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## Foreword: Local Social Safety Net, Explored

*By Susan Morrissey, ESPC Executive Director*



*Photo by the City of Edmonton*

Welcome to our spring edition of the Factivist, which we have dedicated to sharing some information about the local organizations that we consider part of Edmonton's social safety net. As many of our readers already know, we devote each issue of our newsletter to a specific social issue or topic and then build our articles around that topic. This time, we decided to focus our attention to some of the agencies that help support vulnerable individuals within our community functioning and engaged in daily life, whatever that may mean to the specific person. We have in no way tried to represent all of the agencies in this edition, we simply do not have enough time or room to do so. What we have attempted to do is provide our readers with a snapshot of some of the agencies based on demographic groups and needs.

In many respects, when we look back at EPSC's history, one sees that we had a significant role back in the early 1940s by coordinating social service agencies that were already in existence. The idea was that as more individuals and families were identified as in need, the scarce resources that were available required fair and equitable distribution. Our role today has changed. The ESPC now exists to help social service agencies with research information to serve the citizens of Edmonton to the full capacity.

In an ideal world, social safety nets should not need to exist. However, we know this is not the case and we are proud to be associated with those agencies that are making a difference to the lives of individuals living in low income.

## The Voluntary Sector and the Social Safety Net: A Historical and International Perspective

*By Michael Colborne, Volunteer Writer*

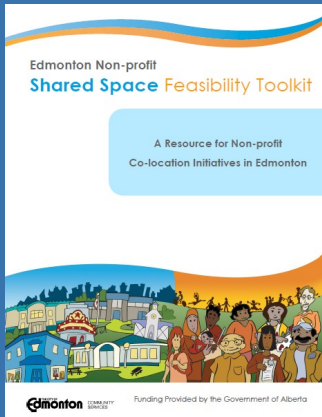
The voluntary sector has long been a critical piece of Canada's social safety net. From churches feeding the hungry and caring for the disabled, to community-based agencies providing services to refugees and giving shelter for victims of abuse, the voluntary sector has played an essential role in supporting vulnerable people across Canada since Confederation. This situation is by no means unique to Canada; the voluntary sector plays a similarly important role in other Western industrialized nations, like the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States.

However, there has been a dramatic shift in the roles of voluntary sector agencies across Canada and other Western countries since the early 1990s. There have been new roles, new responsibilities, and new challenges

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Additional Resource



*Edmonton Non-Profit: Shared Space Feasibility Toolkit: A Resource for Non-Profit Co-Location Initiatives in Edmonton.*

Published by the City of Edmonton - Community Services. 2010.

Available at  
[www.edmonton.ca/for\\_residents/Non-profit-SharedSpace-Toolkit.pdf](http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/Non-profit-SharedSpace-Toolkit.pdf)

## The Voluntary Sector and the Social Safety Net, *continued from page 1*

thrust upon voluntary sector organizations. This shift has eroded the social safety net and negatively impacted some of the most vulnerable sectors of society.



Governments across many Western industrialized countries, including Canada, have continued to reduce the role that the state plays in the social safety net (Milligan and Conradson, 2006). These efforts began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when governments like the Chretien Liberals and Tony Blair's Labour government in the United Kingdom felt considerable pressure to reduce public expenditures, reform bureaucracies that were perceived to be bloated and inefficient, and foster market-based solutions to social problems. It was argued and assumed by these and other governments that private and voluntary sector agencies would be able to deliver services to vulnerable populations more effectively, more innovatively, and, most importantly, at a lower cost. As a result, voluntary sector agencies have begun to play a much larger and more direct role in delivering social services to vulnerable people. Voluntary sector agencies are now seen less as active political advocates for vulnerable populations who provide additional service over and above those provided by the state, and more as passive deliverers on a time-limited, contract-by-contract basis of social services that were once delivered by the state - a role that leaves the voluntary sector as a "shadow civil service" (Laforest, 2011).

While Western governments may have found success in balancing their budgets, much of this has been founded on the backs of voluntary sector agencies and vulnerable populations. Voluntary sector agencies now bear the responsibilities for program success or failure, as well as the financial risks of running a program or service (e.g., cost overruns), to the point where some commentators see the voluntary sector as having become a "dumping ground" where governments can avoid difficult issues and responsibilities (Macmillan and Townsend, 2006). By downloading service delivery to both large and small agencies alike, governments can show clean balance sheets while voluntary sector agencies are often forced to sharply reduce costs. Agencies are often forced to reduce the numbers of qualified staff, offer lower pay, or even eliminate other much-needed services for vulnerable people to save money (Davies, 2010). Time-limited contracts, as well, impact the ability of voluntary sector agencies to build internal capacity to deliver and monitor programs and services, and to build sufficient cash flow to allow for proper organizational planning (Davies, 2010).

The slow dismantling of the social safety net and the downloading of much of this responsibility onto the voluntary sector has resulted in what has been described as a "disorganized welfare mix," where programs and services are inconsistent between different locations or even different periods of time (Bode, 2006). For example, many health and social services to Aboriginal people in Canada are provided by voluntary sector agencies working on time-limited contracts at different times and in different parts of the country, meaning that Aboriginal people do not necessarily have equal access to the same quality of health and social services across the country. These sorts of inequalities have been documented across other Western countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, and France (Bode, 2006; Macmillan and Townsend, 2006). As well, voluntary sector agencies face considerable human resource pressures and challenges, as described

above, that can curtail the types of programs and services - and the quality of programs and services - they can offer to vulnerable populations.



Photo by IFJC Fellowship

We cannot go back and rewrite the intertwining history of the voluntary sector and the social safety net. We cannot ignore the fact the governments in Canada and the Western world will continue to try and download responsibilities onto the voluntary sector to reduce government expenditures, particularly during the ongoing global economic crisis. However, what we can do is work together to ensure that governments - municipal, provincial, federal, and international governments alike - understand that that they have a fundamental role to play in supporting the social safety net and voluntary agencies at the community level. If the voluntary sector is expected to be a critical piece of the social safety net, governments must do more to support voluntary sector agencies, including:

Building opportunities for governments and voluntary sector agencies to meet in common forums and work together towards common goals

Assisting the voluntary sector with human resource challenges (e.g., targeted funding for staff attraction and retention, like wage 'top-ups')

Providing stable core funding to both enhance delivery of contracted services and help build internal capacity to deliver and monitor programs and services.

To carry the metaphor to its end, governments must be more than just a shopkeeper who provides twine for voluntary sector agencies with limited

resources to build a thin, patchwork social safety net - governments must roll up their sleeves and work with voluntary sector agencies to strengthen that net for all Canadians.

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### Additional Resource



*Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities.*

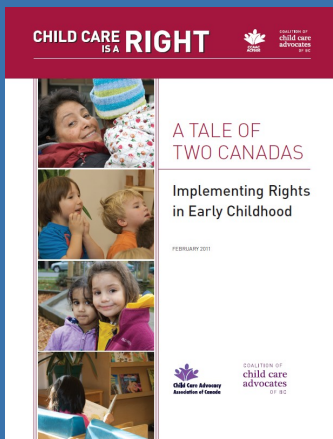
Published by Volunteer Canada. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.volunteer.ca/files/BTG-Final.pdf](http://www.volunteer.ca/files/BTG-Final.pdf)





## Additional Resource



*A Tale of Two Canadas:  
Implementing Rights in Early  
Childhood.*

Published by the Child Care  
Advocacy Association of  
Canada. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/  
documents/March2011/  
tale\\_of\\_two\\_canadas.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/March2011/tale_of_two_canadas.pdf)

# Community Options: Early Childhood Education and Caregiving

*By Lindsay Wodinski, Volunteer Writer*



*Photo by Peggy Nairn*

Social service organizations in Edmonton's nonprofit and voluntary sector play a vital role in supporting vulnerable groups in our city. Social service nonprofit and voluntary organizations advocate on behalf of socially marginalized groups and offer essential programs and services to children, youth, families, newcomers, the elderly, persons with disabilities, the homeless, and others. These agencies provide valuable resources that are typically not found in the public or private sectors. Nonprofit and voluntary organizations respond to myriad of social issues and are often catalysts of positive change in local communities. In this edition of the Edmonton Social Planning Council's *fACTivist* Newsletter, I would like to highlight Community Options: A Society for Children and Families as one local charity that contributes to the social safety net for children and families in our city.

Community Options is a federally registered charity that provides early childhood education and accredited caregiving services in the Edmonton area. Access to affordable and high quality childhood

education and care are major challenges experienced by many Albertan children and families today. Compared to other Canadian provinces, Alberta has a young population with a high number of families with children. In recent years, Edmonton and Calgary have experienced 'baby booms' and are among the fastest growing cities in the Prairie Provinces (Statistics Canada, 2006). The provincial government has tried to address existing shortages in early childhood education and caregiving by increasing funding to various ministries and partner organizations, such as school boards, Alberta Health Services, and Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). Despite these efforts, the need for early childcare and education opportunities in local communities remains high. Community-based organizations provide the lion's share of early childhood education and caregiving services and are a significant source of social support for children and families (The Muttart Foundation, 2010; 2011).

Over the past thirty-five years, Community Options has specialized in early childhood education and caregiving. This organization is a known source of knowledge and expertise in early childhood education and caregiving among service providers in Edmonton. Community Options' programs are open to all members of the public. The organization emphasizes inclusion by ensuring that its services are accessible to children from lower-income families and children with developmental disabilities. The mission of Community Options is to educate, encourage and inspire children and families to fully participate within their community. The organization envisions "Strong resilient families being the best they can be".

Community Options operates a Child Care Centre, Preschool Centre, and Out of School Care Centre in the Inglewood community. The agency also offers Community

Preschool Education programs for children with disabilities in kindergartens, preschools, and other child care centres located throughout the city. The Community Preschool Education program provides educational opportunities to children with severe developmental disabilities. Children learn with other typically-developing students and are supported by a team of professionals, including teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists and family consultants. The Community Preschool Education program recently initiated a proactive screening process to support children who will require learning and funding support in the new school year.

The Edmonton Northwest Child Care Centre is located in the heart of Inglewood community, away from traffic and busy commercial areas. The centre strives to be a leader in provision of quality child care. The Edmonton Northwest Preschool and Out of School Care Centres are offered in two classrooms in Inglewood Elementary School. The Out of School Care Program runs before school, during the lunch hour, and after school, as well as on non-school days, while the Preschool Centre runs morning and afternoon activities four days a week. Community Options receives FCSS funding, which allows Preschool Centre fees to stay quite minimal to ensure access for lower-income families.

To varying degrees, these three programs have adopted the Reggio Emilia philosophy in their approach to early childhood learning and development. This philosophy emphasizes the roles of the child, teacher, and environment during the learning process. In Community Options' programs, the Reggio Emilia philosophy is used to encourage children to learn about their surroundings through sensory experiences (touch, movement, listening, seeing, and hearing). Teachers and child care workers develop curriculum and learning materials based on children's interests and curiosities. Thus, children learn through exploration and their relationships with others.

In addition to these services, Community Options organizes several events throughout the year to encourage

community involvement and assist families with meeting their basic needs. The organization hosts an annual Festive Meal during the Christmas season. More recently, the agency organized "A Taste of Inglewood Multicultural Event" and clothing exchange, as well as a "Make Tax Time Pay" service in the Inglewood community. Community Options has also engaged in community development initiatives. The organization is currently raising funds to build a new innovative playground for children attending the Child care Centre.

In many respects, Community Options delivers on its mission and vision by providing supportive services to children and families and helping them to engage with their community. The organization is an important piece of the local social safety net and provides essential early childhood learning and care opportunities to Edmonton-based families.

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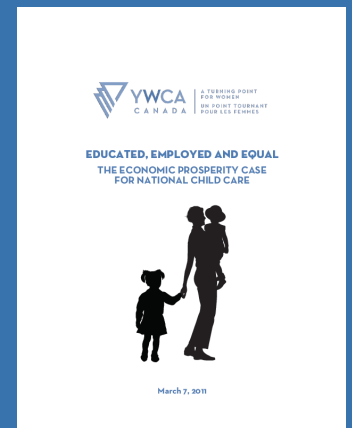
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The Muttart Foundation. (2011). *Municipal child care in Alberta: An alternative approach to the funding and delivery of early learning and care for children and their families*. Retrieved from [www.muttart.org/sites/default/files/report/Municipal%20Child%20Care%20in%20Alberta%20report%20PDF.pdf](http://www.muttart.org/sites/default/files/report/Municipal%20Child%20Care%20in%20Alberta%20report%20PDF.pdf)



### Additional Resource



*Educated, Employed, and Equal: The Economic Prosperity Case for National Child Care.*

Published by the YMCA of Canada. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/documents/March2011/educated\\_employed\\_equal.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/March2011/educated_employed_equal.pdf)



# Bissell Centre: Supportive Services

By Lindsey Graham, ESPC Board Member

## Additional Resource

### Better Access to Better Food

A Final Report on a Collaborative Inquiry Into How to Improve Food Security in Edmonton's TSH Neighborhoods

Prepared for Bissell Centre by Mark Cabaj, March 2012

*Better Access to Better Food: A Final Report on a Collaborative Inquiry Into How to Improve Food Security in Edmonton's TSH Neighborhoods.*

Prepared for the Bissell Center by Mark Cabaj. 2012

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/documents/May2012/Better-Access-to-Better-Food.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/May2012/Better-Access-to-Better-Food.pdf)



Photo by Mulder Studios

The presence of Bissell Centre as a vital thread in Edmonton's social safety net dates back to 1910. With the experience of over a century of helping Edmontonians, the Centre has served countless individuals and families in need of social supports. In 2005, construction began on Bissell Centre West, which now houses the Drop-In, adult programs, mental health support, employment programs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum of Services, and a housing program. Today, the Centre is guided by a vision to "eliminate poverty in our community."

Bissell Centre has an acute awareness of what poverty means in the lives of those who access their services. Beyond the quantitative data, they weave the stories of people into their programming to provide program outcomes of empowerment, equity and justice. The core values of Bissell Centre reflect the collective capacity of the community. Their philosophy is one of "hope for human potential and social justice; of trust in the power of community through relationships and inclusiveness; and of resourcefulness with strength and capacity."

### Current Programming

The Provincial 10-year plan to end homelessness, Edmonton's own plan to end homelessness, and Premier Redford's recent commitment to develop a poverty reduction strategy will be contingent on the operations and programming of local

service providers. Bissell Centre serves as a link between these broader policy goals and on-the-ground service delivery. By collaborating with other service providers in Edmonton, they are working to put words and policies into action.

The programs delivered through Bissell Centre celebrate the diversity of the community and respect the challenges that community members face. They are reflective of the complexity of community issues and acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all approach rarely works.

To achieve the goal to eliminate poverty, they focus on five service areas: core services, health & wellness, financial stability, safe & affordable housing, and learning & development. The following summary of programs provides a snapshot of the extensive suite of services offered:

- Child and Family Resources include accredited childcare, family support services, parenting classes, advocacy and referral services, and essential care items such as infant formula.
- Employment Services to assist participants looking to re-enter the workforce or enhance their job skills and readiness through training and assessments and connecting them with casual labour opportunities. Essential Community Support Services provides non-judgmental supports and advocacy to participants who may have chronic physical or mental illnesses, are living in poverty, are homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless, and have little or no support systems.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum of Services enhances the community's capacity to understand and prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and support the individuals and families affected by FASD through advocacy and community education campaigns.
- Homeless to Homes aligns with the Housing First approach championed in



the Provincial plan to end homelessness. Using an Intensive Case Management approach, barriers are eased so that individuals are able to access permanent and secure housing with wraparound supports tailored to their needs.

- Inner City Victim Services provides non-police based access to programs and services to victims of crime to reduce the difficulties of navigating the criminal justice system. This may include court support, case management, crisis intervention and additional social supports.
- The Centre also offers recreational activities and outings to help people form and strengthen social networks, learn new skills and enjoy life in healthy ways. Programming includes a broad range of activities, including individual and team sports, visits to cultural events and facilities, and outdoor pursuits.
- The Bissell Thrift Shoppe is a social enterprise of Bissell Centre providing low-income families and individuals a venue for purchasing high-quality products at very affordable prices. All products sold at the Thrift Shoppe are generously donated by the citizens of Edmonton and surrounding communities and all revenue goes back

to Bissell to fund the Community Closet. The Closet is a voucher-based system assisting low income families and individuals by providing basic essentials of clothing and household goods at no charge every season.



Photo by Karen Lee



### Quick Facts

- On average over 400 people access the Drop-In daily
- 2 adults and children have found housing through Homeless to Homes 90.5% of participants stated the Drop-In assisted them in finding other sources of help
- There were over 12,000 Casual Labour placements in 2010



### SPRING IS HERE! It's time to clean your closets for a cause!

Bring your new or gently loved items down to Bissell Centre's Thrift Shoppe to be sold at affordable prices to those that can't afford retail prices!

Proceeds of our Shoppe fund our **Community Closet** - a voucher based "store" assisting low income families with basic essentials of clothing and household goods at **no charge**.



**Thrift Shoppe & Sorting Centre**  
8818 118 ave  
edmonton  
780.471.6644

Mon - Sat  
9am - 4pm  
Sunday  
10am - 3:30pm

**South Side Drop-off**  
5120 - 122 St  
edmonton  
780.432.2377

Mon - Sat  
9am - 4pm  
Sunday: Closed



[www.bissellcentre.org](http://www.bissellcentre.org)



### Challenges Faced

- Approximately 77% of Canada's incarcerated federal offenders have no high school diploma
- Over 70% have unstable job histories
- 52% claim to have had dysfunctional parents
- 79% have abused alcohol and/or drugs
- 79% are poor at problem solving, 70% are unable to generate choices, and 79% are considered to be impulsive
- At admission, 20% of Canadian offenders had been previously hospitalized in a mental health facility
- 12% have a current psychiatric diagnosis
- 21% have been prescribed medication for a mental health issue

(Regional Halfway House Association, 2012.)

# Elpida House: Facilitating Healthy Transitions

By Michelle K. Maitland, Volunteer Writer



Photo by R. Judson

In contemporary society, breaking out of the unhealthy patterns and cycles associated with lower socio-economic statuses is often difficult to do on one's own. Such cycles restrict the opportunities leading to the individual assertion of self-worth and societal value. The vulnerabilities and stressors that face large portions of Canadian society are largely fostered by society itself; systemic prejudices and societal stigmas play role to this perpetuation of inequality. Poverty, crime and substance abuse are among some of the typical by-products arising from this unwarranted social placement. The question then follows: How does an individual reassert themselves as a healthy and productive member of their community when they are faced with not only their daily habitual triggers and patterns, but also rigid social perceptions? Complications multiply when healthy reintegration is the goal for offenders recently released from correctional institutions. These individuals are truly on the fringes of society; their identities perceptually marred by an inherent criminal nature, challenging the very fabric of our civilized way of life. With an array of factors working against them, these individuals require stability, guidance and council within a healthy environment.

Without the gradual and supervised release from incarceration, individuals are rendered highly vulnerable to fall back into old habits; the alluring temptations presented by environment, routine and familiar crowd

make the goal of positive reintegration incredibly daunting and less likely to be achieved. Due to this fact, there is an essential need for a transitional point between incarceration and independence; halfway houses act as this intermediary stage, dramatically reducing the likelihood of re-offending through proactive personal development. Halfway houses are locally-based residential facilities where offenders can serve a portion of their sentence- under supervision- in the community. These transitional homes are facilitated via the correctional service of Canada or by voluntary agencies. The supervised involvement in and exposure to the community is vital in not only altering the offenders behaviours and perceptions, but also the behaviours and perceptions of the community as a whole.

In Alberta, the Prairie Region Halfway House Association acts as an umbrella for a collection of locally rooted halfway houses. It is a provincial association whose network enables the open transference of knowledge and effective strategies amongst its various members; such networks are fundamental to the efficiency and success of any initiative.

The Elpida House program (operated through Catholic Social Services) lends itself to this provincial collaboration. Within Edmonton, there are four Elpida houses, each with separate demographic foci: men, men with substance abuse problems as a main concern, women, and youth (Catholic Social Services, n.d.). The Elpida House program serves offenders eligible for day parole, offering them accommodation, support and counselling. Potential Elpida clients apply through an institutional parole officer who forwards the request to Edmonton District Parole. The request is then forwarded to Elpida House staff to assess the individuals' suitability for the program; assessments are based on their criminal history, institutional behaviour and



compliance, degree of mental stability etc. Applicants can be rejected for a variety of reasons, for instance, if their individual needs are deemed in excess of the resources available at the house or if they are sexual offenders. Contrary to the fears and uncertainty that many people express in having a halfway house in their proverbial backyard, the safety of the general public is of utmost importance and consideration when granting parole to an offender. Halfway houses are not a source of imminent danger. The method of gradual and supervised reintegration ensures that the positive and healthy changes manifested within an individual are enduring. Through programs like Elpida House, the safety of the community remains uncompromised and actively maintained.

While staying in their fully furnished apartments, clients are responsible for their own shopping and food preparation. With domestic stability secured, many socio-economic stressors are alleviated, providing a refuge where individuals can learn positive life skills and strategies. Halfway houses enable their clients to focus on nurturing their own self-confidence and self-worth before being fully released into the community. At Elpida house, clients are expected to either attend school or work while adhering to a series of stipulations (i.e. curfew, sobriety etc.). As for rent, nominal fees are paid monthly according to the clients' income (Community Based Residential Facilities, n.d.). While staying at the house, there are a number of resources available which cater to the clientele's specific needs. Aboriginal resource workers, mental health workers and addictions counsellors guide clients, producing the healthy mindsets which form the foundation of a successful law-abiding life.

There is a necessity for an intermediary adjustment stage between incarceration and independence. According to the Parole Board of Canada, 50 per cent of offenders who were released directly from prison 12 years ago, without the benefit of gradual and controlled supervision, were later re-admitted for having committed new offences. In contrast, only 10 per cent of those who completed their sentences under

parole supervision were subsequently re-admitted to a federal penitentiary with new offences (Parole Decision Making: Myths and Realities, n.d.). Although parole violations do occur, the number of offenders who meet the terms and conditions of their release provides inspiring evidence of the effectiveness of the parole system in Canada. Conclusively, we see that the re-integration and re-establishment of individuals into their communities is most efficiently facilitated through local programs. They provide a system of positive support and guidance, commodities that many individuals do not experience without the help of local programs like Elpida House.

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### Successful Integration

- The rate of reconviction for violent offences while under community supervision has declined since 1994-95
- Offenders under discretionary release (full parole and day parole) are less likely to be convicted of a violent offence while under supervision than those on statutory release
- During 2003, federal offenders received 16,437 different periods of community supervision
- Only 4.1% of these release periods resulted in a re-admission in 2003 because a new crime had been committed
- Of the total of 2.8 million offences reported in Canada in 2003, only 2,659 new convictions were recorded against offenders under supervision in the community, an average of about 3.8 new convictions for each of the 686 re-admissions

(Regional Halfway House Association, 2012.)



## Additional Resource



*Are We Doing Enough? A Status Report on Canadian Public Policy and Youth Health.*

“This report examines major indicators used to measure child and youth health at the provincial, territorial and federal levels of government in Canada. It also looks at how these levels of government can improve legislation that supports the development and general well-being of youth and children in Canada.”

Written by the Canadian Paediatric Society. 2012

Available at: [www.cps.ca/english/Advocacy/StatusReport2012.pdf](http://www.cps.ca/english/Advocacy/StatusReport2012.pdf)

# Kids Help Phone: Kids Talking, Chatting and Posting for Better Mental Health

*By Vanessa Zembal, Volunteer Writer*



*Photo by Nancy Lehrer*

The Kids Help Phone was established in Canada in 1989. As child and youth mental health awareness has increased over the years, this service has proven to be an important resource that assists Canadian youth as they struggle with life challenges. In Alberta, the provincial government is continually working towards promoting mental health awareness and developing collaborative methods to reducing the impacts of mental stress on children and youth. In 2006, the Government of Alberta presented “Positive Futures - Optimizing Mental Health for Alberta’s Children and Youth”, which sets up a 10-year strategy for supporting a “common and integrated approach [between agencies, resources, schools and parents] to optimize mental health of children and youth” (Government of Alberta, 2006). The Kids Help Phone’s anonymous service provides Albertan children and youth with the opportunity to access correct information from professional counsellors (Kids Help Phone, 2012). As the government and general public understand the facets of mental and emotional wellbeing better, this service will continue to answer all the questions that children and youth cannot answer alone.

Kids Help Phone is focused on the mission of “improving the well-being of children and youth in Canada by providing them with anonymous and confidential professional counselling, referrals and information

through technologically - based communications media” (2006). Kids Help Phone’s statistics prove that the services they provide are valuable. The professional counsellors at Kids Help Phone receive over 1,000 callers a day from all across Canada. Kids ask for advice about issues with their friends, their future, homework, their parents, body, puberty issues and any other life related topics. As well, the services Kids Help Phone provides to Canadian youth in distress are highly accessible. Youth are able to speak to a Kids Help Phone counsellor 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Through the help of corporate sponsors, this not for profit organization continues to expand its services to meet the communication needs of children and youth. In 2006, the support service began responding to questions that were being posted to their website by youth. (Kids Help Phone, 2012). The online posting allowed kids to ask their questions anonymously and read other questions and responses. However, this meant that youth had to wait for counsellors to respond to the questions they posted online. In 2011, Kids Help Phone launched an online chat service, which decreases the amount of time it takes for their questions to be answered by counsellors. Sherrie Cameron from the Edmonton office of Kids Help Phone believes that this service also gives youth more privacy (personal communication, 2012). The private, and quiet, chat line reduces the likelihood that they will be overheard or emotionally overwhelmed while talking on the phone (Cameron, 2012). Ms. Cameron said that youth are telling Kids Help Phone counsellors that they would never have accessed the service before the chat line. She also believes that this increased level of privacy encourages youth to ask more serious questions (Cameron, 2012).

As an anonymous, confidential resource for youth, there are many misconceptions about the services that Kids Help Phone offers and the types of youth that rely on them (Cameron, 2012). Contrary to popular belief, the majority of kids using the Kids Help Phone are not high risk with life threatening questions. While this group does account for about 30%, the other 70% of users are well-functioning kids dealing with normal issues of growing up or dealing with a crisis (Kids Help Phone, 2012). The topics these kids are asking include dating, sexual development, struggles with parents and school concerns to severe bullying, feeling isolated, bereavement or friends being involved in high risk behaviours (Kids Help Phone, 2012). The remaining 30% ask questions regarding addictive behaviours, self harming behaviours, lack of emotional control, suicidal behaviours, eating disorders and depression (Kids Help Phone, 2012).

This anonymous, confidential factor is also an issue when collecting valid statistics. Kids may be uncomfortable providing their age or location, prank calling is an issue and conversation topics are interpreted by the counsellor and caller differently (Cameron, 2012). However, the facts do reveal that over 1,000 calls are taken a day and the website is visited an average of 20,000 times per month (Kids Help Phone, 2012). Also, 47% of kids posting questions online post more than once (Kids Help Phone, 2012). The organization values the input of kids through every step of their development process (Cameron, 2012). All the information is voluntary and collected by kids answering questions after visiting a particular page of the site or using one of their services (Cameron, 2012). The information collected guides the process of future development to ensure that kids have the best access and feel like they can contribute (Cameron, 2012).

Parents, teachers, counsellors and other people involved with children have a responsibility to recognize the range of issues that may influence kids. And while parents may not be able to understand what exactly their child is dealing with, the Kids Help Phone can provide information on

helping your child cope with issues and begin to understand part of the issues that may affect your child (Cameron, 2012). The information online, especially the online posts, can be a valuable resource to read about real questions from kids and the counsellor responses.

Although “kids” is identified as anyone under 20 years old, the Kids Help Phone services are available to anyone. Their services do not have access restrictions and can be particularly helpful for anyone involved with kids, such as parents, teachers, counsellors or youth group leaders (Cameron, 2012). For example, parents who are uncomfortable with the topic or lack the knowledge of a particular topic can access these services, such as related online posts. They can also read how the counsellor responded to better understand their child’s situation (Cameron, 2012). This includes phone counselling, online posting counselling, live chat counselling, community referral databases, interactive clinical games and other resources. These resources do not have access restrictions and are freely accessible to the public (Kids Help Phone, 2012).

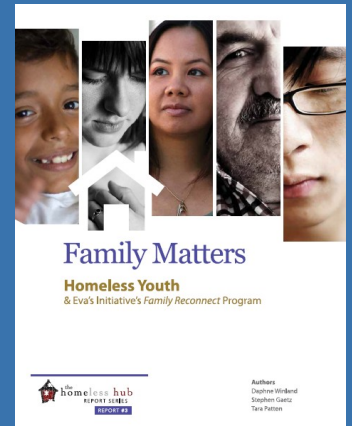
Mental health isn’t only an adult problem and doesn’t only affect people in high risk situations. Sometimes “kids just being kids” isn’t always the whole story. When kids don’t have anyone to talk to about the problems they face as they grow up, the results can be scary. Kids Help Phone has people who will listen and chat without judgement and provide professional, factual advice. Make sure that both you and your children know the Kids Help Phone number and web address so you can access these essential services.

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- Government of Alberta. (2006). *Positive Futures: Optimizing Mental Health for Alberta's Children and Youth*. Edmonton: Alberta Health and Wellness.
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### Additional Resource



*Family Matters: Homeless Youth & Eva's Initiative's Family Reconnect Program.*

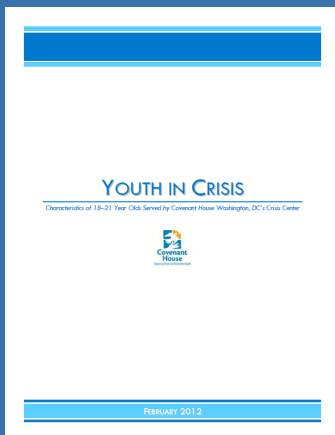
Written by Daphne Winland, Stephen Gaetz, and Tara Patton. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/documents/May2011/family\\_matters.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/May2011/family_matters.pdf)





## Additional Resource



*Youth in Crisis: Characteristics of 18-21 Year Olds Served by Covenant House Washington, DC's Crisis Center.*

Published by the Covenant House Institute. 2012.

Available at:  
[www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/DC.Youth\\_In\\_Crisis.pdf](http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/DC.Youth_In_Crisis.pdf)

# iHuman: Helping Our Youth

*By Esther Steeves, Volunteer Writer*



"At-risk", "high-risk", "troublemaker", "hoodlum", "drug addict", and "criminal" are just some of the labels that the youth who visit iHuman are given in our society.

In many cases, these youth have either turned away or been turned away from other service providers, feeling alienated by a judgmental system of supports, and have nowhere left to turn.

Many of these youth have criminal records, a file with Alberta Human Services, ongoing addictions, and conditions such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other brain injuries. Without intervention, they are vulnerable to a path of gang involvement, crime, poverty, and homelessness.

As a consequence of the risks and challenges individual youths bear, society as a whole is vulnerable to losing the capacity and value of these individuals. Not to mention the increased costs to society for providing life-long social supports to individuals who become incarcerated or dependent on social support systems.

At iHuman, youth deconstruct the labels placed upon them by society and develop a new, positive, sense of identity through artistic expression. Founded by two artists in 1997, iHuman provides space, supplies, and mentorship for youth. Programs include music, fashion, art and design, dance and drama, and written word. These creative outlets provides youth with opportunities to create representations of their lived experiences, building their self-knowledge and trust in the process.

The experience of exploring identity through art builds resilience and supports

youth to create new, workable life paths that resonate with individuals' emerging sense of self-awareness and personal goals. iHuman Executive Director Catherine Broomfield writes, "Exploring binary factors such as 'what I am' and 'where I want to be' or their 'good side' and their 'dark side' in mediums that resonate with the youth allows them to truly explore their individuality. In discovering who they are, a youth discovers that they can express openly issues and pain that otherwise has no outlets to be vented safely."



*Photo by Marjan Hols*

In addition to art programs, iHuman also provides a variety of supportive outreach services to youth accessing the agency's art programs. Youth can access a variety of services provided directly through the agency or through partner organizations to meet their immediate needs for shelter, food, clothes, child care, and more.

Several outreach workers are employed at iHuman, working one-on-one with each youth to facilitate connections and provide seamless system navigation and advocacy. iHuman also runs programs, like Woven Journey, to provide targeted assistance and encouragement for specific groups, like new mothers.

iHuman was recently recognized for their High Risk Youth Uncensored program through receipt of a 2011 Gold Laurel Award from law firm, Duncan and Craig, which seeks to raise the profile of innovative

A portrait of a young woman with dark skin and braided hair, wearing a purple top, leaning against a red brick wall and looking over her shoulder at the camera.

*Photo by Diyosa Carter*

The organization works with approximately 500 youth aged 12 to 24 each year. Between 90 and 95 per cent of these clients are from Aboriginal backgrounds; and many have been referred by an aunt, a sister, a cousin, or other relation, who themselves benefited from iHuman's program. Referrals also come from the court, probation officers and other professionals or social service agencies.

In some ways iHuman's approach is to take on a role similar to that of a family, providing a safe, stable, neutral environment that nurtures each individual to better understand themselves through creativity. iHuman helps equip clients with the self-understanding to take control of their lives and make deliberate choices about their futures.

Success for iHuman's clients depends on each individual's goals and strengths, and does not necessarily entail becoming an established artist. Some youth have achieved high levels of advanced education and professional success, including international recognition for excellence in

their fields of study. Others have established leadership roles within the community, working to address local social problems that they were affected by. For others, success is about meeting personal short-term goals, such as staying clean and sober for a period of time or living independently.

Based on provincial data and the high birthrate in Aboriginal communities, iHuman projects that over half of Edmonton's youth population will be from Aboriginal backgrounds within the next five to 10 years. This trend is expected to increase the demand for iHuman's services significantly.

Currently, iHuman's studio space is housed in a temporary location in Edmonton's downtown east side. Broomfield envisions a larger, permanent facility that can meet growing demand as well as providing a more stable environment for clients. Location permanence, notes Broomfield, is critical to providing an environment conducive to building trust.

iHuman is a key part of Edmonton's social safety net. It is often the shelter of last resort for clients with no other options, but it is far from the bottom of the barrel. Rather, iHuman intentionally creates an atmosphere to attract youth with the highest needs and - in many cases - the greatest potential. Through its culture of openness and acceptance, hundreds of Edmonton's youth have found a place to call home, and new ways of relating constructively to mainstream society and the broader community in order to meet their personal goals.

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### Additional Resource

Canadian Journal of Family and Youth, 4(1), 2012, pp 29-51  
ISSN 1718-9748 © University of Alberta  
<http://journals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/cjfy>

No Safe Place to Go  
LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in Canada: Reviewing the Literature

Deena Alex Abramovich

## Abstract

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population in North America. This review brings together the literature on the topic of LGBTQ youth homelessness and provides a comprehensive overview of the unique needs of this population, as well as gaps and barriers to support. The review culminates in recommendations for support services and further research on this topic. This review should be particularly useful for youth shelter and service providers, and policy makers to respond to the needs of this population and to enhance knowledge in this area more broadly.

Zina Alani, *Associate Professor and Graduate Studies with the Department of Adult Education and Community Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto*. Alex's research focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, and queer (LGBTQ) youth homelessness and investigating the changes that need to be implemented in Toronto's shelter system in order for it to become viable, more inclusive, and more supportive. Alex's research also includes the role of youth shelters, youth centers, youth clubs, gender studies, and teaching traditional ways of thinking about gender and sexuality. Methodologically, Alex is interested in the use of critical pedagogical, participatory research, and youth participatory action research, including the use of digital technologies in research. Alex's website is: [www.zinaaloni.com](http://www.zinaaloni.com). Publications: (1) Alomarch, L.A., Repas, S., Widdows-O'Brien, A., Baker, L., Daoust, D., Rasmussen, S. (2010) Translating Collaborative Knowledge into Practice: Findings from a national research study. *Journal of Translational Research*, 1(1), 1-10. (2) Goldfarb, J., Alomarch, L.A., Teyssie, B., Murphy, J., Repas, S., Rasmussen, S. (2010) The Development of an Electronic Department as a Colloquy Clinic. *Clinic: Computers, Information, Nursing*

29

*No Safe Place to Go: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in Canada: Reviewing the Literature.*

Written by Ilona Alex  
Abramovich. 2012.

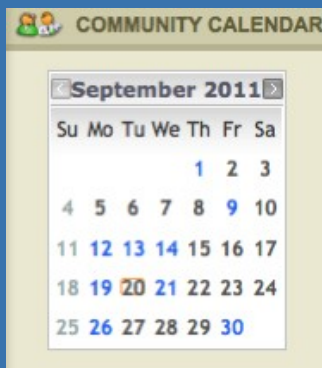
Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/  
documents/March2012/no-  
safe-place-to-go.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/March2012/no-safe-place-to-go.pdf)



## Want to check out more community events?

Visit our website at [edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca) and navigate our **Community Calendar** to see future events in the Edmonton community:

- Awareness Events
- Conferences
- Fundraisers
- ESPC Board Meetings
- ESPC Events
- Publication Releases
- Workshops



# ESPC Organization Members

The strength and effectiveness of the Edmonton Social Planning Council is based on the support of citizens and organizations who are concerned about social issues and aim to help those who are most vulnerable in our society. Featured below are a few of the ESPC's organization members. Each organization make valuable contributions to Edmonton and are important strands that are woven into our local social safety net.

## Bissell Centre

[www.bissellcentre.org](http://www.bissellcentre.org)



**Bissell Centre**  
Where hope finds help.

*Mission Statement:* Working with others, we empower people to move from poverty to prosperity.

*Vision:* We exist to eliminate poverty in our community.

## Boyle Street Community Services

[www.boylestreet.org](http://www.boylestreet.org)



**Boyle Street  
Community Services**

*Mission Statement:* The mission of the Boyle Street Community Services is to build and provide community support for people with multiple barriers to community inclusion.

*Vision:* All people growing healthier through involvement in strong, accepting, and respectful communities.

## Edmonton Food Bank

[www.edmontonfoodbank.com](http://www.edmontonfoodbank.com)



*Mission Statement:* To be stewards in the collection of surplus and donated food for the effective distribution, free of charge, to people in need in our community while seeking solutions to the causes of hunger.

*Vision:* The Edmonton Gleaners Association envisions a community where all citizens have access to an adequate and nutritious supply of food.

## Homeward Trust Edmonton

[www.homewardtrust.ca](http://www.homewardtrust.ca)



**homeward trust  
edmonton**

opening doors. building hope.

Homeward Trust Edmonton is a not for profit organization that uses a community-based approach toward the goal of ending homelessness in Edmonton. Working within the guidelines of the Government of Alberta's - *A Plan for Alberta* and the City of

Edmonton's - *A Place to Call Home*; Homeward Trust Edmonton strives towards the goal of ending homelessness in Edmonton.



**John Howard Society**  
www.johnhoward.org



*Mission Statement:* Through our programs and services, we work to prevent crime and to help people affected by crime.

*Vision:* "Safety and Harmony in our Community"

We work with people to eradicate the root causes of crime so we can build a safe, healthy community through:

- promoting an awareness of the problem of crime and its impact on society
- encouraging greater responsibility within the community for crime prevention, and
- providing services to people who are, or have the potential to be, in conflict with the law or who have been victims of crime.

**SAGE**  
www.mysage.ca



*Mission Statement:* To enhance the quality of life of older persons through service, innovation, advocacy and volunteerism.

*Vision:* Sage is a vibrant and dynamic organization that encourages older persons in Edmonton and area to participate in a caring community where they enjoy optimal physical, mental, social, spiritual and environmental well-being.

**Seniors Coordinating Council**  
www.seniorscouncil.net



*Mission Statement:*

To enhance the capacity of organizations that provide social support services to seniors through facilitating collaboration and resource sharing.

*Vision:* Through the work of the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, organizations that provide

services to seniors have enhanced capacity and work collaboratively to provide effective, accessible services to meet diverse needs of seniors in Edmonton.

**Terra Centre**  
www.terracentre.ca



*Mission Statement:* Empowering Teen Parents to Succeed

*Vision:* Promising Futures with New Possibilities



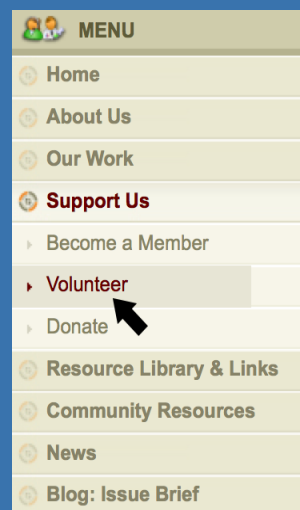
## Want to volunteer for the ESPC?

Get involved with some of our existing and new volunteer opportunities!

We are looking for people who can:

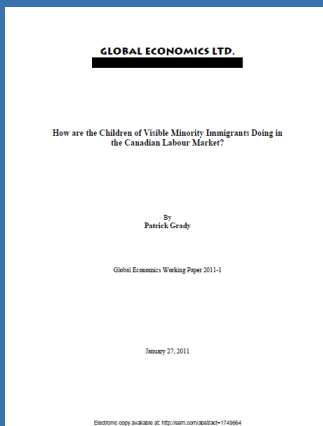
- research and / or write reviews
- help in the community
- serve on the board
- plan events / fundraise

For more information, visit [edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca) and fill out our volunteer application form (under the **Support Us** menu).





## Additional Resource



*How Are the Children of Visible Minority Immigrants Doing in the Canadian Labour Market?*

Published by Global Economics Ltd. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/  
documents/February2011/  
children\\_visible\\_minority.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/February2011/children_visible_minority.pdf)

# Islamic Family Social Services Association

By Lubna Umar Sami , Volunteer Writer



Photo by Local 888 SEIU

## History

In 1992, the Islamic Family Social Services Association was established as a registered charitable organization after some dedicated community members came to the realization that many unskilled, low income and refugee status immigrants were having difficulty satisfying their needs for food, clothing and household items. They also found that this cross-section of the community needs guidance and counselling for various issues that arise because of poverty and living in a culture that is different from their own. IFSSA started a program that aimed to meet both the physical and emotional needs of the community. Under this program it started providing food, clothing and household items free of cost to needy immigrants and counselling via a registered clinical psychology counsellor.

After identifying the need to help immigrant youth develop and to reduce family violence in immigrant communities, IFSSA started the Youth Development and Parental Education program in 2002 and the Fostering Healthy Families program in 2009. Currently, IFSSA is managed by twelve volunteer board members, four paid staff, and many dedicated volunteers.

IFSSA's vision is to help foster and support Muslim families and seeks out to meet the basic physical and emotional needs of the community within an Islamic context (Islamic Family Social Services Association,

2012). It offers several programs that serve the Edmonton Muslim community:

## Essential Needs Program (Food Bank, Clothing and Household Items)

Muslims must observe specific dietary criterion. As a result, Muslims need to be concerned about the food they eat and how it is prepared. For instance, meat products must be slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines and food must be free of alcohol and pork products and by products. Food that is prepared following these guidelines is considered to be Halal. The fact that there wasn't a Halal food bank in Edmonton was a major reason why the IFSSA was established. It is the only social service organization in the city of Edmonton that provides a completely Halal food bank for all of its clients. IFSSA offers its food bank services to anyone who is in need regardless of religion, race or gender affiliation.

The association's Food bank service is provided by a client services administrator and program chair. This is a community sponsored program that is entirely dependent on community donations and volunteering. In addition to regular food hampers, IFSSA also provides special supplements and Eid-ul-Fitr Celebration gift cards during the month of Ramadan.

In 2010-2011 this program provided 1176 food hampers and special supplements to 275 needy families. 175 families were given Eid Celebration gift cards to celebrate and enjoy the event.

Clothing and household items are also donated by community members. It includes both new and slightly used good conditioned items.

## Fostering Healthy Families (FHF) Program

In 2009, Government of Alberta's Safe Community Initiative program funded IFSSA to develop the Fostering Healthy Families program to prevent and support victims of

family violence in the immigrant community of Edmonton. Currently program has two trained and competent paid staff and six volunteers to deliver the required services. Staff and volunteers are committed to meeting the needs of the community in an efficient and culturally sensitive manner. Services under this program include:

#### *Family Violence Education*

This program conducts at least two big educational events on family violence in a year. In addition to face to face prevention and intervention education it also arranges different workshops by a registered clinical psychologist on different topics of family violence. In November 2010, an educational event "No Peace in the Home, No Peace in the Heart" was held at the University of Alberta. Over thirty participants attended this educational program.

#### *Monthly Serenity Support Group/Sisters Helping Sisters*

This monthly support group for the victims of family violence is conducted by a registered social worker with the collaboration of The Today Family Violence Help Centre. The uniqueness of this group is not only to empower the participants to deal with their challenging situations bravely but also to network and support each other. From July 2010 to March 2011, sixty five people attended the group. Participants increased their knowledge about issues relating to family violence, types of abuse, cycle of abuse, self-care, and safety planning.

#### *Counselling Services*

FHF program also provides a subsidized counselling program for the victims of family violence. Since the start of the program, 19 families have enjoyed therapy facilitation by a registered clinical psychologist.

#### *Transportation and Essential Needs Services*

Essential Needs services are provided through Essential Need Program of IFSSA. Transportation is also provided in case of need either by taxi or FHF's reliable volunteers. During 2010 and 2011 it provided transportation to 144 clients for

different types of appointments.

#### *Referral Services*

FHF program provides client needs appropriate referrals to family violence victims. Outreach worker accompanies clients for their appointments to various needed community serving agencies and advocates on behalf of the clients. From March 2010 to March-2011, this program served 771 families, 1004 adults, 1471 children (0 to 12 years), and youth (13 to 17 years).



*Photo by Jim Boud*

#### **Youth Development and Parenting Education Program**

This program started in 2002. It provides services to the youth in the Islamic community through the following programs.

##### *Homework Club*

Homework club is provided in collaboration with Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers at Saint Francis School from 3:00 to 4:30 every Monday.

##### *Female Identity*

This program is provided at J. Percy Page High School from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm every Wednesday. It provides information about teen violence and other teens relevant topics.

##### *Parenting*

This program is provided by a registered clinical psychologist on every other Friday at MAC Rahma Mosque (6102-172 Street) for two hours after sunset. Everyone is invited to attend this session. Next two sessions will be on May 25 and June 8, 2012.



#### **Additional Resource**

##### **WORKING PAPER SERIES**

**What do we know about immigrant seniors aging in Canada?  
A demographic, socio-economic and health profile**

Edward Ng, PhD  
Daniel W.L. Lai, PhD, RSW  
Aliza T. Rudner, MBA, MPR, and Heather Oquias, PhD

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CERIS - The Ontario Metropolitan Centre

*What Do We Know About Immigrant Seniors Aging in Canada? A Demographic, Socio-Economic, and Health Profile.*

Written by Edward Ng, Daniel W.L. Lai, and Aliza T. Rudner. 2012.

Available at:  
[www.ceris.metropolis.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf/research\\_publication/working\\_papers/wp88E.pdf](http://www.ceris.metropolis.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf/research_publication/working_papers/wp88E.pdf)





# You Tube

Visit our YouTube Channel to view past Lunch and Learn talks and speeches made by the ESPC.

[www.youtube.com/edmontonspc](http://www.youtube.com/edmontonspc)

# flickr

All of ESPC's events are archived on our photostream at [www.flickr.com/photos/edmontonsocialplanning](http://www.flickr.com/photos/edmontonsocialplanning)

## Islamic Family Social Services Association, continued from page 17

### Mothers Group



Photo by the Islamic Family Social Services Association

Its sessions are also held at MAC Rahma Mosque located at 6102-172 St on Wednesdays every week for six weeks from 9:00 am to 10:00 am. Sessions are facilitated by a provisional psychologist. Anyone who wants to attend is invited.

### Male Mentorship

This program is for male youth (ages 12+) at Common Wealth Stadium every Sunday from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. This program provides teenagers an opportunity to network, build friendship, play different games, peer leadership talks and other activities. This is drop in program.

### What makes this agency different from others?

All of its services are culturally sensitive provided by culturally competent staff or volunteer. Confidentiality of clients is maintained at all levels and especially for Essential Needs program.

It works through close relationship with the community members. Knowing community well enables the service providers to assess the needs easily and be able to provide better services. All of IFSSA's programs are designed around not only the community needs but the way community operates itself.

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Islamic Family Social Services Edmonton. (2012). "About Us." Retrieved from [www.ifssa.ca/about/](http://www.ifssa.ca/about/)



**edmonton**  
SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL

Looking for research assistance?

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides **FREE** research services to social advocacy organizations in Edmonton! Are you seeking publications or statistics in social policy areas such as:

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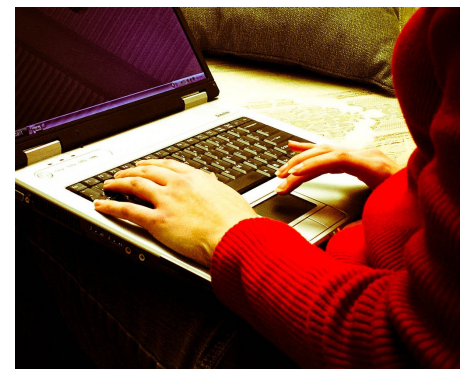
**Transportation**

**Poverty**

**Disabilities**

**Seniors**

**Etc.**



If you or your organization needs a hand finding information about local social issues or related topics, feel free to contact our Resource Coordinator Stephen MacDonald by phone at 780.423.2031 ext. 354 or by email at [stephenm@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:stephenm@edmontonsocialplanning.ca). Or, submit a research question to us using our Research Inquiries form. To access the form, please visit <http://goo.gl/7b6VH>.



# CARE WITH FLAIR

## FALL FASHION SHOW

Sunday, 16 September 2012  
EPCOR Tower 10423 - 101 Street  
Doors open 1:30 pm  
Program begins 2:00 pm.  
Tickets \$25  
Members \$20

The **Edmonton Social Planning Council** will be hosting a fall fashion show fundraiser. Design wear will be selected from **D'lutchi Fashion** (11237 Jasper Avenue) and to be modelled by representatives from the following agencies: Bissell Centre, Boyle Street Community Services, Homeward Trust, REACH Edmonton, and the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Tickets can be purchased through the Edmonton Social Planning Council in August.

Please contact Sabrina Sperber regarding tickets, auction items, or sponsorship by calling 780.423.2031 or email [sabrinasp@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:sabrinasp@edmontonsocialplanning.ca).



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## Additional Resource



*Hunger Count 2011.*

Published by Food Banks Canada. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threeource.ca/  
documents/November2011/  
HungerCount-2011-web-print-  
friendly.pdf](http://www.threeource.ca/documents/November2011/HungerCount-2011-web-print-friendly.pdf)

# Edmonton's Food Bank

*By Adrian Pook, Volunteer Writer*



*Photo by the Edmonton Food Bank*

My worst eating habit is snacking more often than I should. Without thinking, I'll grab something to eat before sitting down at my desk and nibble mindlessly while doing something else, like writing this article. I know I'm not the only one with this tendency. You might also share this habit, and maybe you're even eating while you're reading this article. If not, then I admire - and slightly envy - your restraint.

What separates snacking from eating is the purpose and usefulness of these acts. While food is a necessary part of life, snack food goes beyond being a source of nutrition. Snacking is more like a leisurely activity or form of entertainment. It implies a surplus of food: if you aren't eating for the nutritional value, then the requirement must have already been met. It hardly seems fair that so many of us would have more food than we need, while others struggle to keep their kitchen stocked. Whatever the case, we can all relate to feeling hungry.

Now, can you imagine feeling hungry, without knowing when you will eat your next meal, or where you will be eating it? Unfortunately, too many Canadians struggle with this reality. Food Banks Canada (2011) claims that Canadian food banks have been assisting over 700,000 separate individuals in Canada per month for most of the last decade (Food Banks Canada, 2, 2011).

In Edmonton, a group actively involved in the community decided to make food more accessible to individuals that struggle to access nutritious meals. They realized if they could connect those with extra food to

those with little food, then the effects of hunger in their community could be substantially reduced. Thus beginning the Edmonton Food Bank (EFB), originally the Edmonton Gleaners Association, on January 16th 1981; the first of its kind in Canada.

The EFB operates by collecting food donations and distributing them to 190 organizations throughout Edmonton. They include social agencies, churches, food depots, emergency shelters and soup kitchens that give food directly to those who need it most.

It is no small effort to feed those unable to provide for themselves. The role of the EFB is a demanding one, and they are regularly recognized for going above and beyond in meeting these demands. In 2011, the EFB was awarded a Human Rights Award from the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights.

Marjorie Bencz, the Executive Director, offered her own insights into what makes the food bank such a successful service provider:

"...you have to be collaborative and inclusive. And when we're working with 190 agencies, we're hoping we can take the best of everyone's programming and work towards some goals that reduce the effects of poverty in our community."

Their primary focus is on helping the community of Edmonton. Only with the support of the community could the EFB achieve its results. Receiving no government funding whatsoever, the organization is entirely dependent on donations and their loyal volunteers to facilitate the distribution of food to organizations in the city.

A huge component of the organization is filled by volunteers. In just about every facet of the operation, there is a role for a volunteer to take on. Volunteers could be doing anything from directly assisting the clients by providing information about the emergency food services available, to



managing any number of warehouse activities like sorting food and assembling hampers, or representing the EFB at various special events to raise-funds and awareness.



Photo by Chiricahua Sky Island

The EFB staff and volunteers are always working tirelessly, and there's no indication they will have a chance to slowdown any time soon. Every single month, 15 000 Edmonton citizens are given hampers, as well as over 300 000 meals through various affiliates. While there has been a recent 1 per cent decline in the number of Albertans that access the food bank, that number is still nearly 75 per cent higher than it was in 2008 as our economy was in a recession (Food Banks Canada, 2011).

Since opening its doors over thirty years ago, the number of Edmontonians that have been helped by the EFB is enormous. It also appears that there will be many more to

come. Despite the magnitude of work that still needs to be done, and help that still needs to be given, you can't help but feel optimistic about the future for Edmonton. With organizations like the EFB doing everything they can to help the less-fortunate among us, it isn't hard to imagine what the positive effects will be on the community.

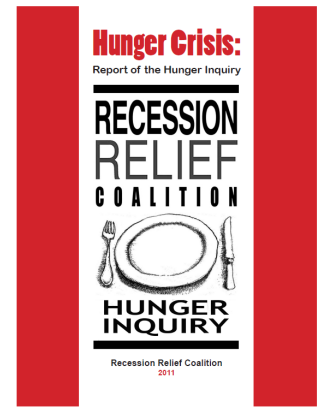
It's possible that someday, there won't be a need for a food bank in Edmonton. The only way for us to reach that goal will be through sustained community support for the EFB and its 190 organizations. If you share the same enthusiasm for making a tangible difference in your community, you can in a number of ways: by giving whatever food you can spare, or time to help out. I plan on it, or at the very least, feeling very guilty the next time I help myself to a snack I don't need.

#### Works Cited

Food Banks Canada (2011). *Hunger Count 2011*. Retrieved from [www.threesource.ca/documents/November2011/HungerCount-2011-web-print-friendly.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/November2011/HungerCount-2011-web-print-friendly.pdf)



#### Additional Resource



*Hunger Crisis: Report of the Hunger Inquiry.*

Published by the Recession Relief Coalition. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/documents/March2011/hunger\\_crisis.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/March2011/hunger_crisis.pdf)

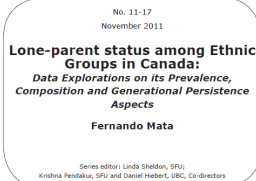
## ESPC Board Member Profile: Vasant Chotai



Vasant Chotai pursued Dip. Teach, BA (Hon) in psychology and MPI (Queen's) in planning, and has 29 years of experience with the Government of Alberta and 2 years with Nairobi High School. Vasant was a senior manager and Director of Social Policy with Alberta Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Industry. His major initiatives included social policy framework, cross-ministry coordination on social programs and supports, and an advisory committee consisting of community leaders, businesses, academics and senior government officials. He was appointed policy expert to the Committee of Members of Legislative Assembly to review low income programs that developed the new model for supports to low income Albertans, crossing program and ministerial boundaries. Since retirement, Vasant has a private consulting business; and he also sits on the Board of Directors for the Edmonton Social Planning Council; Christmas Bureau; Vibrant Communities Edmonton; and the Quality of Life Commission.



## Additional Resource



*Lone Parent Status Among Ethnic Groups in Canada: Data Explorations on its Prevalence, Composition, and Generational Persistence Aspects.*

Written by Fernando Mata. 2011.

Available at:  
[www.threesource.ca/documents/November2011/Lone-parent-status-ethnic-groups-Canada.pdf](http://www.threesource.ca/documents/November2011/Lone-parent-status-ethnic-groups-Canada.pdf)

# Terra Centre: Aiding Young Parents

By Brittany Christiani, Grant MacEwan Social Work Practicum Student



terra centre

The Terra Centre is a not-for-profit organization in Edmonton that assists teenagers who are pregnant or parenting. The organization was established in 1971, with the mission of empowering teen parents to succeed and the vision that pregnant and parenting teens will be successful individuals raising healthy, resilient children. Terra “supports and encourages teen moms and dads to recognize their potential as nurturing parents and successful members of the community,” (Terra Association, 2012). The organization serves young women up to age nineteen and men up to twenty four years old who are raising children or are pregnant.



Photo by Jo Witka

The Terra Centre values a good work-life balance by encouraging its teenage clients to achieve their educational goals, while still

being able to successfully raise their young family. They have partnered with Braemar School in Edmonton to educate pregnant and parenting teens exclusively, while also providing on-site childcare in order to give them time to attend classes and study. The childcare centre offers individual and group parenting information and support, along with assistance in accessing funding to help the teens with their child care fees.

Another helpful service Terra provides is supportive housing for their clients through their projects Hope Terrace, Braemar House, and Housing Works. Hope Terrace offers thirteen suites for up to three years to those who face the different adversities that comes along with living independently at a young age. What makes this project unique is that “a full time Family Housing Worker is on site at Hope Terrace to provide tenants with one on one support, focused goal planning, group programming and access to community resources” (Terra Association, 2012). This provides their teenage clients with the support they need to grow as independent individuals and be successful as parents and as part of their community. Housing Works also partners with Capital Region Housing and its teen-parent tenants to support them “in setting goals, overcoming barriers to employment and education and planning for the future” (Terra Association, 2012).

The Terra Centre offers a variety of group supports and classes that provide young parents with information and opportunities to learn skills that are required to raise a child. They include prenatal classes supported by a public health nurse, and support groups that teach them how to take on parental responsibilities and maintain their own social network. As well, Terra offers individual support with relationship issues, advocacy and social support, free baby and infant clothing through the local clothing donation program Klothes Kloset, parenting education, in-home parenting support, assistance in securing child care and financial support, and referrals to other

community agencies or health centres if needed. One program in particular, called the Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program, focuses on working with teens to develop healthy parenting skills in the areas of body, behavior, mind and safety and positive discipline. This program is not specific to Terra clients only; it is open to the community on a voluntary basis. Nobody's Perfect runs a span of eight weeks which consists of two hour sessions with a meal provided; clients will receive a certificate from the program after attending six sessions.



*Photo by Amanda Baker*

According to Lindsay Sylvester, Terra Centre's communications coordinator, it is important for Edmontonians to know that in addition to serving pregnant and parenting mothers, the agency also serves parenting fathers as well as men that are about to become parents (Sylvester, 2012). The services for young fathers include personal support, individual or group supports on developing parental skills, monthly group activities, advocating issues, community resource referrals and a drop-in resource centre. These services offered to new and soon-to-be teenage fathers could help teach them how to play an active role in parenting their child.

Although they have a sister organization at the Louise Dean School in Calgary, Terra Centre is the only organization dedicated

solely to the success of teen parenting in Edmonton. This, as Lindsay mentions, has advantages and disadvantages in that they can differentiate themselves from other organizations for funding, but there is a large demand for their services in which the centre can only accommodate so many at a time. (Sylvester, 2012). However, Lindsay stressed that the teens on wait lists are not forgotten, giving them access to emergency items such as diapers and bus tickets to help teen parents as much as they can.

Terra is currently in year two of a program titled the Teen Parent Service Network. This program allows for joint work between the different agencies around Edmonton and Terra Centre in order to better serve teen parents. The center is also planning on strengthening their Peers Educating Peers program, which creates opportunities for clients of the Terra Center to educate teens about the adversities of becoming parents at a young age, such as giving presentations in high schools around Edmonton. The program has been successful thus far, and Terra Center hopes to make the program even more client-driven in order to empower their teens.

Terra Centre is a strong organization that is making great strides in Edmonton, helping teens reach their goals and develop healthy parenting techniques. They are located at 9930 106 Street Northwest, Edmonton, AB and can be reached at (780) 428 -3772. For more information on the services Terra Centre provides, or to find out how to volunteer with Terra, you can visit their website at <http://terracentre.ca>.

### Works Cited

- Sylvester, L. (2012, April 4). Communications Coordinator at Terra Centre. (B. Christiani, Interviewer).
- Terra Association. (2012, March 26). "Terra Centre." Retrieved from [www.terracentre.ca](http://www.terracentre.ca)



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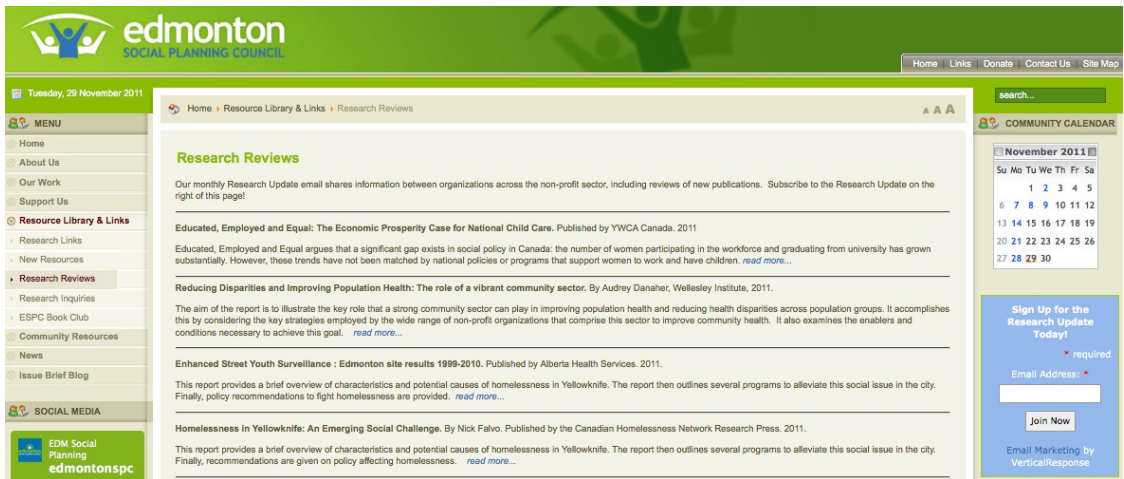
# edmonton

SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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