



GOOD NEIGHBOUR PLAN

Summer 2021





About YESS

Based in Edmonton, Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS) provides immediate and low-barrier 24/7 shelter, a drop-in resource centre, temporary supportive housing, temporary independent cohort housing, and individualized wrap-around supports for young people aged 15–24. We work collaboratively within a network of care focused on the prevention of youth homelessness by providing youth with the necessary supports to stabilize their housing, improve their wellbeing, build life skills, connect with community, and avoid re-entry into homelessness.

Why does YESS exist?

Youth Homelessness in Edmonton

In 2019, YESS served a total of 800 young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Most of these young people do not choose or wish to be homeless. They are the result of societal failures to adequately provide these young people and their families with the necessary supports to maintain basic needs, provide healthy and positive parenting, and build positive relational and emotional brain development. Not only is the sustained experience of homelessness itself often negative, unhealthy, unsafe, traumatizing, and stressful, [citation], but most young people at YESS have experienced deeply disturbing adverse childhood experiences such as family rejection, abandonment and abuse, sexual trafficking and exploitation, inadequate social services and institutional erasure, as well as violence and discrimination from racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

The Cycle of Unaddressed trauma

It is our belief that if these traumatic experiences are left unaddressed, they will mostly likely create the cyclic barriers to healing and moving forward with their lives positively in community. Some of these barriers and results include addiction, mental illness, abuse, and criminal involvement. YESS has re-organized its structure and processes to be trauma-informed, created an internal trauma and mental health psychology team called the Wellness Integration Team, and has created an evaluation framework to help youth identify what life skills they still need to develop and where they are in their healing journey.

It is our belief, that if we give youth the safe space, consistent and non-judgemental support and teaching, and the time to choose their own path to success, we can prevent further entrenchment into the cycles of trauma and homelessness.



Our Programs and Buildings

24/7 Shelter

Our 16-bed 24/7 shelter, **NEXUS**, at our Whyte Avenue head office (9310-82 Avenue NW) gives youth a safe, secure, and immediate place to stay when experiencing homelessness. Since April 2021, our NEXUS shelter is now open for youth 24/7. The Shelter provides beds for sleeping, basic needs like food, clothing, showers and laundry, school supplies, and support from youth workers and counsellors. This is a safe place for all youth with support and access to staff who are trained to deal with diverse client needs. We are LGBTQ2S+ friendly. We have harm reduction minded staff, with suicidal ideation intervention and safety planning. Staff work to build community support connections before youth leave program to ensure supports exist.

Supportive Housing

YESS provides two supportive housing facilities: **Graham's Place**, located at the Whyte Avenue location, and **Shanoa's Place**, located on the west end of Edmonton. For youth who need the stability and support of a longer-term placement than our shelter and direct oversight from staff, our two residences provide a homelike environment while youth work on their goals. Youth in our supportive houses are taught to identify realistic and individualized goals that help them move forward in their journeys towards healing and independence. Our purpose is to walk beside the youth in a more stable environment to help facilitate safe and appropriate community integration.

Daytime Resource Centre

The Armoury Resource Centre (ARC), located at 10310 85 Ave NW, is home to a variety of daytime programs, including medical care, addictions, and mental health counselling, help with continuing education and employment, art therapy and programming, recreational activities, life skills and employment readiness, and help with housing resources and with warrants and navigating the justice system. ARC provide youth with basic needs and shelter from the elements with the support of non-judgemental staff in a safe place to hang out without the fear of loitering or trespassing charges. At ARC, our youth have a safe place to come where they can build, on their own terms, relationships with our staff. Our staff focus is on establishing trust with our youth so that they will see themselves as worthy of care and compassion, building positive relationships with staff that encourage growth and self-confidence.

Pilot Program: Cohort Independent Living

YESS has received funding and approval from Homeward Trust Edmonton to temporarily lease the Hostel International building at 10647 81 Ave NW, Edmonton for one year for the Cohort Independent Living project. Public health guidelines, including physical distancing and mandatory masking, have impacted the capacity of overnight emergency shelters and the accessibility of daytime programming.

This has been especially difficult for vulnerable youth and those experiencing homelessness. In response, YESS has created a **Cohort Independent Living** project where youth can live safely in cohorts and not have to be masked while they access support and work toward permanent housing. This project will allow youth to live in small cohorts of 3, with light 24/7 supervision from youth workers, and to enjoy a more “normal” living situation and socialization. If this project is successful, we will look at finding a more permanent solution.

Referral Process

Youth can be referred to YESS through the Coordinated Youth Response (call 211) or can walk into ARC or NEXUS for support and intake to a program.

Good Neighbour Commitment

YESS is committed to being a good neighbour and working with the surrounding neighbourhoods to share information, address issues and explore opportunities to give back to the community.

YESS Service Standards

- YESS will provide services in an effective, safe, and secure manner.
- The sites will always have trained professionals on-site during hours of operation. Staff have experience working with youth in the homeless serving sector, including in relationship building and de-escalation techniques.
- All individuals undergo a health screening for COVID-19 before entering. One wing of the hostel building will be designated as Tier 1 and 2 isolation and quarantine support so that youth will not have to leave to isolate. Anyone in the isolation wing will not be allowed to leave the premises during their isolation period.
- All buildings have been inspected by EPS, AHS, OHS, and EFD for safety and appropriate operations.

Security and Cleanliness

YESS is committed to maintain high standards of safety and cleanliness for the young people who access our programs and the neighborhoods we live in.

- YESS staff will continually monitor the internal and external environment immediately around the buildings and manage security and clean up at all sites.
- Our premises are monitored by camera and alarmed for rapid EPS and EPFD response if we are unable to de-escalate a situation.



YESS

youth empowerment & support services

- Our partners at Edmonton Police Service are patrolling the area and work with us to ensure the safety of clients and staff, as well as public and business neighbors.
- **In case of a COVID outbreak, YESS will work with Alberta Health Services** to ensure the safety of clients, staff and the broader community. Anyone who tests positive will receive appropriate medical care in our designated isolation space. Information about outbreaks is shared by the Ministry of Health at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.
- All visitors on premises are required to follow AHS and OHS protocols at all time.

Donations

YESS does not take donations directly from the Public. We have agreements with partners such as Bissell, FIND, and the Food Bank to get our items. Please consider supporting our partners and please do not leave donations at our sites. We are actively trying to clean up the items people leave.

Volunteering

YESS currently does not have any volunteer opportunities, given the risk with COVID-19. If you are interested in signing up as a YESS volunteer for when things open back up you can sign up on our [website](#) .



Who to Contact

If you have questions or concerns, please contact us at community@yess.org. We take any concerns raised by our neighbours and business partners very seriously and always endeavour to find mutually agreeable solutions.

The City of Edmonton’s Neighborhood Empowerment Team is also available to support businesses and community members as needed. (Contact: NET@Edmonton.ca)

- Violence or medical emergency **Call 911**
- Camps and ravine living materials; excess garbage on city land **Call or text 311**
- Mental health crisis, extreme weather or basic needs support **Call or text 211**
- YESS issues (moderate to low complaint, such as garbage, noise, loitering) Response time 3-7 days community@yess.org
- Urgent YESS issues (issues with staff, time dependent issues involving YESS youth) Response time 1-3 days community@yess.org or 780-468-7070