

# “EVERYTHING STARTS WITH HAVING A PLACE TO CALL HOME”

*Pursuing Justice: Bilateral Interactions Among the Criminal Justice and Housing Sectors for Preventing Youth Homelessness*

Jessica Braimoh, York University  
Erin Dej, Wilfrid Laurier University  
Anita Desai, St. Leonard’s Society of Canada

January 2025



MAKING  
THE SHIFT<sup>INC</sup>

Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab

# RESEARCH TEAM

## Team Leads

- Erin Dej, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Anita Desai, St. Leonard's Society of Canada
- Jessica Braimoh, York University

## Regional Coordinators

- Tim Veresh, Plea Community Services
- Deborah Nowakowski, Calgary John Howard Society
- Kelly Nolan, St. Leonard's Community Services, Prevention, and Residential Services
- Lucretia Brown, John Howard Society of Newfoundland and Labrador

## Youth Advisory Team

- Neo Ferguson, Prairies
- Fialka Wolfblade, BC
- Ethan Woodcock, Ontario
- *Anonymous, Atlantic Region*

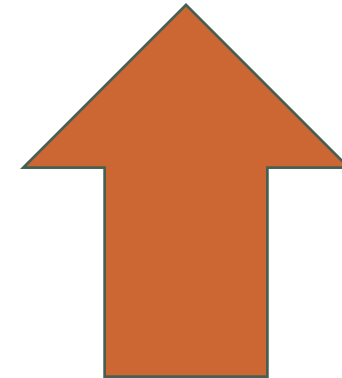
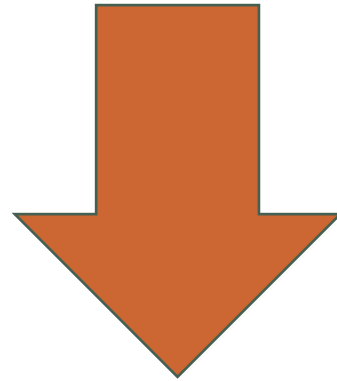
## Research Assistants

- Vic Kaulback
- Ebru Asik
- Emilie Nhan
- Allison Cooney
- Megan Giovannini
- Amanda Potvin



# BI-DIRECTIONAL RELATIONSHIP

How the **youth justice system** can reduce discharge into homelessness



How the **youth homelessness sector** can support exits from homelessness to prevent youth from involvement in the justice system.

# WHAT WE DID

## Survey

n= 73

Identify mutual  
vulnerability  
points across  
sectors

## Roundtable 1

n= 69

Identify  
strategic  
problem areas

## Roundtable 2

n= 36

Solutioning  
exercise

## Final Report

14 Solutions

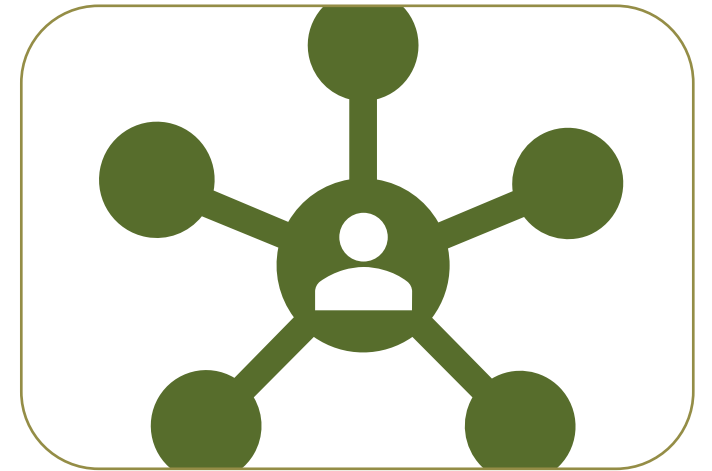
# STRATEGIC PROBLEM AREAS (SPAs)



1. Service Eligibility &  
Access

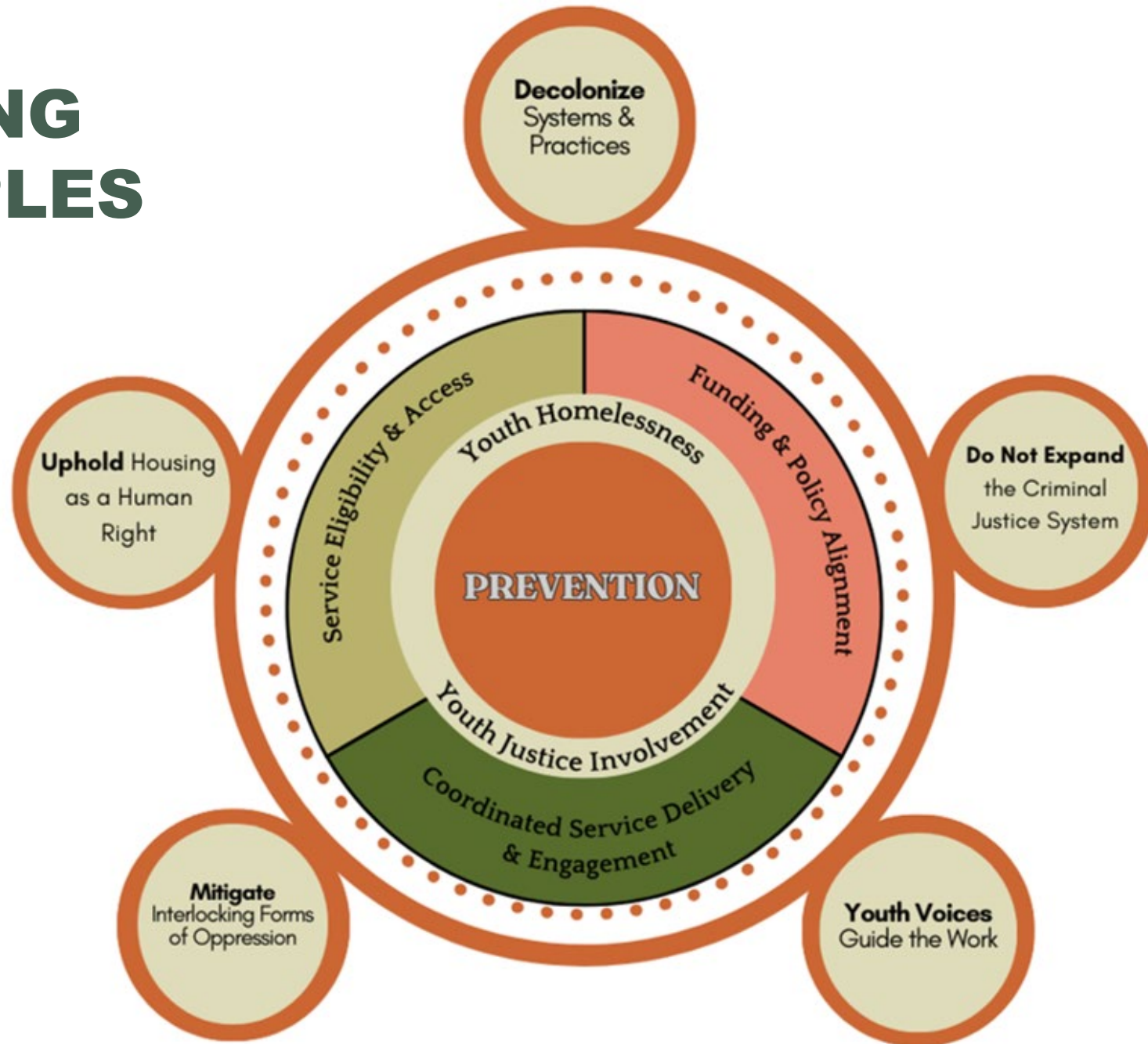


2. Policy and Funding  
Alignment



3. Coordinated Service  
Delivery & Engagement

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES



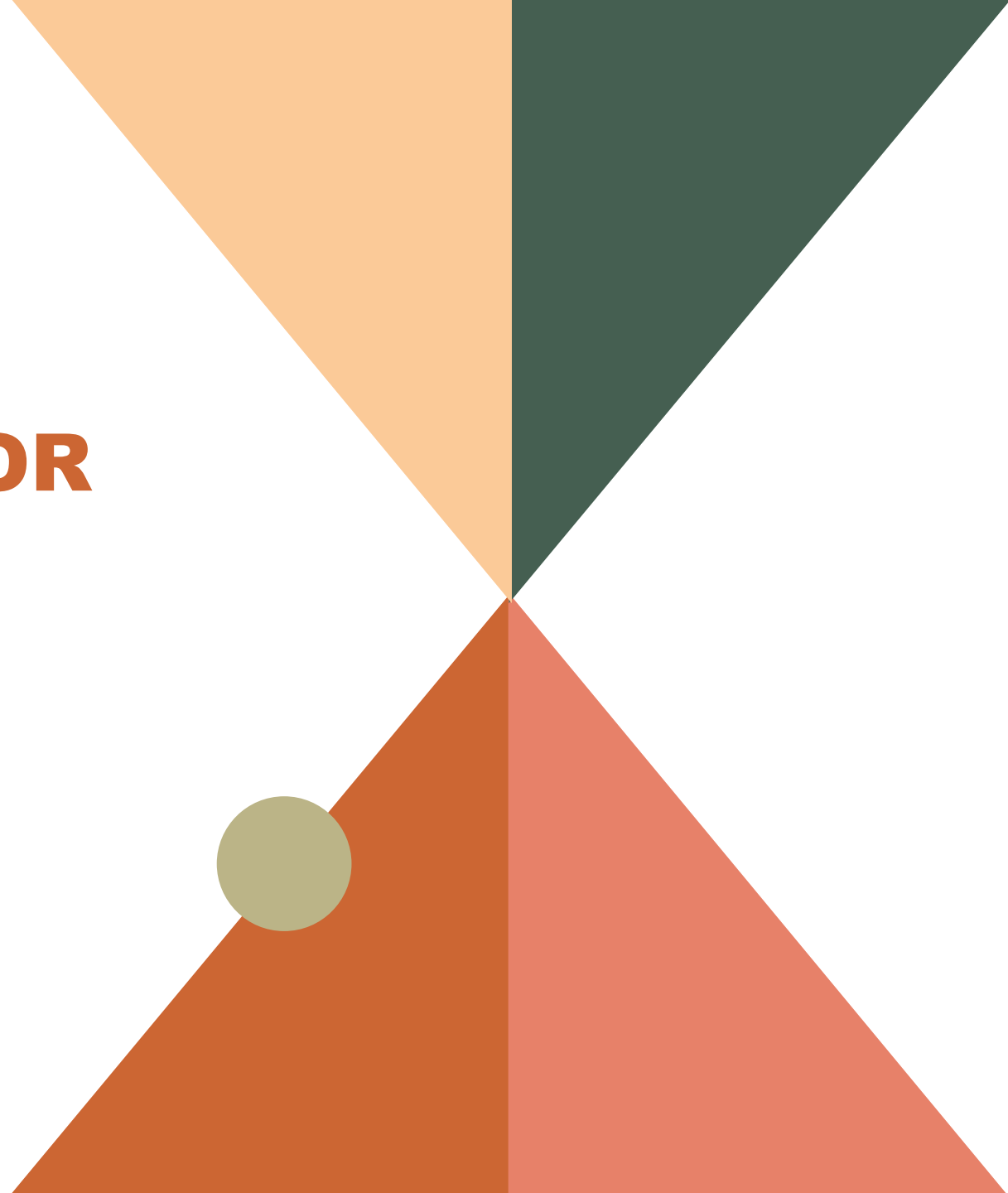
# **SOLUTIONS**

## **AND PATHWAYS FOR**

### **CHANGEMAKERS**



bitly



# SERVICE ELIGIBILITY & ACCESS

1. Establish more mechanisms to enable early and comprehensive discharge planning from youth justice
2. Empower service providers to respond with urgency
3. Establish a consistent definition of youth across sectors
4. Enhance access to services in rural areas

*Some people just need a little help to help them push further in the world and become successful and contribute to society. But everything starts with having a place to call home.... People can't even get that then what's the point of anything?*

*– Ethan (Youth Advisor)*

# FUNDING & POLICY ALIGNMENT

5. Increase discretionary funding, flexibility in eligibility
6. Pay and train staff better
7. Build cross-sectoral community collaboration
8. Structure funding frameworks to evaluate success from a youth-centered lens
9. Cross jurisdictional collaboration between provincial/territorial and federal ministries
10. Indigenous autonomy and equity over funding

*What needs to be done? ...I would say having more formal funding set in place with less harsh deadlines, and more funding for the people doing the work. Because if someone's working 8 hours of their day helping kids – and sometimes with serious issues – and then they get less than living wage for a lot of [youth services]*

*– Neo (Youth Advisor)*

# COORDINATED SERVICE DELIVERY & ENGAGEMENT

11. Culturally appropriate services
12. Streamline practices to reduce complexities of navigating multiple systems
13. Build attachment to community and natural supports
14. Prioritize individualized plans for youth – one size fits none

*“As much as housing is important, it's also important to take care of their traumas and addiction and much more.”*

*– Osean (Youth Advisor)*

# QUESTIONS?

[edej@wlu.ca](mailto:edej@wlu.ca)

[anita@stleonards.ca](mailto:anita@stleonards.ca)

[jbraimoh@yorku.ca](mailto:jbraimoh@yorku.ca)

**ACCESS THE REPORT  
& HANDOUTS AT:**

**[BIT.LY/MTS2025](https://bit.ly/MTS2025)**

