

Improving Conditions for Students from Care

What is Child Welfare

— — —

- Foster Kids
- Group Care
- Residential Placements
- Orphans
- Child Protective Services
- Children's Aid Society's
- Child Welfare Authorities

Reasons for Entering Care

— — —

- Abuse
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Sexual
- Neglect
- Immigration
- Food or Housing Insecurity
- Systemic Discrimination

Intersecting Issues Arising In Care

— — —

- Identity
- Racism
- Labels/ stigma
- Family/parenting
- Mental health
- Resources (or lack thereof)
- Programming /treatment

Aging Out (aka Cutting You Off)

- An estimated 62,428 children in out of home placements in 2013
- 10% (~6,700) “age out” of the system every year (17-19)
- Others fall through the cracks sooner due to not having a supporting system (14-19)
- In contrast, almost half of the young adult population (20-29) live with their parents and 60% under 30 receive financial support

Education

- Less than half (40-44%), and in some provinces less) graduate from secondary school
 - Overall population ranges from a 80-90% graduation rate
- Less than 13% enroll in any sort of post-secondary program
- Less than 2% graduate from post-secondary institutions

Homelessness

- Half of the 8,000 homeless young adult population
- $\frac{1}{3}$ of the overall homeless population (32,000)
- 60% of females under 24 are pregnant
- Trying to juggle multiple jobs while attending secondary and post-secondary school
 - Hinders pathways to post-secondary
 - “You cannot thrive when you are barely surviving”

Health

Compared to the overall population:

- Twice as likely to suffer from learning disabilities, developmental delays, asthma, obesity and speech problems
- Seven times as likely to experience depression
- Five times as likely to feel anxiety
- Three times as likely to have attention deficit disorder, hearing impairments and vision issues

Health

- Overdiagnosed and Overprescribed psychotropic medication
 - i.e, Making the child “easier to manage” as there are limited supports and placements available to deal with unwanted behaviours)
- Especially dangerous when leaving care and leads to substance misuse as the costs of prescriptions are not sustainable
- Distrust with the mental health system
 - Less likely to reach out for supports

Overrepresentation of Marginalized Populations

- January 2016, the Human Rights Tribunal ruled that child welfare authorities have been systemically engaging in discriminatory practices against Indigenous communities
 - 60'S Scoop, transition of Residential schools to child welfare
 - Half of children in care are Indigenous (only 10% of total pop. under 25)
- Black Youth
 - E.g. Toronto, only 8.2% of the population under 18 is black, yet make up 41% of Toronto CAS's caseload

What areas *need* improving on?

1. Education
2. Emotional (people)
3. Health
4. Financial

Aligning McGill and SSMU Initiatives

- Research and advocacy around Indigenous issues
 - Provost's Task Forces on Indigenous Education
- Diversity and Inclusive enrollment strategies
- SSMU research on first-generation students
- SEDE community engagement initiatives and McGill recruitment
- Improving support for racialized students (mentorship and peer support)

Social and Economic Impact

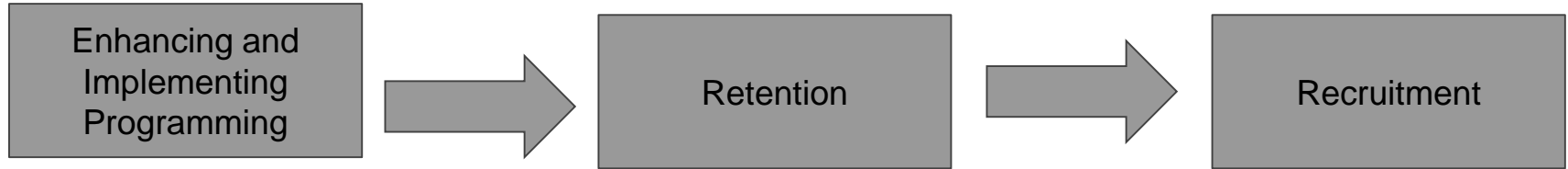
Sticking to the status quo means:

- Perpetuating a cycle of discarding thousands of young people without giving them the opportunity to thrive
- Without education and social supports development and ability is thwarted, leading to homelessness, reliance on welfare, pipelines to criminal justice involvement
- An \$8 billion productivity loss over 10 years due to high social assistance payments, collecting lower tax revenues and other associated costs

International Impact

- The United Nation's Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) consistently lists Canada as ranking below its other economically prosperous, western counterparts
- UNCRC's last review in 2014 provided Canada with 47 recommendations to improve child welfare practices, most of which have been stagnant
- The Conference Board and UNCRC cite allowing children the humanity to have a say in their fate and cross-sectoral collaboration as key areas

Recommended Approach



Solutions: Targeted Programming

- Numerous post-secondary institutions offering targeted support and programming, including components such as:
 - 1. Financial Supports** (tuition waivers, room and board, designated scholarships and bursaries, living stipends, etc.);
 - 2. Mental Health Supports** (peer groups, anti-oppressive outreach, etc.);
 - 3. Academic Supports** (additional advising, coordinated programming, academic mentorship, etc.); and,
 - 4. Fostering Communities** (mentorship programs, designated programming, living and learning programs, etc.)

Targeted Programming: Examples

- Seattle University: *Fostering Scholars*
 - Financial: Tuition waiver, year-round housing, meal plan
 - Academic: Two staff members serve as mentors
 - Counselling: For personal and academic issues
 - Peer Supports: Designated spots to create a network
 - 80% retention rate!

Targeted Programming: Examples

- University of Michigan: *MPowering Success + Blavin Scholars*
 - Financial: Year-round housing, emergency funds
 - Mentorship: “Champion advocates”, liaisons that are privy to child welfare issues
 - Life Skills: Weekly meetings with a Life Skills Mentor
 - Social: Group gatherings

Targeted Programming: Examples

- University of California (multiple campuses) and University of Colorado: *Guardian Scholars*
 - Transition Support: Personal development, pre-school year programming, life skills
 - Mentorship: Paired with academic advisor and an upper year FYIC
 - Financial Support: (bursaries, housing supports, laptop program)

Next Steps

Short Term (within the Fall Semester)

- Outreach Survey
 - Focus Groups?
- Report

Long term (within the Academic Year)

- Administration (Enrollment Services, Student Aid, Recruitment, Mental Health & Counselling)