

IMPACT REPORT 2021

Real youth.
Real challenges.
Real change.



Covenant
House
Vancouver



YOUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE



170 youth

FOUND AND MAINTAINED EMPLOYMENT



95% of the youth

WHO WORKED WITH OUR CLINICAL COUNSELLORS SHOWED IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR MENTAL HEALTH



406 youth

ACCESSED WARM MEALS, A SAFE PLACE TO REST, AND ONE-SIZE-FITS-ONE SUPPORT IN OUR DROP-IN CENTRE



20 months

THE YOUTH LIVING IN OUR RIGHTS OF PASSAGE PROGRAM STAYED WITH US FOR AN AVERAGE OF 20 MONTHS.



1,740 meals

OUR COOKS LOVINGLY PREPARED AND SERVED MORE THAN 1,740 MEALS PER WEEK



98% of youth

TOLD US THAT COVENANT HOUSE VANCOUVER HAS HELPED THEM

Dear CHV Community,

The past months have been a time of unprecedented change around the world. Life amidst the global Covid-19 pandemic has tested all of us and its effects will have both economic and social impacts for many years to come.

For Covenant House youth, the loss of employment and recreation opportunities coupled with greater stress from social isolation has intensified the already daunting challenges of adolescence. During the past year, youth employment rates have fallen, and CHV youth mental health scores have declined — directly correlating with increased drug use.

These are amongst the pressure points, some the result of Covid-19, that we will monitor for the long-term implications for homeless and at-risk youth.

Covenant House Vancouver has stood strong throughout the pandemic; however, the daily drama unfolding on the downtown streets has meant that frontline staff have been called to support many young people who are struggling with ever more serious mental health concerns and addictions to dangerous drugs. We have shared a case study about Harm Reduction at Covenant House Vancouver in this report so you can learn how we are responding to the Opioid Crisis and supporting youth who are in active addiction.

We are encouraged by the unprecedented amount of support from our generous donor community. It is with gratitude that I note that our fundraising revenue has remained strong, allowing us to provide life-changing services for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The new year will include the opening of our new building at 1280 Seymour Street. The youth, staff, and volunteers are excited about the new building and to use the services that will be available, including a gym, art and music rooms, and a dedicated classroom for education.

“AS WE MOVE INTO 2022 AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, I AM GRATEFUL THAT WE HAVE THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES, TALENT, AND PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS. TOGETHER, WE HAVE SET THE STAGE FOR GREATER CONNECTION AND BRIGHTER FUTURES IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD.”

We are thrilled to be partnering with Foundry for our new health clinic which will reduce barriers for youth seeking medical care. Our Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator has started and has begun staff training to improve our work with sexually exploited and trafficked youth. All these initiatives will supplement our current programs and be invaluable as we welcome young people into our new building.

As we move into 2022 and the challenges ahead for young people, I am grateful that we have the financial resources, talent, and new programs to address their needs.

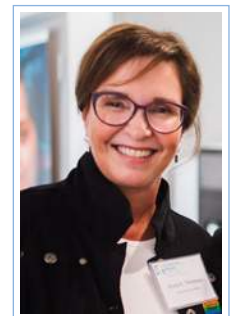
As always, I want to express my deepest appreciation to our donors, board members, partners, volunteers, and staff for their dedication to young people.

Together, we have set the stage so youth can tackle difficult challenges and create real change.

With love and hope,



KRISTA THOMPSON, ICD.D
Chief Executive Officer
Covenant House Vancouver





Our Purpose

COVENANT HOUSE VANCOUVER'S purpose is to serve all youth with absolute respect and unconditional love, to help youth experiencing homelessness, and to protect and safeguard all youth in need. Our goal is to support young people relentlessly as they work to overcome homelessness.

We offer a continuum of services using evidence-informed theories and practices that ensure they care for the entire person — mind, body, and spirit. Services range from outreach and drop-in to housing and support services that enable youth to transition into independence successfully.

CHV uses a one-size-fits-one approach, tailored to the specific needs of each individual youth. This ensures that precise supports are made available to youth based on their respective journey, meeting each youth's unique and individual needs.

Our Programs

OUTREACH AND DROP-IN

The Outreach Team seeks out young people living on the streets, in Single Room Occupancy Units (SROs), or those at risk of becoming homeless. The Outreach Team builds trust with the youth, lets them know about our programs like our Drop-In Centre where they can get something to eat, have a shower, and do their laundry, all while receiving support from caring staff and volunteers.

CRISIS PROGRAM

Our Crisis Program offers safe housing, food, clothing, and counselling to young people aged 16-24. We take care of their immediate needs first, which are often food and rest. We encourage and work with youth to create their own plan for independence and we support them every step of the way.

RIGHTS OF PASSAGE (ROP)

Rights of Passage (ROP) is a longer-term transitional living program for young people who need housing, structure, and support as they strive toward independence. Basic life skills most of us take for granted like budgeting, cooking, cleaning, and goal setting are taught while youth attend work and/or further their education.

WRAP AROUND SERVICES

Housing Support Workers, Life Skills Workers, Social Workers and Registered Clinical Counsellors are available for all youth in all our programs. All our services are offered with genuine compassion and acceptance, with the knowledge that trust is the foundation for a successful way forward and away from the trauma of the streets.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT:

Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation

Creating real change through partnership

DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF the Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation may no longer be run by its founder, humanitarian and business leader Mr. Mowafaghian, but its small board channels his spirit with every decision they make.

“Mr. Mowafaghian is an incredibly kind and considerate man,” explains Margaret Thomson, Treasurer and Director of the Foundation. “His father passed away when he was very young and he was raised by a single mother in a modest household in Tehran. His mother was generous to those in need in their community, and he attributes his passion for giving to her.”

Formed in 2003, the foundation really took shape in 2010, when Mr. Mowafaghian suffered a stroke and switched his focus almost entirely to giving back. In the eleven years since, they have supported their mandate with enthusiasm, and the presidency of the foundation has shifted to Mr. Mowafaghian’s nephew, Hamid Eshghi.

“MR. MOWAFAGHIAN IS AN INCREDIBLY KIND AND CONSIDERATE MAN...HIS MOTHER WAS GENEROUS TO THOSE IN NEED IN THEIR COMMUNITY, AND HE ATTRIBUTES HIS PASSION FOR GIVING TO HER”

The Board, however, continues to employ Mr. Mowafaghian’s careful approach to philanthropy. “We believe the biggest changes come from long-lasting partnerships,” says Thomson, “so we really take our time when choosing who we support. A onetime gift for something like a building can have a lot of impact, but it doesn’t always carry through. When we trust an organization is making a difference and a good steward of funds, we’re going to continue to support them.”

“BY SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS WE TRUST, WE CAN SUPPORT THE COMMUNITIES THAT NEED OUR ATTENTION THE MOST.”

The Board — who recognize the far-reaching effects of homelessness in Vancouver — has turned their attention to organizations like Covenant House Vancouver, Coast Mental Health, and the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, in recent years. “Giving is such a personal thing, and, for us, no one wants to see a young person living on the streets. The abuse and trauma that some of these young people experience is a travesty. By supporting organizations we trust, we can support the communities that need our attention the most.”



↑ From left to right: Hamid Eshghi, President | Margaret Thomson, Director and Treasurer | Mr. Mowafaghian, Founder, Mr. Tahsili, former Board member | Vahid Eshghi, Vice President

The Power of Vulnerability

By: Desiree, Youth Worker



One of the first things that you notice about Terrance is his hair, which is long and chocolate brown. It flows freely down his back and often in front of his face. It took a long while before I even had a chance to see his eyes. When Terrance reflected on his first few weeks in the Crisis Program, he said that was intentional. “They say that the eyes are the windows to the soul, so I look down,” he said to me once at lunch, while he fiddled with his fork.

TERRANCE IS A deeply inquisitive and introspective young man. It is not uncommon to see him staring intently out into the distance. “What are you doing?” I’d often say. “Just thinking,” he would respond with a smile. And he would. He would sit and ruminate for hours, mentally unpacking his day, his week, his world.

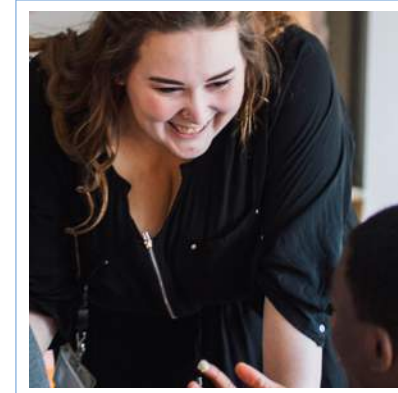
Terrance will be the first to tell you that he had a tumultuous upbringing that resulted in him growing up fast and becoming the primary caregiver in his family. This is a role that he falls into naturally and one that he is proud to step into at a moment’s notice, for both family and friends. But fulfilling this role has not come without a cost to Terrance.

The first time I sat and had a conversation with him, he was timid, shy, and reserved, but it was clear to me that he was yearning for connection in an unfamiliar place. He spoke about feeling lost and out of place with no idea of how to engage with his peers or staff.

“I WAS ALWAYS TOLD GROWING UP TO BE TOUGH...I NEVER REALLY HAD PEOPLE TELLING ME THAT IT’S OKAY TO CRY.”

I remember telling him that it takes time to settle in and that this discomfort was a natural response to being in an unfamiliar situation. Terrance felt an extreme sense of displacement. He was living without his family for the first time and in a homeless shelter in a brand-new city. All of Terrance’s youth workers worked closely with him for weeks to help build trust and a strong relationship with him.

We let him know that we were there to support him and talk through things but on his own time and without any expectations. On one challenging day, Terrance seemed to be really struggling to process all the overwhelming feelings he was experiencing. I sat in front of him in an office and watched as he furrowed his brow, scrunching up his nose in protest to the tears that began to fall silently down his cheek. Terrance kept his head bowed and screwed his eyes shut in an effort to stop his tears from freely flowing.



“It’s okay to need to cry,” I said. Although this may seem like a given, I find that so often the young men that I work with struggle to embrace their vulnerability and sometimes just verbalizing that they are in a safe space can make all the difference. He sat quietly and considered my comment. “I was always told growing up to be tough,” he responded. “I never really had people telling me that it’s okay to cry.”

We sat and spoke together about masculinity, emotion, and the power of vulnerability. I often encounter similar conversations with the young men that I work with. They often have a diverse range of backgrounds, childhoods, and experiences with processing emotions but the one thing that many of them have in common is an implicit understanding that to show one’s emotions is to show weakness. This notion is not often verbalized but seems to be somehow engrained into the psyche of so many young men.

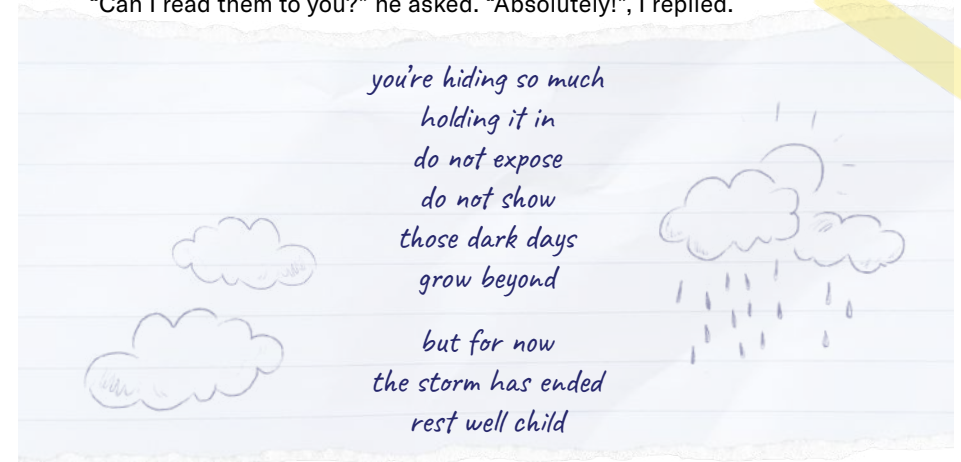
Terrance was open to continuing his process of self-discovery through counselling. A few weeks into the counselling process, he announced that he had discovered creativity as a tool for reflection. He became engrossed with any creative outlet that he could get his hands on, whether it be music, painting, reading, or writing.

The arts became his primary form of self-expression and the more that he continued to express himself to staff and his newfound friends, the more that he settled both in his physical surroundings and in himself. Terrance began to make friends with his co-residents. He joined in on every activity, he laughed and made jokes but above all else, he created.

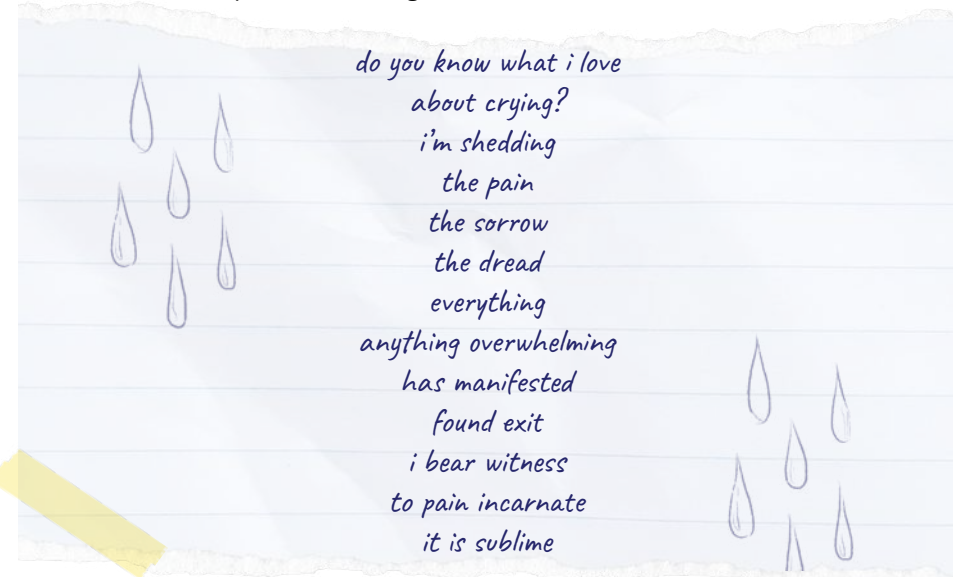
“I have something I’d like to share with you,” he said to me one evening during our nightly check-in. He pulled out a well-worn book of published poetry from his bag, opened it, and began to read aloud. He spoke about feeling inspired about what this poet had to say. Moments later he pulled another, smaller notebook from his bag and told me that he had written two of his own poems in response.



“Can I read them to you?” he asked. “Absolutely!”, I replied.



I felt myself become emotional as I listened to him read the words aloud and with purpose. Before I could begin to respond, he flipped the page and told me that he had written a second poem in response to the last. He took a deep breath and began to recite:



As a youth worker, one of my primary functions is to act as a support for our youth and often one of the best ways for me to do that is to help them unpack their own relationship with vulnerability. Sometimes that’s as simple as giving someone permission to cry.

CASE STUDY:

Harm Reduction at Covenant House Vancouver

Covenant House Vancouver initiated a two-year harm reduction pilot project within our Street Outreach and Drop-in Centre, to prepare for our new Sanctuary Program and to create an avenue to better support youth requiring exceptionally complex care.

British Columbia has been amid a public health emergency as a result of the increasing deaths due to opioids. Since the public health emergency was declared in 2016, over 7,760 individuals in BC have died of opioid overdose.



The BC Centre for Disease Control, in a position statement published in 2018, endorsed harm reduction practices in “preventing and reducing undue health, social, cultural and economic harms of substance use.” Harm reduction practices have been endorsed by all levels of government.

In BC, there are only 124 treatment beds for youth. There is a promise for an additional 123 beds by 2022; however; this falls far short of the need, which is estimated to be closer to 1,000

beds. Until the supply meets the demand, there will be a need for services like Covenant House Vancouver to engage and maintain connections with youth, supporting them until they are able to access treatment.

It is important to include those youth who are pre-contemplative and have not made the decision to address their substance use. Developing services to support youth with addiction/substance use issues is challenging because there is not a coordinated system for the provision of substance use services. This can lead to significant gaps and differential services between health authorities and communities.

“HARM REDUCTION PRACTICES HAVE BEEN ENDORSED BY ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT”

Covenant House Vancouver’s approach to harm reduction is and will continue to be about engaging with youth to move from one stage of change to another in the safest way possible. The introduction of harm reduction practices does not mean we will encourage or support youth to remain in active addiction. Our programming will remain focused on supporting youth to make healthy choices about their substance use, and to take the steps necessary to support a healthy and successful future.

COVENANT HOUSE VANCOUVER CURRENTLY PROVIDES:

- Monitoring, individual case management and emergency aid;
- On-site clinical support to youth with concurrent disorders;
- Training on the provision and use of naloxone which is used in the treatment of opioid toxicity;
- Referrals to treatment programs for youth ready for treatment;
- Support for prescription alternatives to illicit drug use for young people that qualify for this support as determined by their prescriber;
- Support for youth to make healthy decisions around their substance use.

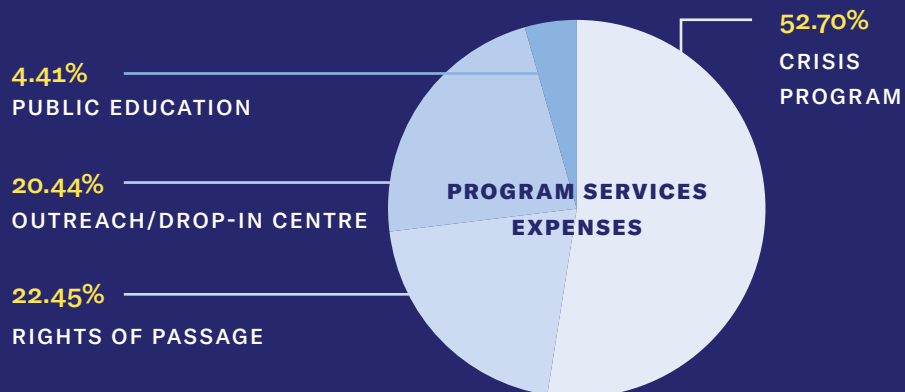
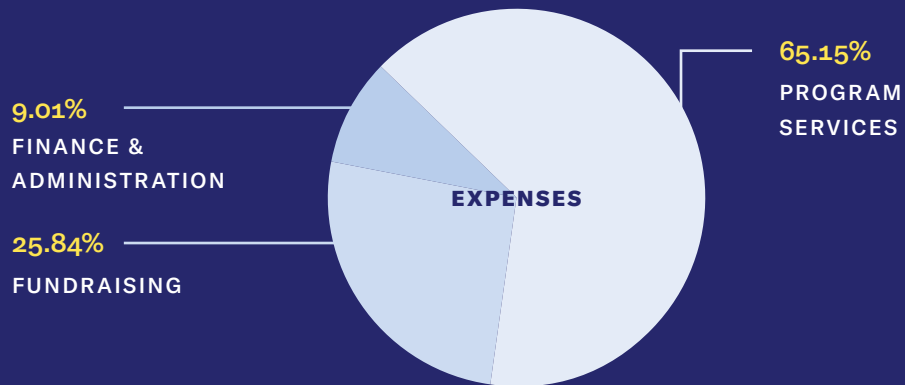
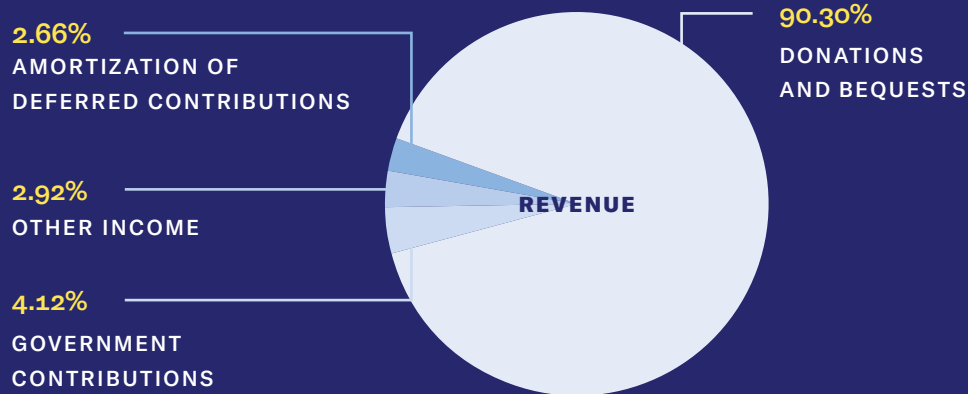
The model of service at Covenant House is well suited to effectively support the use of harm reduction practices. Evidence informed practices and strong theoretical approaches such as attachment theory and Trauma-Informed Practices are very effective for working alongside harm reduction practices.

Our one-size-fits-one approach, utilizing strength-based and positive-youth-development practices, support the ability to build trusting relationships with youth, which is fundamental to successfully applying harm reduction practices.

We are focused on supporting youth as individuals to move towards health and wellness.

The Impact of Your Generosity

Complete audited financial statements are available by request by calling 604-638-4438, or online at www.covenanthousebc.org.



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Immediacy

Sanctuary

Value Communication

Structure

Choice