

# Improving Conditions for Students from Care

# What is Child Welfare

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

# Reasons for Entering Care

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

# Intersecting Issues Arising In Care

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

# Aging Out (aka Cutting You Off)

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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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

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- 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

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- 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?

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

# Aligning McGill and SSMU Initiatives

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- 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

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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

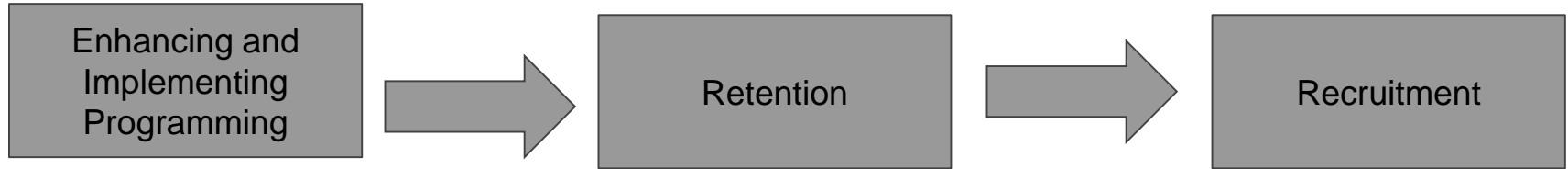
# International Impact

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- 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

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# Solutions: Targeted Programming

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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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)