of Hope, has reached a new milestone: For the first time in its history, there are more homeless single fathers in the house than any other statistical group.²

#2 – FACT (Fathers and Children Together) Program–Minneapolis, Minnesota – Emergency Shelter

In Minnesota, the FACT Program is administered via Emerge Villages, a not-for-profit community development organization. The service is noted as offering “low-cost, safe transitional housing for fathers who have custody of their children”.

With a focus on custodial fathers and father-headed households, Emerge serves 45 homeless families that are comprised of men who have legal custody of their children. Emerge Villages staff work with fathers to (1) secure affordable, transitional housing, (2) secure and retain employment, (3) enhance parenting skills, and to (4) address barriers such as mental health and chemical dependency.³

A number of similarly named FACT Programs are offered in various jurisdictions in the United States, however the nature of these programs varies. In Kentucky, a FACT program is an initiative of Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky and focuses on parenting education (classroom instruction, visitations, family outreach) for incarcerated fathers.⁴ In Texas, FACT Program workshops for fathers cover topics such as job search, parenting, relationships, anger management, budgeting, child support mediation and legal assistance.⁵

#3 - UIF Family Partners–Trenton, New Jersey – Fatherhood Programs

UIH notes the development of its programs as part of an “emerging field of fatherhood programs” and a response to “a growing body of research that correlates the absence of a father in the life of a child (whether he lives with the child or not) with a host of negative outcomes”. UIH does not provide housing services and instead provides a set of parenting; workforce readiness; health and wellness education; child support; dad and child library, computer stations, and play area; and other resources.

While UIH serves men from all walks of life, the majority of those who participate in its programs are unemployed, non-custodial fathers who face multiple systemic barriers to self-sufficiency. Through a comprehensive array of free programs and services, UIH empowers and equips men to play a more active and positive role in the lives of their children and families, physically, emotionally and financially.⁶

#4 – Catholic Community Services Benedict House –Seattle, Washington – Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing

Benedict House is an emergency shelter and transitional residence for homeless single men and fathers in Washington State.

Benedict House provides a furnished family room for homeless men with up to three children. The program is one year in length and costs 30% of the resident's verified income. Residents are required to meet with their Case Manager weekly to monitor progress. They are also required to take part in improving themselves by taking part in educational classes, meetings and activities.⁷

HOUSING PROGRAMS OR SERVICES FOCUSED ON FAMILY UNIT

#5 - CoAbode–Santa Monica, California – Housing Services Alternative Design Options

While not focused on the single father family cohort, CoAbode provides a matching service for single mothers to find shared housing with other single moms. The organization's mission is:

To provide support and services that connect women raising children alone. Thru this connection, single parent women families pool their finances and resources to improve

their living conditions for themselves and their children by sharing a home. CoAbode was founded on the principle that two single moms raising children together can achieve more than one struggling alone. Through a variety of community based programs CoAbode provides single mothers with affordable housing opportunities, specialized support groups, educational scholarships, community outreach and involvement as well as referrals to vital resources designed to make parenting a child alone easier, healthier and more secure.⁸

At present, CoAbode only provides its matching service to mothers "firstly, because they are in the majority, and secondly, for safety reasons."

Our service can only provide the forum for single moms to connect with each other because most have neither the resources nor time to do background checks and other such diligence on the person they are considering as a housemate. With that in mind, we feel it is a safer prospect to restrict our participants to single mothers only for now.

While the organization is seeking to establish a complementary service for fathers, it has found the interest in pursuing shared accommodation does appear to differ between mothers and fathers:

We are currently looking for funding to expand the website for dads however, this is not a priority for us as only on occasions do we get an inquiry from single dads. We have found that women are far more interested in house sharing than men.

#6 - Quint Development Corporation–Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – Family Housing Program and Male Youth Lodge

Quint Economic Development Corporation provides a set of services and programs designed to "create opportunities for housing, jobs and economic development in Saskatoon's West-side core neighbourhoods."⁹Programs with particular relevance for this engagement include:

- Affordable Rental Housing – provides approximately 70 affordable rentals for low-income individuals and families and encourages family-friendly community and capacity development with tenant associations, educational workshops, collective kitchens, potluck/BBQs, community gardens, common green space, family room, and day care. In addition, Quint has also offered the Eviction Prevention Program to familiarize tenants with their community and community expectations and address behavioural issues, history/contact with the police and other activities that can disrupt tenancy. Youth are currently not eligible for this program.
- Male Youth Lodge – offers transitional residence; 24-hour on-site staffing; and educational and training opportunities for approximately 40 young men aged 16-22 years who are homeless or at risk of being homeless; have involvement with the Ministry of Social Services and/or the justice system and have been referred through the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.
- Pleasant Hill Place – offers transitional housing toward independence, 24-hour on-site staffing; and a variety of supports for mothers whose children are at risk of, or currently in the care of the Ministry of Social Services.

At the time of interview, three non-custodial fathers were participating in the Affordable Rental Housing program. Quint representatives cite access to appropriate childcare and transportation as the dominant

challenge for parents attempting to secure and to maintain stable housing. Where individuals are youth, this is further challenged by "a lack of landlord references and quite often work experience which prevents them from making proper rent payments since they may not be equipped with the proper tools and resources required to find meaningful, sustainable employment".

#7 – Gerard Place–Buffalo, New York – Transitional Shelter

A "transitional housing and supportive services program for homeless single parent families, Gerard Place has 14 units in its transitional shelter. Support services include weekly counseling, planning, referrals and community linkages; recreational, educational, spiritual and wellness activities; babysitting services; and after stay monitoring and support as clients move into self-sufficiency.

Our parents are often victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, or in recovery and all are trying to make better lives for themselves and their children. Gerard Place strives to improve the quality of their lives through a holistic approach by feeding their mind, body and soul. Our parents range in age from 18-45 years old. Our children are aged newborn to 14 years old. Our purpose is to empower our parents through education, employment, vocational training, life skill classes and counseling so that they can live a more self-sufficient life when they leave Gerard Place. The aftercare case manager works with discharged families for six months in their new apartment so that transitional issues are addressed.¹⁰

#8 – Semiperm – New York City, New York – Transitional Housing

Recognizing a need for homeless single parent families for stable housing and supports beyond shelters and a six-month period, Settlement Housing Fund Inc. established Semiperm, a housing program where families can reside for two to five years. During this time, participants receive a set of services designed to build capacity and support housing independence. All single parents who have participated in the program are noted as female.

Semiperm provides a home for 23 formerly homeless single parent families, including approximately 35 children. This innovative program is tailored to families who need more assistance than six months in a shelter. Semiperm provides an apartment and supportive programs for two to five years. During this time, the participants develop the skills necessary to support themselves, advance their education, care for their children, and reach self-sufficiency. In addition to individualized counseling for each resident, Semiperm provides group programming and assistance on a wide variety of subjects including financial literacy, nutrition, and health care. We have built partnerships with neighboring community based programs offering parenting workshops, employment training, physical and psychological health services, and credit and legal assistance. When they are ready to graduate from the Semiperm Program, successful families will be referred for vacancies

HOUSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICE SERVING TEEN PARENTS

#9 – Te Aka Ora Charitable Trust and Lytton High School – Gisborne, New Zealand – Young Parents School, Early Learning Centre and Teen Fathers Program

Te Aka Ora means "healthy vine". Our aim is to provide a safe and nurturing place where you can learn how to look after yourself and baby in the best possible way. We want you to develop a strong loving bond with your baby and learn heaps about how to make a family, so that you will have a solid foundation upon which to build the rest of your life as a parent.12

Te Aka Ora Charitable Trust, in collaboration with Lytton High School, offers a set of programs for youth and young parents:

- Te Aka Ora Teen Parent House – offers residence to young parents working toward independence. Housing supports include a dedicated social worker and 24-hour on-site house parents as well as life skills development programs and counseling.
- Young Parents School and Early Learning Centre– includes educational programming for parents and children at a variety of levels; parenting, life skills and recreational programs as well as transportation to and from home for students and their children.

A Teen Fathers Program is noted on the organization's website, however additional information about this program was not available at the time of writing.

#10 – Greater Bridgeport Area Prevention Program – Greater Bridgeport, Connecticut – Teen Fathers Support Services

Established in 1979 to address rising rates of teenage pregnancy, GBAPP Inc., the Greater Bridgeport Area Prevention Program, delivers "adolescent-focused health promotion and disease prevention services in the region". Key initiatives include:

- Teen Fathers Program – provides support services to young expectant fathers 23 years or younger with the birth of their child expected in six or eight months. These services are individualized and delivered in group settings and include case management, community linkages and referrals, and home visits.

The goals of the program are to help non-custodial adolescent fathers connect with their child in a healthy and productive manner; model and teach them how to be involved in the child-rearing process; to continue their education on the secondary level and encourage post-secondary or vocational pursuits. These goals support decreasing subsequent pregnancies in adolescents and the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases. The Teen Fathers Program also helps the young teen fathers build healthier relationships with the child's mother, reducing issues of domestic and dating violence; helps with demonstrating positive role modeling for their children; and explores community assets to support the development of teen parent and child.13

GBAPP's Teen Fathers Program is here to involve teen fathers with their children, keep fathers in school, strengthen their employment skills, and provide comprehensive support services.13

- Maternity Home – provides residence and a supportive, 24-hour staffed environment to 30 to 40 expectant high-risk homeless teen mothers ages 13 to 19 and their children annually.

- Housing for Success – provides 24-hour staffed transitional housing and supportive services for individual teens and women ages 16 to 21 who may or may not be parenting. The program's objective is to "prepare youth for adult living settings".¹

Other Secondary Research

Research and analysis of the factors or approaches associated with successful parenting outcomes for young fathers and their children are beyond the scope of this engagement. During the environmental scan and literature review of specific programs and services, a number of informative studies and resources were sourced as a result of the keyword searches. Three sample documents with relevance to this engagement are provided to assist iHuman and Terra with pursuing further research and development of housing and support services offerings for the young fathers they serve.

Freedom's Consequences: Reducing teenage pregnancies and their effects in the UK

In view of a 1998 national government objective to reduce teenage pregnancies by 50% by 2010, this study's purpose was to "approach an old problem from some new angles" given the rate of progress toward that national objective in 2006 was slow. A significant component of this study is a review of the existing research, experiences and parenting roles of teen fathers:

Much less is known about young fathers than about young mothers and their children. Many young fathers also come from disadvantaged homes and families. The majority of young fathers are known and identified by the mothers and, according to research, can play a positive role as a partner and a father. Many young fathers would welcome being a proactive, involved parent but feel poorly equipped for the role, lacking experience not just in fatherhood but also in life. Little support is offered to them either by professionals, their own families or the family of the mother. A positive, supportive partnership between the young parents would ameliorate some of the most negative social and economic outcomes for mothers and babies.¹⁵

Key themes explored on teen fatherhood in the UK include: benefits of young parents staying together; impact of adverse family backgrounds; relationships with extended family; feelings about the pregnancy; young fathers excluded; involvement after the birth of the child; significance of age and residence; quality of the young couple's relationship. A central recommendation of this study is achieving inclusion of teen fathers in future strategies and efforts to reduce teen pregnancies:

The emphasis needs to be on whole family approaches to supporting young parents: involving the parents of the young parents, the extended family and, most importantly, the fathers in supporting the young mother and child.¹⁵

The Support Needs of Teenage Fathers (New Zealand)

With the interest of establishing support programs for teen fathers in New Zealand, this study includes a literature review and survey of young fathers. Its central premise:

[T]here seems to be a significant number of young men quite willing to be involved in the lives of their babies, but little appropriate help for them to achieve this goal. This paper includes a review of the literature available to date on teenage fatherhood, which comes to a similar conclusion. Our research presented in this paper did not question the motivation of the young father – it stemmed from the philosophy of the Father & Child

Trust that obstacles to involved fatherhood do not often include a lack of interest by the father himself.¹⁶

Observations from this work include: a lack of research on fathers as a factor in teen pregnancy; the factors influencing teen fathers' contact with their children; and the needs of teenage fathers.

Effects on Children of Father Involvement

The Effects of Father Involvement: An Updated Research Summary of the Evidence from the University of Guelph provides a representative example of research that could further inform the programs and services under consideration in this engagement. **17** This study's compilation of research findings presents the effects of father involvement "on children's developmental outcomes, the co-parenting relationship, and development of fathers themselves". Topics presented include father involvement and the cognitive development of infants and children; emotional development and well-being; social development; physical health; reduction of negative child development outcomes; and other topics.

Focus Group Findings

4.1 IHUMAN AND TERRA YOUNG FATHERS FOCUS GROUPS

PARTICIPATION

Two focus groups were held in September 2013 with young fathers in varying degrees of contact with iHuman and Terra. A few youth were completely new to the agencies, participating only in this focus group and have yet to remain in contact afterwards. Some are in regular contact with the organizations, accessing services or programs on an on-going basis. Others are former youth in contact with iHuman who no longer pursue regular contact for services. One individual attended both focus groups.

A total of 20 individual youth, ranging from an estimated 15 to 23 years of age participated in the one- to one-and-a-half hour sessions. The young fathers' housing situations varied from homelessness and use of emergency shelters; to "couch-surfing"; temporary or long-term stays with immediate or extended family and parents of the mothers of their child(ren); co-habitation with mothers; and housing independence. One father was a sole custodial parent. The majority of participants did not reside with their child(ren) on a full-time basis and a number of participants were expecting their first child at the time of the focus group. To encourage participation, attendees were offered a \$50 stipend as well as lunch for the daytime session at iHuman or dinner during the late afternoon session at Terra. A set of questions guided discussion about the youths' personal circumstances and experiences surrounding access to housing (Appendices).

COMMENTS AND NOTATION

Individual comments from both focus groups have been consolidated and grouped into general themes in Section 4.2. Participant comments are noted in italics. Items in square brackets have been inserted by the writer to complete participant comments as they were understood by the facilitator, or as they were referred to in other parts of the focus group discussion. Individual names and dates have been removed.

GENERAL THEMES

In response to the questions about housing and parenting, in general, a majority of participants indicated:

- A desire to actively parent their child/ren, spend more time with them, or reside with them;
- A series of challenges in achieving a stable household when attempting to find suitable employment, continue schooling, and/or parent;
- A number of barriers to obtaining housing given a lack of credit history, employment or tenancy referrals;
- A degree of isolation from other young men in the same situation with the same life goals or parenting objectives; and
- A lack of role models, mentors, services, and/or supports to improve their parenting or coping skills.

4.2 IHUMAN YOUNG FATHERS FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

INVOLVEMENT WITH IHUMAN

How long have you been involved with iHuman?

I was in RAPID since 14. I heard about it from a cousin. I heard it was full of thugs an gangsters so I didn't go here until 3 years later. I came here because I wanted to be heard through my music. I'm going through a lot of challenges.

Since last year. Been a while. I came because of the music program. I was staying in a group home and they wanted me to come here.

I've only been here 6 times. Was so busy finding a place and getting a job.

I first heard about this place from my younger brother when I came out of remand. He said you can go here and make music. I was supposed to do my time for something else but I got cleared for that, then they were trying to put me down for community service for hours for driving without a license. But I know I did [have a license] because iHuman has the records.

I found out about this place when I was 15. I was over there, and my sister told me about it as a good place to chill out. Met [an outreach staff member]. I barely come here now since I have a kid.

YOUNG FATHERS WITH CHILDREN

Can you tell me about your children? How many kids do you have? How old are they?

A, he's going to be one in November. He's born on the same day as [my friend]. My daughter's name is W. She looks a lot like me, she's pretty cute.

I have three kids. The oldest is 4, then 2 and 1. Two sons and a daughter. They are all smart kids. They talk so clearly and vocalize so well. I can sit there and have conversations with my oldest son. They never cease to amaze me. I miss my kids.

I have 11 kids. My oldest is turning 8 this week. My second passed away when I was 16, at 6 months old. That took a toll on me, that's all I'll say. I was at work, and I heard [on the radio] there was someone that got run over, and I got radioed in. I had to walk in 2 acres ... there was no-one at work that had an ATV. I got on a chopper, got to the hospital and found out my son was dead. I was so mad at my ex-girlfriend that I just walked away from her. I was so mad I just went smashing things. My other kids are with their aunties. My 2-year-old daughter is in Sherwood Park, My youngest is only 6 months and he's in [foster] care. I've been trying real hard to get work and get them back, my oldest son and my 3-yr-old daughter. They've been visiting...[family]. My grandparents were always drinking. They live here and there with my aunts and uncles. I don't like being at Hope Mission. Been running around looking for jobs. Still haven't found no work.

My child is 5 months and she lives with me. My girlfriend lives with me too. And I'm still sober, going on 9 months.

CURRENT HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

When you talk about housing are you looking for yourself alone, or with someone else?

Ideally I would get a place for me and my kids, but realistically I'm looking for myself for now. I go to parties just to find a place to sleep. But, for now, just for me I guess until I can find something better.

I don't look for places. I'm not even old enough. If I were to look I would look with someone who's old enough I guess.

Been here from out of town for about 6 weeks. Been looking for housing. I went to viewings, but they wanted another grand [\$1000 for damage deposit in addition to rent] so I just left it. Was going back to work yesterday but then my bus ticket got denied. But the social workers at Sherwood Park won't let me leave the city.

I live on my own. I was living on 50th street but I left to work. When I was gone my house got rushed.... My kid brother was there and women and kids. The house got smashed up. When I came back they moved to Saskatchewan, and I was just on my own.

I never had my own place for a long time. When I got out of remand and I went to the Rehab Centre over here. They helped me find housing on the west side. You can't trust just anyone you find on Kijiji. They pulled some shitty shit and said I stole a jersey. I don't know what they're talking about. Met a guy at a party, they had two free rooms. I was there with my boy at the time, I was still sober. Then I got my own place, but I got evicted. Since there, I've been homeless and just couch surfing. Got kicked out of Momma's house again, still homeless. She said I could go back there for a month. Heard something today about getting my own place but it doesn't change nothing, I'm still in the same position it feels like.

Ever since I got out of treatment, I found that I was looking for a house when I got into the 42-day treatment program. When I got out of there I found a house—it took me that long, the whole time I was in treatment. It was hard paying rent a first, so I had to get another job. There were too many drugs and alcoholics so I had to move. Where I live now the rent is even more, plus I just lost a job but I have another one coming up. Terra helps me and so does iHuman. Terra helps me find low-income housing. Right now I'm paying \$875 for a one-bedroom.

DESIRED HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

Are you able to talk about an ideal situation? What would that look like for you?

At least a 2 or 3 bedroom for me and my kids. And to have some kind of support financially, and guidance as well to find resources in the community. Being a father of 3 kids on my own would be overwhelming so I'd need a lot of support.

I've been looking for a 2-bedroom for me and my wife. We were talking about this all night long before we [came here]. We've been searching for jobs. Went to a temp agency, they won't let me in for some reason, I don't know why. Looking around, going to Clareview to apply at grocery stores. It's real hard. I've been walking around lately. I ran out of bus tickets so now I just walk. People ask me, how can I do that, but when I was back home I would walk in the bush all the time. I was born and raised on a reserve where there was no road, no trucks. This past summer they just built a road. Been helping my brother with some jobs, but I guess he didn't need help, he was mad at me the other day. He lost his workers to another company, and I was the one dealing with getting his workers into classes to get their safety tickets and stuff. I was the only person to help him build his company. He's 42 and I'm 22. I been helping him get back on his feet.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSING

What types of issues do you encounter when considering or looking for housing?

I don't know any single dads who have their kids and have their own place.

"We don't take young adults." They don't want to talk to me because I'm native. I've been told, "We don't take your kind." There's a lot of discrimination out there.

A lot of natives our age are alcoholics, or are gonna be alcoholics.

There's a lot of bad perception of people our age.

It's hard to be a young native guy.

Something I've noticed is, if you don't go into a place that helps with housing, a lot of places have credit checks. I only got a credit card last year. It's a big barrier.

Places that do criminal checks won't even look at me, If you're VO or DO it's hard to get looked at. [Violent offender, dangerous offender]. My stupid past haunts me.

Being homeless for a while, it's not hard to find a job, but it's hard keeping a job. You can always find a job here in Edmonton, but it's hard to keep a job. People aren't used to waking up early/regularly, being told what to do. You have no choice. It's hard to keep that mind state of wanting to do good when you're put down a lot.

I have a hard time keeping a job because of my living situation. The job site is too far from where I gotta stay.

Don't have a kid if you're not ready.

Don't let the welfare be involved.

When I see people with kids being stupid I tell them they're an idiot. They're lucky they even have their kids with them. Mine are in foster care.

Don't [expletive] around if you have a kid.

If you don't have a job and stuff and you have a kid... damn. That's all you'll be saying...damn.

When I was working on the oil rigs for my brother all the money went to my kids. I had to send all the money to their bank cards—\$500 each to their mothers. All I had left was \$80. The safety at the place I was working was pretty bad. There were constantly people getting hurt. The head manager was pissed off because his pipes kept getting scratched. I'd been doing that for quite a while. I don't know what I'm going to do. I can't move out of the city or I'll lose my kids until they're 18. I don't know why I became homeless. It's so hard. It's tough running to places to eat, to get jobs. I've been going to Bissell for \$60 per day. Bought me and my wife a meal. I kept on doing that until they told me to stop it. I had to wait for a week to get into that program. A friend hooked me up with Workforce. Still waiting to hear from them. Trying to get in with them so I can get a place, buy some baby stuff. Then my daughter can come home.

4.3 TERRA YOUNG FATHERS FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

INVOLVEMENT WITH TERRA

How long have you been coming to Terra (programs)?

I found out about Terra while I was in treatment. A guy I used to work for told me it was a good program.

I have been part of Terra maybe 2 and a half to 3 months but my girlfriend has been in for 6 years since her first child.

I heard about Terra through social workers. They told me it was a good program

2 months

I've known about Terra since January or February when my girlfriend was pregnant

10 months

I don't have a Dad worker but my girlfriend [comes here].

My girlfriend got involved when we found out she was pregnant. Been involved ever since.

Almost three years now. My girlfriend found out she was pregnant and did some research and got involved with Terra.

Two years

About a year

About a month roughly.

YOUNG FATHERS WITH CHILDREN

Can you tell me about your children? How many kids do you have? How old are they?

I have a 5-month old baby.

Have 3 kids, a 6-year-old boy, a 3-year-old boy and an 8-month-old daughter.

I have a daughter, she's 6 months.

I have two boys, 4 and 14 months.

I have a little 4-month-old daughter.

I have a 10-month-old daughter.

I have a year and 4-month-old daughter (16 months).

We are expecting our daughter in early November.

I have a two-and-a-half year-old daughter.

I have a 2-year-old.

I have a son who's 2.

I have a two-and-a-half-year-old son.

Will be a Dad in 5 months.

I have a boy, he's 2 years old now, he's good, everything's good, we're doing fine.

CURRENT HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

What experiences have you had with finding or keeping housing?

There are a lot of adult buildings and probably some Dads can handle that but there aren't very many that allow younger guys.

Every time I tell them my age or they try to do credit [checks] and all that, they see I have no experience and don't have any landlord history so I usually just get hung up on.

It's good to have a co-signer with you, someone who's been renting for a while. Internet is the best way. You can refine your search. And we got my girlfriend's Dad to sign for us for now. Then, in a year's time, I can sign for myself.

Nowhere is cheap enough. It's three quarters of my paycheque.

Finding a job that pays enough. I don't get any of my paycheque. It all goes to rent.

Yeah, that's a big one.

Availability. Have to wait for one to be available, they'll call us.

I want to be around somewhere that has a grocery store, where you can go get emergency diapers, baby food. That's a big thing for me, having those amenities around.

Where are you living right now?

I live north of the City with my dad, who's in the military. My girlfriend's living situation doesn't allow me to live there until we pay off a lot of damages. She lives in low-income housing, and previously before I knew her a lot of damage was done to the house. They aren't allowing her to change the lease and she can't have anyone else living there full time. The three kids are all with her. It's south of the City and I'm north of the city. I spend a lot on gas.

I live in 101 Ave and 86Street. I used to live with my sister in Abbotsfield. My fiancée used to live with my parents. When we found out she was pregnant, by that time I was working. I tried to find a job for after school. Her parents, they guaranteed for the housing. They couldn't let me take a house.

I just moved back in with my parents in Mill Woods. Before that I was living on my own with a friend in the Capilano area, but then I lost my job, so...now I'm back with my parents.

My two sons are with their mother during the week and every weekend they are with me.

I'm living with my mother now until I finish my grade 12. Not really looking for housing at the moment.

Live in Westmount with my girlfriend. My girlfriend's father co-signed the lease. We already went to a 6-month lease [after a one-year lease]. They aren't keeping up to the maintenance [on the apartment] but they will get to it in the long run. I pay \$960 for a one-bedroom. My bathroom ceiling has a crack in it right over the tub where I bathe my kid. I don't want that ceiling coming down on my kid in the bath. They'll have to fix it, or the [Landlord and] Tenant board will make them.

I live in [neighbourhood], a really nice place. It's near a strip mall, bakery and grocery store. We only pay \$1,300 for rent including the utilities for a 4-bedroom but with one bathroom. I live with my girlfriend, mom, and half brother.

I live by Jasper Place transit. I live with my girlfriend and mom right now. I'm looking for a job so we can get out of there.

I'm at home with my parents. I have my daughter there; my fiancée and my daughter. I pay \$500 for the room and \$5-600 for groceries and gas. So altogether we pay about \$2,000.

I live in an apartment with my fiancée and daughter. We pay \$950 for a 2-bedroom plus power. It's actually a really good deal.

I'm living with girlfriend and her mother. I pay about \$700 for everything.

I have my own place. It's a 1-bedroom for \$775 and just me and my son live there. It's at the new YMCA building.

OTHER ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSING

Are there other things we haven't talked about that have been challenges or difficulties along the way?

For a single father to apply for the child tax credit, it's really hard, you have to get witnesses and stuff to prove that you have custody. It's been almost 2 years and I'm still not getting it.

Being able to get a job that pays the rent.

I have a 1-year-old, he's totally fine and we had it all under control. And then bam, I get a teenage girl dropped on my doorstep. That's my spouse's younger sister and now I have to raise a teenage girl. I was really hoping not to do that. Other than that, finding housing is pretty easy if you have the money for it.

Which organizations or programs have you tried to access?

Edmonton Housing. But that was really hard. You gotta wait about 2 to 3 years right now just to get in there. It's because there are just so many other people ahead of me.

Do you think your situation would be different if you were a mom?

I think it is different. We get that background on us: [people assume] we're young, we want to party. That's how landlords see us: that we're young, we're going to party and damage stuff. And you're young too. Same problem as trying to get car insurance.

No, I just paid off my car, all I got is gas and oil changes.

I was a young Dad. There is of course a difference. One, you can't keep up [at the workplace] with someone who's 5 feet taller than you. They have more power and everything. But we try our best to support our families. A few months ago, when I got into a car accident, everything I was

saving, it just went. Right now, I'm just having a hard time getting back to where I was. The insurance didn't pay me for days home or anything, they just gave me the money for how much the car cost and nothing else. I have a new job now making windows, at \$14 per hour. No experience or anything. We try our best and stuff just to keep up. I'm just trying to do the best for my family.

DESIRED HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

Can you describe a housing situation that would be helpful? Or, address your needs?

Something kind of close to low income housing.

Subsidized housing.

Good credit.

Without a really long wait list.

The credit requirement doesn't help.

No credit is just as bad as bad credit.

If you have bad credit, just show them cash, they change their mind.

If you've never had a house before, it's hard.

Housing that would be good is low income and an understanding of first renters and being a Dad.

I've had my son with me ever since he was 7 months old. I was staying at my Mom's house for a while. When he was just a few months old I had my own place. Things happened with his mother. I finally saved up enough to get back into the city and have my own place.

Having an apartment that's OK with small children inside the building. It makes it loud. There are buildings that don't say "Adults Only," but they really don't want kids.

There are some places that say they don't want odour and stuff. And so they say they don't want diapers and stuff.

Childcare so you could go look for a job or go to work.

I live in one, a pretty nice building. They help us with pretty nice support. Let's say there is another building and everyone here has his own place in there, they're getting the same support. Raising a kid is hard. I think if they had a lot of people in the same situation in the same place, then everyone will be happier. If there is a place where I can be accepted, that would be great.

We wouldn't want to single any one out. When it comes to schooling, there is schooling for teen moms and stuff but the Dad's get left out. So we wouldn't want to do that the other way around.

Other comments?

CONTINUING EDUCATION

If you want to go back to school and the mother is going back to school, and if you aren't the primary guardian, then you won't be getting the benefits.

I don't have a diploma, it's really hard to get a job to support your family. When I go to school I get a diploma so I can get a good job. Let's say [Terra's] Braemar [school], it's just for girls, no guys can go there. Is there a way to get a school for guys too, where we can get a diploma?

With a school like that, it should also have options for trades. For a lot of young dads that seems to be the way. If there was a way to get some of those tickets, not for free like a charity but a way to get them, we'd be jumping at that.

I've noticed that young guys, when they get out of school, they want to go do something. They don't tell you about getting your tickets and what you actually have to do to get the tickets. If they had a school for dads that want to further their education, like math and stuff and tickets that you need for certain jobs where you can make really good money, whether it's in the city or out of town.

I was going to school and was getting \$541 a month. I decided after school I can just take a trade so once the trade is done I can get a good job. But the government said I have to choose a trade or school, but they wouldn't let me do both at once. If there was a half-day school, that would be good so we could take a trade too.

WORK, SCHOOL, SUPPORT AND PARENTING

Stuff [programs and support] is more advertised for moms, not for dads. It's all advertised for the females. We are a good role model in the child's life, and there are single dads too.

People think the Dad leaves, but there is the other side too. Mom's run away too, I know that because my mom went away on me when I was a kid.

My girlfriend's mother doesn't trust any men, she's seriously sexist, she's just messed up that way, so we don't see eye-to-eye.

When you have that kind of messed up past, it makes you more determined. I'm not going to be like that, I'm going to stay around. Everyone goes through the pros and cons of keeping the baby. If you can find the person where you know the person is going to be there it works better.

That's what school should do too. I know they do sex education and stuff but I think they should do parenting classes too. Talk about the pros and cons of being there for their child and not being there.

I was in Grade 12 when my girlfriend got pregnant and I got kicked out of school for attendance because I had to be away for doctors' appointments and stuff. But for a girl, they can get out of school and ... they won't get kicked out of school for attendance.

Housing should be like that too. They should know that you're at school and working too. A place like that should maybe be a bit more understanding of being late a couple days with rent or whatever.

We get stereotyped as single Dads who are going to take off anyway, so what's the point in providing supports anyway.

I think people are having a hard time finding a job that actually pays and stuff. But there's a company called [name] and all you have to do is have [a clean urine test]. The job pays \$30 an hour. But if you are a [particular] labourer you get paid way more to start. But the steps to get there... if there was a system to pay the union dues up front and then pay it back when you have a job for a while, that would help a lot.

I would do that if it wasn't just for construction labour work.

I've seen trades and I've seen how they're all done. If you want the easy way, you go to [company name]. If you go to other trades you have write tests and [expletive]. With [company name] you don't have to have a trade.

The program I'm in, I can't work outside the city. But it's hard getting someone to babysit for a few weeks.

After my girlfriend got pregnant, my parents didn't like where I was going with that. My parents didn't like my girlfriend at all. But the biggest thing is the connection with children and stuff. You want to go out of town, but at the same time you don't want to, because then you aren't there for the kids.

Some of us don't have the family [support]. My girlfriend, her family tried to disown her, remove her and not give her any help at all.

I'm living with my parents, but they are parents too, and they try to overrule me as a Dad. They want me out and I want to get out but...I'm paying so much for rent that I can't save it.

There are some free daycares. At the Bissell Centre, they were looking after my son while I was looking for a job.

ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT AND RELATIONSHIPS

I like the one-on-one but it's also nice to sit in a room with a lot of young Dads. I don't have a lot of friends who have kids, so this is actually nice because I don't get a lot of chance to talk to other dads.

Yeah, hearing from Dads that have been around, it's nice to have discussion and hear about what to do and what not to do from other dads, especially when you're expecting.

Your girlfriend gets support and I'm just sitting at home.

Or, the other way around, where the girlfriend is staying at home and you're working all the time.

And then you come home and just want to lay down and she wants to do this and that.

I think too with the whole spouse and stuff, you know how they ask you I want this, I want that, they look at what they need. It's bothersome because you think they'd grow up and stuff.

Girls are supposed to be more mature than guys.

That's only until puberty.

I think us Dads should put our foot down a bit more and say that's what you want, but that's not going to happen. They don't really see the idea that you're actually out working for your children and not for them.

At Terra, there is a group for young moms to go for a walk. And that was really nice. And me, I'd be just locked up in the house, and she would come back, oh, I did this and I did that. After work, if I want to go outside the house, I can't. So if, like, once a week or even twice a month we can just go outside as a Dad and share experiences, that would be great. For me, I don't have parents or nothing. And I was raised by a girl, she was a teenager too. So I have no-one ever showed me nothing, how to do this and that. I have to teach myself to be a dad. If we go as a dad to share experience, know what's there, I think it will help us be better dads. Like how do we talk about school with our kids. So if we can share that, that would be great. I think our families would be more happy, and our kids too.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

I always wanted to be in construction, but if you don't finish high school you can't do that.

A lot of people at [company name] have only Grade 9.

The thing I hate is borrowing money.

Me and my spouse were talking about the difference between having a boy and having a girl. I think having a girl, they'll be asking for a lot more things later.

Yeah, here's your pair of shoes. All right, thanks dad!

I'm finally realizing where the money is going to have to go. I can see a perspective where all the money goes.

DEALING WITH STRESS

Everybody probably has something they do to let loose. I feel sorry for anyone that doesn't have that release. I have to play video games or I'm going to kill someone.

I've said the wrong thing and I got kicked out on the streets for a few weeks.

I think that if they had housing for dads too, there would be almost like a dads' worker that would check in every so often, and you could go down to a meeting once a week or whatever. But in a building with housing, so it gives you an extra support.

Like an AA meetings for dads.

If you're working 8 hours a day, with the boss screaming at you, then after that you go home, the kid is crying, the wife is stressed out, and you don't have the time to go to a play sports, let all your feelings out. For me when I play sports, I can let it out and forget about all the bad things. Then there's the traffic and then I go home, my fiancée is screaming, the kid is crying, I can't go outside, listen to music or nothing. Let's say we have a building, we have a chance to go out there, play something for fun, then all our bad feelings will just come out, then we can go back to our families and be a better person.

You need that release, of just give me a break, give me some space. You go to work, someone's yelling at you. Same thing at home.

The easiest way to sum it up is we got the [expletive] end of the stick.

If we don't do something right, we get screamed at. If we don't do anything, we get screamed at. If we do something right, we still get screamed at!

My daughter means the world to me. I would do anything for her. I've been looking at a camp job right now, which means I would be able to support her. People are looking at that like I'm trying to get away, but I'm not, I'm trying to support her.

Just trying to make sure my fiancée is healthy and has the right nutrition and stuff. If we want to support our families well, get the right education, we have to give that sacrifice for them. We're there to make sure they have a roof over their heads and food in their stomach.

With people whose dads have left them, you don't want to give someone else that feeling for how long it's been since you've seen your parents.

I definitely don't want to be like my dad.

I don't even know what my dad looks like. I don't have a picture or nothing. My mom, everyone tells me she was a great mom. I want to see her, her image and everything. I grew up without no dad, and I know what that life is like. It hurts. I'm trying to show my daughter who I am and be the greatest dad in the world for her. If I didn't want to be a good dad and stuff, I wouldn't be in this room. But because of our daughters and sons, that's why we are here. We care about them. When we see them smiling and stuff, you feel something in your heart. You don't want that to go away. So the best thing we do is to support them.

And we don't want them to fall into the same place that we are now. We can understand where our parents come from now if they had you at a young age. I don't want that for my kids. I want them to go on and finish school and have what they dream of.

One idea is that—even not through Terra—some of us could get together and hang out, with our kids, get knowledge from other parents in this group.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall purpose of this engagement is exploratory. In consideration of the engagement objectives, scope of consulting activities, and information collected, the following conclusions and recommendations are drawn for consideration by iHuman Youth Society and Terra Centre for the design and development of housing and/or support services for the young fathers they serve.

Young Fathers Express Desire for Personal, Parenting and Housing Supports

The 20 young fathers who participated in the focus groups at iHuman and Terra expressed desire to actively parent their child(ren), spend more time with them, or reside with them. They noted a series of challenges in achieving a stable household while attempting to find suitable employment, continue schooling, and/or parenting. They reported a number of barriers to obtaining housing given a lack of credit history, employment or tenancy referrals – barriers often exacerbated by their youth, and correspondingly, limited applicable life and employment experiences. Many expressed feelings of isolation from other young men in the same situations with the similar life goals or parenting objectives. Participants were interested in pursuing improvement and gaining access to male role models, mentors, services, and/or supports to improve their parenting or copying skills. Also, a few participants expressed interest in simply meeting and spending time with other young fathers and indicated that this opportunity alone might help them solve problems and feel better or more confident about their situations.

Recommendation: For Homeward Trust Edmonton to continue to investigate, develop, trial and implement programs and services, including the improvement and/or redirection of existing services, to address some of the barriers experienced by young fathers. This may include enhancing communications to landlords about supporting young fathers or families; offering short term or micro loans to assist individuals with damage deposits and/or the undertaking of educational opportunities and securing more skilled employment. Continue to support agencies in the development or provision of new opportunities for young fathers to meet to discuss their situations and objectives in a supportive environment and on an ongoing basis to 1) provide support to these individuals and greater connection to each other, iHuman and Terra, and other community resources; and 2) utilize these forums to further explore the range of needs and potential programming options for this diverse set of young fathers.

Comparable Young Father-Focused Programs and Services Appear Limited

This engagement is highly targeted. As such, the environmental scan and literature review were limited in scope. Given the searches performed, it appears there are few housing or related supportive programs and services directed to young fathers in particular. Programs and services developed expressly for young fathers identified in this engagement include a pre-birth preparation program and likely individualized case management or counseling supports. It appears the development of housing and support services currently envisioned for young fathers by iHuman and Terra may be emergent.

Recommendation: For Homeward Trust Edmonton to continue to perform research in additional jurisdictions to augment these findings. In addition, leverage Terra’s knowledge, history and experiences in serving young mothers to develop a wide set of housing and programming options for young fathers for further consideration, development, and evaluation. It is recommended Homeward Trust Edmonton perform further research and planning activities to assess specific design options for a young fathers housing program / residence which would be inclusive of fathers and young family units and may include

some of the on-site support services and links to employment and education that are delivered by programs in other jurisdictions.

Unique or Innovative Approaches for Young Fathers May Be Required

It appears that growing interest and accompanying research on the role and needs of young fathers in successful family or parenting outcomes has occurred within the past 10 years. While not within scope of this engagement, existing secondary research about the young father sub-population and teen pregnancy in other jurisdictions could inform the program and service approaches under development. Some areas of research focus could be: supporting and strengthening the relationship and/or communication between father and mother; improving communications by the professional community to be inclusive of young fathers in a primary or secondary parenting role; and/or identifying approaches to provide young fathers with opportunities to interact with male role models on topics of parenting.

Recommendation: For Homeward Trust Edmonton to fund an expanded literature review to document current knowledge on the needs of young fathers in other jurisdictions as well as specific factors affecting successful parenting or family outcomes that are inclusive of fathers.

The few resources identified in the course of performing the other research objectives of this engagement suggest unique or innovative approaches will be required for young fathers than those that have been employed for young mothers. Additionally, secondary research focused on quantifying the potential young father sub-population, including custodial and non-custodial fathers is recommended to both scale and characterize potential demand for the housing and support services under development.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Protocol

Roundtable discussion:

1. Can you tell me about your children? How many kids do you have? How old are they?
2. How long have you been coming to iHuman or Terra?
3. What experiences have you had with finding or keeping housing?
4. Do you think your situation would be different than if you were a woman?
5. Which organizations have you tried to access?
6. Can you describe a housing scenario that would be helpful? Or, address your needs?

Appendix B: Agency Data Collection Protocol

1. Does your program serve fathers? Custodial? Non-custodial? How many clients are single custodial fathers, as compared to non-custodial fathers or single custodial mothers?
2. (If the agency only serves mothers, is there a reason the program is only offered to single mothers and not to single fathers?)
3. In your experience, is there a difference between the services needed by the fathers you serve as compared to the mothers?
4. (If only mothers...Do you see or hear of a demand for similar services for fathers? Do you think that demand is being served by other agencies in your region?)
5. What do you consider to be the most significant barrier to housing for the parents in your client base?
6. Is youth a factor in the housing or other difficulties faced by your clients? In what ways?
7. What kinds of housing / living situations are your clients coming from? Where are they able to go when leaving your program?
8. What kinds of supports (life skills, workplace readiness, etc.) does your program offer in addition to the physical housing supports?
9. Is there a difference between what is used and/or useful to fathers as opposed to mothers? Single parents as opposed to couples?
10. Do you have some services that incorporate fathers as well as the mothers that are your clients?
11. Can you describe a perfect scenario where program funding wasn't limited and you were able to offer a perfect program to your clients? Alternate: Can you describe a perfect housing support scenario for your clients?
12. Does your program offer child care assistance? In what form? How important is that to your clients?
13. Are you aware of any housing programs specifically targeted to fathers?