

# EVA'S INITIATIVES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

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## THE RESILIENCY-BASED RESEARCH TOOLKIT:

A GUIDE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ETHICALLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR PRECARIOUS HOUSING

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Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This toolkit was part of the *Journeys In and Out: Youth Homelessness Solutions Lab*, a collaboration led by Deloitte Doblin and Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth. Special thanks to the project team: Elle Ziegler, Setareh Shamdani, Alzahra Hudani, Kristen Szekszardi, and Kay Dyson Tam.

The resiliency model framework and practices to structure safety are deeply informed by Registered Clinical Counsellor Dr. Vikki Reynolds.

Guidance on research methods and existing literature was provided by Dr. Kaitlin Schwan of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

The resiliency-based tools were co-created over three days in May 2019 with over 200 staff, young people, and sector partners including participants from Pacific Community Resource Society (PCRS) in Vancouver, British Columbia and Dans La Rue in Montreal, Quebec.

This guide was developed via a project entitled *Journeys In and Out: Youth Homelessness Solutions Lab* received funding from the National Housing Strategy under the NHS Solutions Labs, however, the views expressed are the personal views of the author and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

Most importantly, we are grateful for the young people with lived experience of homelessness and precarious housing who participated in the co-design sessions and 25 resiliency-based interviews.

Thank you.

## ABOUT EVA'S

Eva's is named in honour of Eva Smith, a Toronto community leader who noticed that youth at risk and those who were homeless were unrecognized and unsupported.

Eva's is an innovative and award-winning organization that helps homeless and at-risk youth reach their potential to lead productive, self-sufficient and healthy lives. The three facilities, Eva's Place, Eva's Satellite, and Eva's Phoenix engage and support 123 homeless youth (aged 16-24) each night to help them transition out of homelessness. Eva's is one of the largest providers of shelter beds dedicated for youth and programs uniquely tailored to address the challenges homeless youth experience in the GTA.

Last year, Eva's provided emergency shelter and transitional housing for 1,034 youth experiencing homelessness. Eva's also provided critical programs to help homeless youth stabilize their lives and build the independence they need in order to leave the streets permanently. In the last year over 5,000 participants benefited from our life skills programs, employment training, education support, interview preparation, family counseling, and healthcare.

**“Eva's stands out because they create a connection with the young people, and they're actually able to demonstrate the impact they have.”**

**Greg Thomson, Research Director, Charity Intelligence Canada**

## ABOUT EVA'S SOLUTIONS LAB

In 2019, Eva's received funding from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for their first Solutions Labs competition through the National Housing Strategy.

This toolkit's framework and methods provided the foundation for the Solutions Lab's discovery phase activities (i.e., qualitative interviews with young people using resiliency-based design tools such as journey maps and card sorts). Though not typical of Solutions Lab processes, the project team felt the creation of unique resiliency-based design tools would be helpful in structuring safety for and ethically proceeding with interviews with young people experiencing homelessness and housing precarity.

As a part of the Solutions Lab, "Journey into and out of Youth Homelessness," the team at Eva's worked alongside Dr. Vikki Reynolds and other key stakeholders to:

- Develop the Resiliency Interview Framework to work ethically with young people in research and youth work;
- Co-design research tools informed by the resiliency interview framework and human centred design;
- Conduct in-depth interviews with young people who have experienced homelessness or precarious housing using these new tools;
- Collectively prototype systems interventions based on interview data, literature and front-line knowledge and expertise; and
- Co-design a roadmap with clear pathways to further the systems interventions.

Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth is adapting the resiliency interview framework to inform our research methods and ongoing frontline youth work at the three different sites across the organization: Phoenix, Satellite and Place.

Adopting best practices and strategies to structure safety with young people will prepare front-line staff and researchers to work collectively and ethically with young people, while guiding them to reconstruct their stories of trauma into ones that demonstrate abundant resilience. In employing these strategies, front-line staff and researchers are playing a role in restoring community connections for the young people by creating a space for them in which trust is established through meaningful engagement and collaboration.

Through this Solutions Lab, Eva's conducted community-based participatory action research to meaningfully translate evidence into practice.

The final 'Prototyping Roadmap' report with promising interventions to improve experiences of young people facing homelessness and housing precarity can be found on Eva's website or by reaching out to the project manager for the Solutions Lab, Kay Dyson Tam at [kdysontam@evas.ca](mailto:kdysontam@evas.ca).

## ABOUT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Did you know?

- Among youth experiencing homelessness in across Canada, 40.1% were under the age of 16 when they first experienced homelessness
- 75.9% of young people in Canada reported experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness
- A majority of youth experiencing homelessness in Canada have had more than one experience of violence (75.9%), and more than a third have had over 5 experiences (46.9%) of violence
- Homeless youth are 4x more likely to have experienced bullying than Canadian Youth in general
- 57.8% of homeless youth in Canada have had some kind of child welfare involvement over the course of their lives
- Youth experiencing homelessness in rural communities experience unique challenges, including: fewer housing options, barriers to transportation, fewer opportunities for employment, fewer services (including youth –specific services), and high rates of family violence and substance use
- Nearly a third of homeless people in Toronto are young people between the ages of 13-24
- Between 3,300– 10,000 youth experiences homelessness over the course of a year (1 in 100 youth)
- 850– 2,000 young people are homeless on any given night in Toronto; and many more are experiencing hidden homelessness
- Young people face barriers to income support, education, paid employment and rental accommodation simply due to their age

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

If you are reading this guide, it is likely that you work with young people experiencing homelessness or other groups of people who have experienced trauma.

This guide presents tools and outlines processes that have the potential to improve your organizational practice and/or methods of working with, providing services to, or conducting research with people who have experienced trauma.

We hope this resiliency-based framework and tools will be helpful for you, whether you are working directly with young people or looking to do qualitative research (e.g., design-based research, participatory action research, etc.) in ways that are empowering and useful for the people with whom you work.

This guide was developed for and tested through *Journeys In and Out: Youth Homelessness Solutions Lab*, a project focused on better understanding the pathways into and out of youth homelessness amongst young people in large Canadian cities and creating interventions that might expedite young people's exits from homelessness.

If there is terminology that requires further clarification as you read through this guide, please refer to the glossary at the end of this document. Terminology that is included in the glossary is bolded in-text.

# THE RESILIENCY FRAMEWORK

## WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma describes experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing. Trauma overwhelms people's ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Because the outcomes of traumatic experiences have several common features, the road to recovery also follows a common pathway. Internalizing and applying various practices of **structuring safety** when working with populations who have experienced trauma (e.g., people who have experienced homelessness, intimate partner violence, war and conflict, etc.) is one component of this road to recovery and will be addressed shortly.

## WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to not only survive, but also thrive in the face of adversity. Resilience describes people's patterns of positive adjustments to challenges they face and stems from usual and normal human adaptive abilities (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Understanding people's stories of resilience is often overlooked in recovery work with people who have faced trauma, and instead emphasis is placed on the story of adversity itself, potentially creating more harm.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Trauma-informed practice requires a shift in perspective from questions of "what is wrong with them?" to "what happened to them?". It never involves coercion, isolation, seclusion, immobilization, or punishment.

In her novel *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), psychiatrist Dr. Judith Herman outlines three fundamental stages of trauma recovery work: establishing safety; remembering, mourning, and reconstructing the story of the trauma experience; and reconnecting with ordinary life and others.

## ESTABLISHING SAFETY

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY?

The term **ally** has been around for some time and refers to any person who belongs to a group with certain privileges and who works alongside people from groups who are oppressed in relation to that privilege. The hope of being in this position is to create change and increase social justice in relation to the oppression in place. When taking the position of an ally, it is important to:

- Actively support the struggle
- Speak up, even when you feel scared
- Transfer the benefit of your privilege to those who have less
- Acknowledge that the conversation is not about you

As an ally, it is critical that you check in with your own motivations; educate yourself about the history and realities of the community for which you are an ally; and continuously reflect on your actions as an ally while engaging in meaningful conversations with the community you are supporting.

In any social justice work, whether with young people or anyone else, it is important to do a self “check-in” to ensure that your intentions are derived from a good place, and not as a result of one’s own self-interests.

### WHAT ETHICAL ASSUMPTIONS SHOULD YOU MAKE?

In social justice work, it is not uncommon for events or situations to arise that either catch you off guard or do not make sense to you right away. In either case, there are two ethical assumptions to keep in mind when these situations occur:

- 1) People’s behaviour always makes sense; and
- 2) People are always trying to be safe.

Based on their personal traumatic experiences, the person or people you work with may not necessarily view the world as safe or trustworthy. These two assumptions will make sense when you are able to meet people where they are at in this world. In order to do this, it will be helpful to first reflect on your “map of the world” by considering the emotional topography of your life:

- In what state of emotional intensity did you grow up? In what state do you currently live?
- Which trauma behaviours take you out of **co-regulation** and how this is connected to your map of the world?
- How you might resist/respond differently?
- How this self-reflective practice can be of use in the work that you do?

Understanding your emotional map of the world will help facilitate your work with young people. By participating in this reflective exercise and considering the two ethical assumptions listed above, you will be enabled to better act and respond to situations that will provide those you work with a safe-enough space where they sense empathy and compassion as opposed to judgement or harm.

## RECONSTRUCTING THE TRAUMA STORY

### USING LANGUAGE TO STRUCTURE SAFETY

As a researcher or frontline worker, what you say and how you say it plays a significant role in how young people perceive their circumstances and their responses to those circumstances. The following language practices are recommended when working with young people who have experienced homelessness or housing precarity, or others who may have survived difficult or traumatic events. You can structure safety for the young person through language by:

1. Using language that conveys the one-sided nature of any oppression that was experienced by the person; and when possible include accounts of the *person's* responses.
2. Avoid using language that portrays any justification for the perpetrators' words/actions, and instead highlight the deliberate nature of the acts – particularly offenders' strategic efforts to suppress the person's responses.
3. Elucidate and honour the person's responses and resistance by enquiring about their responses to specific acts of oppression or violence; and elucidate the logic by which some responses become intelligible as forms of resistance.
4. Contest the blaming and pathologizing of the person by obtaining accounts of their prudent, determined, and creative resistance.

These principles of liberatory language have informed the resiliency interviewing methods that Eva's has applied to their research and organizational practice. Particularly, they have been used to reconstruct young people's stories of trauma into ones that exemplify their acts of resistance and of resilience. This approach removes emphasis from "what's wrong with them?", and instead places emphasis on "what happened to them?".

Asking these questions will help you to better understand acts of resistance in young people's experiences of oppression. The conversation may also help young people view their story in a different, more positive light.

### FACILITATING A DIALOGUE

**"There's no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."**  
– Arundhati Roy

Interviews with people who have experienced trauma should take the form of a dialogue. Dialogue cannot exist with any enactments of oppression, or without humility. In a dialogue, it is not enough to simply be "allowed" to speak- the voices of the interview participants must matter. The research team must be accountable to their word and cannot in any way disregard what was said or heard.

It is therefore essential that preliminary steps be taken for the interviewer to facilitate a dialogue, by first breaking down any power imbalances that may exist between the interviewer and interviewees.

The following best practices should be applied when facilitating a dialogue with young people:

- 🔹 **Co-creating relationships of enough safety**
- 🔹 **Negotiating permission**
- 🔹 **Hearing “No”**
- 🔹 **Engaging Collaboratively**
- 🔹 **Declining intrusive curiosity**
- 🔹 **Seeing structuring safety as the “real work”**

This toolkit outlines a description of each of these practices, as well as ideas on how they can be applied in your work with young people. Examples of how Eva’s research team applied these practices will also be described and can be used and adapted in your practice as you see fit.

### CO-CREATING RELATIONSHIPS OF ENOUGH SAFETY

There is no perfectly safe therapeutic relationship, as there are always risks of transgressing safety due to the perceived power imbalances at play. However, with the intentional practice of analyzing the complex power relationship, moral courage, compassion, and critical supervision, it is possible to develop a capacity for structuring safety; and create a relationship that exemplifies dignity and respect. You can start by asking:

- 🔹 What makes you think it is safe enough to talk to me?

### NEGOTIATING PERMISSION

Before starting an interview or any work with a young person, it is important to ask for their permission (this is separate from consent). The young person should know that there is no obligation for them to respond to any question or perform any task that feels unsafe or uncomfortable. You can start, by asking them the following:

- 🔹 In what ways of knowing yourself do you trust that you will be able to say no to me, if I ask you something that is not okay? or;
- 🔹 What will it take for you to be able to say no to me if I ask you a question that is not alright? (Reynolds, 2010)

If possible, it may be a good idea to provide the young people with alternate ways of saying no.

For example, in our project, we will be providing young people with the option of using “opt out” cards (No, Skip Question, Come back to this one, etc.) that they can pick up or point to when they do not want to respond to a question.

### HEARING “NO”

Refusal can be conveyed in many ways that are not verbal. For example, various signs of “No” can be conveyed through body language and hesitations in response. It may not always be easy to identify what these signs of “No” may be. However, the following prompts can be used to clarify:

- 👉 This hesitation just now, is this one of the ways you have of telling me that is not a useful question right now?
- 👉 You know, I am thinking that this was not a very useful question. Do you agree? Thanks for letting me know that. Are you having any ideas of what a more useful question could be?

### ENGAGING COLLABORATIVELY

Shifting from the typical interviewer-interviewee relationship, to engaging in a more human-centric manner, means allocating time for the young person to reflect on what the potential consequences of revealing their information to you might be – and for them to consider their thoughts and ideas about this before commencing with the interview. The following can be considered when setting up this space for the young person:

- 👉 As we're sitting here now and you are considering what you're going to tell me, I would like you to travel ahead in time until after this meeting and think about how you will be with the telling.
- 👉 How might you feel about the telling tomorrow?
- 👉 Might the telling of this get in the way of our relationship?
- 👉 Might the not telling of this get in the way of our relationship?

### DECLINING INTRUSIVE CURIOSITY

When listening to stories of trauma, be respectful and understand your boundaries when thinking about probing with follow-up questions. Resist letting your curiosity get in the way of maintaining a safe environment for the young person that you are working with. Embrace ambiguity and know that you should be able to identify and understand acts of resistance from even the slightest details of trauma that were mentioned to you. Try to focus on the person's acts of resistance, instead of fixating on learning more about their story of trauma.

- 👉 Where does your curiosity come from?
- 👉 Will asking this question be useful for the young person in any way?

### SEEING STRUCTURING SAFETY AS THE "REAL WORK"

If you consider structuring safety to be the primary focus of your work, you will create a space for the young person that is safe and one in which they will be able to exercise their autonomy in what they do/do not want to discuss. This is the first step to doing any recovery or research work that may be useful to your clients/research participants. The prompt below is an example of a question that can be asked to better understand the current relationship you hold with the young person, and to help you understand your boundaries during the interview process.

- 👉 As you're sitting here now, and considering what you're going to tell me, I'd like you to consider what you know about yourself, that let you trust that you can be the person to decide if there will be speaking or holding of your own counsel. What do you know about our relationship that might help you trust your right to tell or not tell?

## RESTORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SURVIVORS AND THE COMMUNITY

**“The issue is disconnection. The answer in connection.”**

**- Vikki Reynolds**

For survivors to be able to reconnect with their communities, they must first regain some capacity for appropriate trust, feel autonomous, and be able to maintain their own point of view and boundaries while also respecting that of others.

In order to facilitate this reconnection, it is critical that the young person is not abandoned at any point throughout the interview process. Considering the two ethical assumptions outlined previously will help guide an appropriate response by the interviewer regardless of the situation they encounter. This conscientious response should help the young person develop a relationship of trust with the interviewer and further connect with them. This is a conducive first step to restoring connections between survivors and the community.

**“The roadmap out of trauma involves connection and repair.”**

**- Vikki Reynolds**

# HOW EVA'S PUT THE RESILIENCY FRAMEWORK INTO PRACTICE

## OVERVIEW

Eva's Solutions Lab project, *Journeys Into and Out of Youth Homelessness*, employed a community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) approach through all phases of the research. The core research team at Eva's collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to establish the research question, develop and design data collection tools, and to analyze and disseminate findings.

Eva's began our research by asking, "how might we expedite exiting from youth homelessness by understanding young people's journeys into and out of homelessness?" and through an understanding of these stories, "how might we identify meaningful ways to intervene?"

To answer this question, the research team conducted 25 in-depth interviews with young people between the ages of 16–24, over the course of 5 weeks to better understand what factors contributed to their journeys into homelessness or housing precarity, and what factors helped them to exit homelessness.

The research consisted of one-on-one interviews with young people, engaging them in a journey mapping exercise. Together, the interviews and journey mapping exercise document young people's experiences moving through various phases of housing/lack of housing, while highlighting their personal act(s) of resilience through each of these experiences. The interviews and journey map exercises are centered around the resiliency interview framework, ensuring that young people reflect on their acts of resilience during their various experiences with homelessness in a safe and meaningful way, rather than their stories of trauma.

After analyzing the interview data and aggregating the journey maps, Eva's Initiatives created a prototype roadmap with points of intervention (both preventative and reactive) to assist young people in exiting homelessness and precarious housing.

In this section, we outline best practices and guidelines for each of the following stages of research as it complies with the resiliency interview framework:

- 📌 Selecting & Mobilizing the Core Research Team
- 📌 Developing Research and Design Tools
- 📌 Recruiting Interview Participants
- 📌 Conducting a Pre-Brief Prior to the Interview
- 📌 Following the Interview Protocol
- 📌 Debriefing Post-Interview

## 1. SELECTING & MOBILIZING THE CORE RESEARCH TEAM

The core research team involved in conducting the in-depth interviews should include at least one person who can actively witness the young person's act (s) of resistance or resilience.

All team members should be trained on structuring safety in work alongside youth and in conducting interviews with youth. All administrative and frontline staff at Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth participated in an intensive two-day training facilitated by Dr. Vikki Reynolds. Selected staff were invited to participate in a smaller workshop focusing on structuring interviews and co-designing key interview artifacts.

Within Eva's Solutions Lab project, there were three people involved in each interview:

- 1) **Interviewer**— young person with lived experience of homelessness or precarious housing who is a leader in the local community and can easily build trust and rapport with the interview participants
- 2) **Interview Participant**— young person between the ages of 16-24 who meets the inclusion and exclusion criteria and has been recruited into The project
- 3) **Witness**— program staff (e.g. research coordinator or housing worker) who has built rapport with the interview participant and is in the interview space merely to provide support, take field notes, and identify acts of resistance that are indirectly or directly identified by the participant.

As the interviews progress, the witness should make note of any acts of resistance or resilience that he/she has identified. Some probes that can be used by the interviewer to help the young person recognize and vocalize their own act of resistance in difficult or traumatic situations include:

- How did you respond? What did you do?
- How did you choose this course of action? What were you paying attention to?
- What resources or knowledge were you able to access in this moment? How was this possible?
- What experiences and/or people through your life taught you to do this?

## 2. DEVELOPING RESEARCH AND DESIGN TOOLS

All components of Eva’s Solutions Lab (research and design) were co-developed and supported by a diverse and interdisciplinary group of experts ranging from frontline staff, researchers, designers, a registered clinical counsellor, administrative and management staff, and young people with lived experience of homelessness or precarious housing. Each stakeholder was involved in different parts of the research process from co-developing the research question to co-designing key research tools. The deliberative processes through each research phase led to innovative and informed deliverables that were iterative in nature and strengthened over the course of the project.

The Solutions Lab process included the following steps and actors involved in each step:

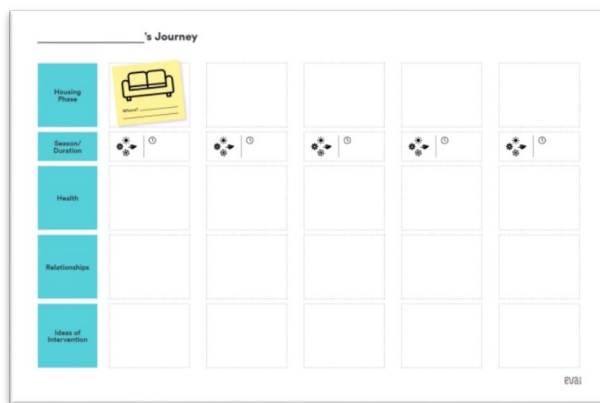
RESEARCH PROCESS	KEY ACTORS
Identifying knowledge gap and developing research question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager</li> <li>• Design/Management Consultants (Deloitte)</li> <li>• Research Consultant (Post-doc)</li> </ul>
Framing the Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager</li> <li>• Design/Management Consultants (Deloitte)</li> <li>• Research Coordinator</li> </ul>
Co-designing Interview Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontline staff (Eva’s, PCRS, Dans la Rue)</li> <li>• Young people with lived experience of homelessness</li> <li>• Eva’s Management Staff (select few)</li> <li>• Research Coordinator</li> <li>• Design/Management Consultants (Deloitte)</li> <li>• Research Consultant</li> <li>• Psychotherapist &amp; and Social Activist (Dr. Vikki Reynolds)</li> </ul>
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer facilitator (young person with lived experience)</li> <li>• Research Coordinator</li> <li>• 2 frontline staff</li> </ul>
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Coordinator</li> <li>• Research Consultant</li> </ul>
Knowledge Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Coordinator</li> <li>• Project Manager</li> <li>• Director of Public Engagement &amp; Communications (Eva’s)</li> <li>• Design/management consultants</li> </ul>

The following approach was used by Eva's and Deloitte to facilitate the co-design session on May 8th, 2019. Resources such as flip chart paper, sharpies, prototype journey maps and prompter cards were provided for each group of stakeholders. There were a total of 6 groups with 4-5 people per group.

### STEP 1: OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITY

- Explain the purpose of the activity
- Provide step-by-step instructions for the activity
- Inform the group about any questions they should answer as they move through the exercise (groups can be provided with a feedback sheet to record their responses to questions)
- State the duration of time the group has to complete the activity

### STEP 2: PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITY (INDEPENDENTLY OR IN SMALL GROUPS)



### STEP 3: GROUP DEBRIEF

During the group debrief, open the room for a group discussion, prompting each table to share thoughts about the exercise. You can discuss questions on the feedback cards and broader questions such as:

- What aspects of the activity do you find useful?
- Is there anything you would have done differently? If so, what? Why?

### 3. RECRUITING INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

#### WHAT IS YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION?

Prior to recruiting interview participants, it is important to clearly define your research question(s). This will determine the type of research you conduct, who your prospective participants are, and what your sample size is. Alongside the research question, specify which methods you will use to collect your data, and what you predict your outcomes will be after data analysis. Ask yourself if the methods you selected are the most appropriate to respond to your research question.

At Eva's, we started by brainstorming "How might we" questions with the core research team to better understand the research objective, goals and how we might meet these goals through preparatory activities (i.e. training) and our research methods. Some examples include:

- How might we ensure that research participants are selected appropriately for this study?
- How might we meaningfully engage people with lived experience onto the project team?
- How might we equip the research team with the tools and training they need to ethically work with this priority population?

#### WHO ARE YOUR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS?

Next, identify what inclusion and exclusion criteria you will apply to recruit prospective participants. These criteria will help you recruit the most suitable sample of interview participants from whom you will collect data to answer your research question(s). The research objective, nature of the research, and context in which the research is conducted will inform these criteria in selecting research participants. Researchers should not exclude individuals from the opportunity to participate in research based on attributes such as culture, language, religion, race, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, linguistic proficiency, gender or age, unless there is valid reason for this exclusion (TCPS 2- Chapter 4).

#### WHAT WILL THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

The recruiting process can be multi-phased depending on your target population. You can start with a general call-out and a short survey (which takes no more than 5 to 10 minutes to complete) to capture the first round of prospective participants. Once the list is narrowed down, you can follow up with a screening phone call to better evaluate expressions of interest and suitability for participation.

#### Compensation

Before starting with the recruiting process, decide how you will be compensating research participants for their time and knowledge (i.e. will you offering monetary compensation, gifts, etc.?). Explicitly state how participants will be getting compensated for their participation; this can be done during the conversation that takes place after the screening process, and in writing in the informed consent form.

## BEST PRACTICES

The following best practices should be considered when recruiting any group of people in research activities:

- 1. Transparency:** The research team must be transparent when providing prospective interview participants with study information. This information should include details such as the purpose and goals of the study, potential risks and benefits of participating in the study, any compensation that will be provided, etc. Special measures should be taken to ensure that information is presented in an unbiased manner and is comprehensible by the target population. Study information can be provided through various means including in-person information sessions, posters and flyers, social media, etc. Ask yourself:
  - Is all information accurate and free of misleading emphases that make the study attractive?*
  - Is the information as complete as is appropriate for each stage of recruitment?*
- 2. Mitigate any undue influence:** The research team should collectively plan to mitigate any undue influences prior to recruitment and in preparation for the interviews. There are often power imbalances in the interviewer-interviewee relationship that may influence the consent process. Building rapport with interview participants beforehand or employing people with lived experience as peer researchers are a few strategies that may help to minimize undue influence in the recruitment process. Second, the research team should carefully consider what incentives will be offered to participants, and how they will be offered such that assessments of “voluntariness” can be made (for example, where incentives are offered to participants, they should not be so large or attractive as to encourage reckless disregard of risks) (TCPS, Chapter 3). Ask yourself:
  - Are there any power imbalances at play that can be mitigated? What strategies can be employed to minimize or mitigate these power imbalances?*
  - Do the incentives being offered impact participants’ motives and level of engagement?*
- 3. Voluntary & Informed Consent:** Interview participants must give voluntary and informed consent to participate in the study. The research team should ensure that participants: voluntarily consent; know that they can withdraw consent at any time; and in the case that consent is withdrawn, participants know that they can request withdrawal of any of their data (i.e. their personal information and/or anything that they shared with the interview team). Participants should be given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study prior to being recruited. The research team should also seek consent for any audio-recording, video recording, and/or photography. Ask yourself:
  - How will informed consent be provided? Verbally, online, or through a written consent form?*
  - Is information conveyed in a way that is easily comprehensible by the target population?*
- 4. Equitable and appropriate selection of participants:** All prospective interview participants should be given a fair chance to decide if they would like to be involved in

the study or not. Depending on your sampling strategy, a screening process should be in place to ensure that participants are selected appropriately. For example, if you are interviewing young people about their experiences of homelessness, you must take steps to ensure that the young person is aware of any risks they may face and is comfortable with being interviewed on this topic. Ask yourself:

- Does the recruitment strategy help ensure that selection of research participants is equitable and appropriate for the study?*
- How do you know someone is in a good place to be recruited for an interview? What strategies are you employing to understand this?*

5. **Respect for Privacy:** Special measures should be taken during the screening and recruitment process to ensure that interview participants' identity and consent to participate in the interview are kept private, in order to minimize any risks that this may pose for them. This can be done by anonymizing identifying information; replacing direct identifying information with a code; or replacing direct identifying information with a combination of indirect identifiers (e.g. date of birth, social insurance number, etc.) (TCPS 2- Chapter 5). Ask yourself:

- What risks may the interview participant face if others in their community find out about their participation in this study?*
- What steps can the research team take to minimize these risks and protect the participant's privacy during the recruitment process?*

## RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES

Interview participants can be recruited using various methods including e-mail, in-person information sessions, billboard postings, posters, media advertisements, social media, distribution of information sheets or flyers, etc. The research team should carefully select platforms for recruitment based on the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria; and considerations of how research participants can be recruited equitably for participation in the study.

For example, in our study, hosted information sessions with young people who were prospective interview participants. Since we were using purposive sampling, we wanted to engage young people who were current or past clients at Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth. As a result, we hung up and distributed posters at each of the three sites at Eva's to invite young people to an information session at the site to learn more about the study. Additionally, the Youth in Transition worker at Eva's helped to recruit past participants (i.e. those who have exited homelessness) by conveying important study information via telephone and/or e-mail. Posters were sent as e-mail attachments and the following recruitment e-mail template was used for the first recruitment phase of the study – expression of interest to attend an information session.

### SAMPLE RECRUITING EMAIL

Dear [name of young person],

This is [Name of Youth in Transition worker] with [Eva's Initiatives]. How are you?

The [impact and innovation team] at [Eva’s Initiatives] is conducting a study to [insert research objective]. We are interested in speaking with [young people who are willing to share their experiences with homelessness and/or unstable housing with us].

We are scheduling information sessions for interested participants on [date & time] at [Eva’s site name and location]. These sessions will provide interested participants with the opportunity to learn more about the study and ask the researchers any questions they may have. The session is intended to last for about 30-minutes. Light refreshments will be provided.

Please let me know if you are interested in attending this information session. If you have any questions about the project, please reach out to [name] at [contact info].

Thank you,  
[name]

### SAMPLE RECRUITING SURVEY GUIDE

Once prospective interview participants attend the information session (recruitment phase 1) and learn more about the study, a recruitment survey (recruitment phase 2) can be distributed to those who continue to express interest in being involved as interview participants. The following is a template that can be used to develop the survey.

#### Introduction

Hello,

Thank you for considering being a part of our research study on [insert research objective]. Please complete this short survey if you are interested in participating in an interview to discuss [x responses to research question]. Your participation in this survey will help us learn more about you. We will contact you by phone or e-mail to schedule the date and time of your interview if you are selected to interview and continue to be interested in participating.

#### Questions

- Start the survey by asking for necessary demographic information. This could include:
  - Name
  - Phone number
  - Email
  - Preferred method of being contacted
- You can ask for other relevant demographic information that will help you to select purposively for your study (if this is your sampling strategy). This can include:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Ethnicity
  - Level of education
  - Place of birth, etc.

- You can ask 2–3 questions about the participant’s experience regarding the research topic or generally their levels of comfort with discussing major topics that will be included in the interview. These questions could require descriptive answers to gauge participants’ level of comfort with sharing their experiences with the researcher.
- End the survey by asking an open-ended question about anything else that they would like to tell you/think you should know.
- Thank the person for taking the time to complete the survey.

## SCREENING PROCESS

If participants expressed interest through a recruiting survey, a screening call (recruitment phase 3) as a second round of assessment can be conducted to determine which of the participants should be included in the study. Review the survey responses to first narrow the list to those who meet your inclusion and exclusion criteria. Once you have reviewed the list, schedule a brief 5–10-minute phone call with the prospective interview participants. The phone call can help build rapport with the potential participants, answer any questions they might have, and help you make a more informed decision on who could be involved in the research. You can also schedule the time, date and location for the interview during this call, if the participant continues to express interest in being involved.

### Sample Recruiting Call Guide

- Start by introductions: provide background information on the team and the research being conducted.
  - Hi there, my name is [\_\_\_\_]. I’m calling to follow up on the survey you filled out on [date and place], expressing your interest in participating in our research study about [\_\_\_\_].
  - You indicated that you’re interested in participating in the interview, is that right?
  - Is now a good time? This call should take about 5-10 minutes.
  - As you may know, this research is being conducted by [team involved]. I’m from [Eva’s] and am one of the researchers on the project. Eva’s is [include mission statement and types of projects the organization takes on].
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Include a few questions that either delve deeper into the answers they provided in the survey or clarify questions that came up for you.
- If the young person continues to be interested in being involved in the study, schedule a time, date and location for the interview.
- Be transparent about compensation that will be provided for their time and how/when they will receive it.
- End the conversation by letting the person know how they can contact you should they have any other questions about the study or their involvement in the study.
- Thank the person for their time.

## 4. CONDUCTING A PRE-BRIEF PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

The pre-brief with the team is an extremely important step for two reasons: it helps everyone align on the interview plan and allows the team to check in with one another.

Before going into your interview, set aside approximately 30 minutes for the interview team to come together to outline roles and responsibilities, and share knowledge about the interview participant (if this information is available through a screening process). At the meeting, you can review:

- Who is the person you are interviewing?
- What is their demographic information? What details do you need to pay special attention to structure safety for this person during the interview process?
- How will you relate to the young person? How are you connected, and how are you different? It's important to own up to these similarities and differences in order to build trust and start the relationship with transparency.
- What background information was communicated during the screening process?
- What do you need to be mindful of in your conversation?
- What is everyone's roles and responsibilities?
- What is your material check-list for the interview?
- Where is the interview happening?
- What steps are you taking to creating a safe space? (We recommend reviewing the 6 principles of structuring safety in the resiliency interview framework to ensure that preparations have been made such that the interview is conducted ethically in every way possible).
- Some additional points for consideration:
  - How does this space (office, room) foster safety?
  - How does your self-presentation (clothing, posture, tone of voice, attitude) foster safety?
  - How can you set the tone of the conversation so that you, the researcher, are the most vulnerable in the room?

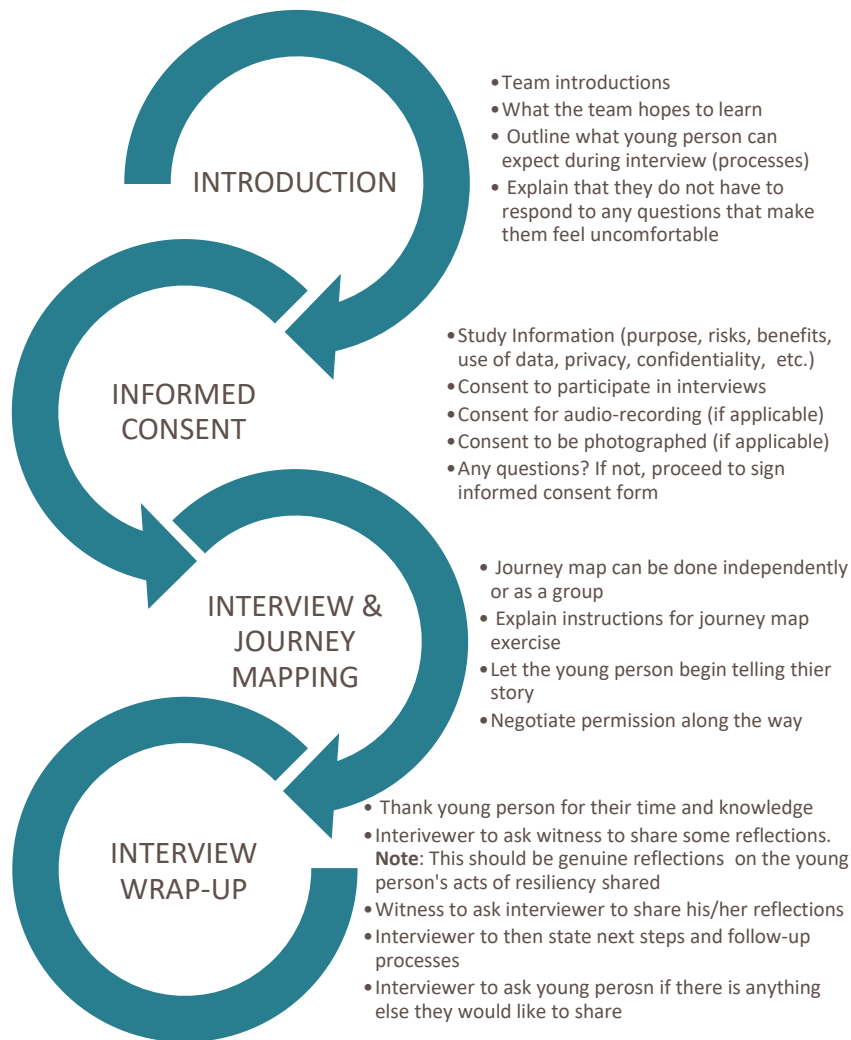
Secondly, use the pre-brief time to understand your own emotional and mental state on the day of the interview, through an exercise called "Your Map of the World." When we talk about our "map", we refer to the memories and experiences that follow us every day and impact our daily emotional state. It's important to recognize this state as it impacts our behaviours and interactions, particularly in the context of speaking to young people.

To first reflect on your "map of the world," consider the emotional topography of your life:

- In what state of emotional intensity did you grow up? In what state do you currently live?
- Which trauma behaviours take you out of **co-regulation** and how this is connected to your map of the world?
- How you might resist/respond differently?
- How this self-reflective practice can be of use in the work that you do?

What does your overall map look like? What do you imagine your interview participant's map might look like based on the information you have? Share your map of the world with the rest of your team, sharing as much or as little detail as you are comfortable with. Use this exercise to inform what steps you may want to take (if any) to self-regulate in order to foster an interview environment where you can structure safety meaningfully and appropriately for the person you will be interviewing.

## 5. FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



### BEST PRACTICES

- Plan your interview—Create a breakdown of the interview and plan the questions you'd like to ask. What is your main research question? What supporting questions do you need to ask to answer the main research question? How will these questions be asked in a way that structures safety for the interview participants?
- Avoid close-ended questions—Avoid phrasing questions in a way where they can be answered with a single “yes” or “no”. Engage interviewees in a conversation with questions that allow them to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings.
- Avoid leading questions—Do not propose your assumptions or hypotheses in the form of questions where interviewees feel pressured into affirming or contradicting your position. Avoid questions that lead the interviewee to a specific answer, which will then confirm your own bias.

- Establish trust—Consider some of the rules of safe space for interviews. Introduce yourself and potentially other people in the room. Make it clear that you care about the interviewees’ responses, and that you are there to learn and not only to confirm your assumptions. Let the interviewee know how their stories will help to create impact down the road.
- Use clear language—Ask questions in clear language, one question at a time. Otherwise, you might confuse interviewees. Avoid slang or technical terms. Try to speak with careful articulation.
- Listen—This sounds much easier than it actually is. Give interviewees time to think and do not push them to respond right away. Sometimes a moment of silence feels uncomfortable for interviewers. However, giving interviewees time to think helps them to structure their thoughts, to dig deeper, and often open up more. Make an effort to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, whether this is due to silence or engaging in difficult conversations. Listening carefully may also help you better understand what the most appropriate follow-up questions or probes may be.
- Paraphrase—Paraphrasing describes a technique where the interviewer repeats in his/her own words what the interviewee has just said. This helps interviewers to check if they correctly understood or if they only heard what they wanted to hear. Paraphrasing also gives interviewees more time to reflect on what they just said and elaborate on it more.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Preparation: 1–2 weeks</li> <li>+ Activity: 1–3 hours/interview (depending on the number of interviewees and researchers)</li> </ul>
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Notebook</li> <li>+ Audio recorder</li> <li>+ Activities</li> <li>+ Stationery</li> <li>+ Legal agreements (consent and/or confidentiality agreement)</li> </ul>
Researchers / Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Minimum 1 (best to have 2 researchers with one person as lead interviewers and one person as the note-taker)</li> <li>+ The lead researcher will be a young person with lived experience of homelessness and/or precarious housing</li> </ul>
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Text (transcripts, field notes)</li> <li>+ Audio recordings (optional) – or written notes</li> <li>+ Photos</li> <li>+ Artifacts/exercises</li> </ul>

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### LOGISTICS

When preparing the interview protocol, clearly state the problem and research question(s) you are looking to address. Explicitly state key learnings you hope to gain from the interviews and

the types of details you are looking to observe. The protocol should also include an outline of the interview activities and proposed timeframe of each activity to help interviewers align on a schedule.

### Introduction

Start the interview by introducing yourself and other team members who may be in the room. Clearly explain the purpose and objectives of the research, and how the interviewee's participation may benefit other youth who are experiencing homelessness or precarious housing. Provide an outline of the interview agenda, describing any activities that the interviewees will partake in.

Before starting with the interview, ensure that each young person being interviewed:

- Has been asked for consent to be audio-recorded and knows that they can stop the recording at any time and/or choose to delete the recording at the end of the interview.
- Knows that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and can retract any information they've shared up to that point.
- Knows that they can refer to "opt out" cards if they do not feel comfortable responding to any of the questions asked
- Knows that they will have the opportunity to discuss research findings with the team at the end of the study.

Give the young person the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the research process. After responding to their questions, provide them with the consent form to review and sign. Emphasize that their personal information will remain confidential and that they can choose to skip any question that they don't feel comfortable responding to. Let them know that you only need them to share as much as they think you should know. Refer to the best practices for structuring safety when interviewing people who have experienced trauma to guide you as you prepare to facilitate dialogue with the interviewees. For example, negotiate permission by asking, "What ways of knowing yourself do you trust that you will be able to say no to me if I ask you something that is not okay?"

### Informed Consent Form

The informed consent form should be written in simple language for youth. It should include:

- Information about the study, including:
  - Purpose of the study
  - Process of engagement (i.e. what can the interview participant expect?)
  - Risks and benefits of participating in the study
  - Information about privacy and confidentiality
  - Potential use of data
  - Process of withdrawal from the study (if desired)
  - Person to contact if you have any questions or concerns
- Consent to participate in the study

- Consent to be audio-recorded (if applicable). Specify what the purpose of being audio-recorded will be (e.g. transcription and data analysis).
- Consent to be photographed/have any artifacts photographed (if applicable)
  - If the interview participant does provide consent to be photographed or have their work photographed, seek consent for where you can use these photographs (e.g. newsletters, social media, presentations, etc.)
- Consent to be videotaped (if applicable)
  - If the interview participant does provide consent to be video-taped, seek consent for where you can use this video-recording.
- Signature of interviewee and the date

### Interview Questions

Start the interview by taking the time to learn more about the young person's history, background and why they decided to participate in this interview. You can ask questions such as:

- I know we've spoken briefly over the phone; would you mind telling us a little about yourself?
- How are you feeling today?
- Why to participate in this interview?
- How did you first learn about Eva's?
- What was your first experience with unstable housing?

## Interview Exercise—Journey Map

After starting the conversation about housing precarity, introduce the Journey Map exercise. Explain to the young person that you will be spending the next 1-2 hours facilitating this activity to document their experiences moving into and out homelessness and/or unstable housing situations. The intent is to capture their experiences over time; understand barriers they faced; any successes and challenges they faced; and what they did to survive and get to where they are today. Remind the young person of the purpose of this activity, and how gaining an understanding of their journey will help the team to inform current and future interventions in the system – which may help others who are experiencing similar circumstances. Take some time to explain the journey map process:

- The exercise sheet is divided into different sections that we can fill out together or you can fill individually.
- Each section starts with the selection of a housing card that can be used to explain accommodation(s) at various stages of your life. There are also blank cards that you can fill out if the images don't correspond to your experience(s).
- Then, we'd like to learn more about what was happening around you in each housing situation. There are cards you can choose from to discuss what was happening for you; what your relationships and connections were; what your health was like; what your dreams and aspirations were at that time; what would you have liked to have help with; and blank cards for anything else you'd like to discuss. You can choose to discuss as much or as little as you'd like for each of your housing situations. Remember that you only need to share as much as you think we need to know.
- We'd then like to learn about what you did in each housing situation to survive and thrive. What were your acts of resistance and resilience? We have several resiliency cards from which you can choose "acts of resilience," that correspond to your story. You can also write your own act of resiliency on a blank card. We'd like to hear your story of how you navigated the space that you were in and what led you to your next housing experience.
- We can either start with where you are at right now and move backwards in time or you can start by telling us about your first experience with housing precarity. Where would you like to begin?

After describing the activity, ask the young person if they have any questions or concerns. Take the time to respond to their questions in as much detail as required, ensuring they are comfortable with moving forward. As you're going through the activity and documenting the young person's story, use the following probes for each section:

- Housing cards:
  - Where—What city/country were you in? Where were you staying?
  - How – How did you get to this city/country/housing situation? How did you pay for this?
  - Duration—How long were you there?
  - Season—What time of year was it?

- Age—How old were you?
- ◆ Descriptor cards:
  - **What was happening for you?** — What was happening for you during this time? Aim to start with this question to ease the young person into telling their story more broadly. Let him/her describe as much or as little as they want. Let this question guide the conversation before probing with specific questions. You can use the following prompts to learn more about the young person’s story and their response(s) to each housing situation. Ask about the young person’s response in each of their situations as opposed to what happened them, by asking questions such as:
    - How did you respond?
    - What did you decide to do?
    - How did you know to do this?
    - What were you paying attention to?
    - What resources and knowledges were you able to access in this moment?
    - How was it possible for you to access this knowledge?
    - What experiences/people through your life taught you how to do this?
  - **Health**— How did you feel? What was your physical health like during this time? Mental health? Do you think your housing impacted your health? If so, how and why? Do you think physical/mental health impacted your housing? If so, how and why?
  - **Relationships/Connections/Culture**— Who were you connected to (probe: friends, services, etc.)? What were your points of contact during this time? Did you have any connections or cultural practices that helped you? Who or what created challenges and/or conflict for you?
  - **My Dreams**— What were you working towards? What were you hoping for? What kept you going?
  - **What would have helped**— What do you think you needed at this time? What helped you, overall? What made things worse? What would have helped you? What would you have liked to have access to?
  - **[blank]**—Is there anything else that you’d like to discuss that we haven’t touched on?
  - What do you think caused you to move into this [type of housing]?
- ◆ Resiliency cards:
  - What were your personal acts of resistance and resiliency? Can you tell us what you did in those moments that helped you survive? You can look through the cards or write your own on a blank card.
  - It may be necessary for the researcher to point out what they’ve heard so far: “I heard you say... you stayed to take care of your sister / you left because you felt unsafe / you left because you wanted freedom...” and to acknowledge the strength and resilience it took for a person to make that choice. This may help the young person recognize their own acts of resilience.
  - What did you do?
  - Can you tell me more about these acts of resilience that you selected [or wrote out]?
  - Why did you choose [or write out] this card(s)?

Be open to using as many or as few of the journey map as necessary to capture the young person's full journey. After completing the interview, ask the young person to review the journey map they created, and ensure they are comfortable with the information they have shared. Is there any content they'd like to redact? How did they feel about the activity?

#### Interview Wrap-up

Thank the young person for taking the time to share their experiences and expertise with you. Ask them if they have any questions or if they'd like to discuss anything that hadn't been touched on. Review the journey map and the questions you asked and ask them if there is anything they would like to remove from the record. Give them time to think about this. Ask them if they would like to take photos of the activity or if they would like to keep their story (if they want to keep the paper copy, ask if you can take a photo of their journey map). Present them with their take-away (journal) and thank them once again for their time. Ask them for their permission to follow-up in the future in case you have any clarification questions; or to inform them about study findings. Finally, give the young person your contact information in case they have questions, comments, or concerns about the information they shared.

## WHAT IS A JOURNEY MAP?

### Description

Journey maps are a tool to visualize past and present experiences of young people as they move into and out of homelessness and/or housing precarity. In this activity, participants discuss various stages of an end-to-end experience, which can be as detailed or as high-level as the scope of the interview requires. Within each stage of this journey, there are various steps and categories that expand on the participant's individual contexts, documenting their thoughts, emotions and actions. By creating a journey map together, the participant and researcher are building a common language that can be changed and adjusted throughout the conversation to ensure that the data being collected is accurate. Visualizing these datasets and personal stories creates a shared understanding amongst stakeholders, and a common language for participants and researchers.

The journey map is a structured way for participants to discuss their story with the researcher by thinking about their various housing experiences and what these experiences entailed. They can start with their current experience and move backwards in time, by moving through the following steps:

1. Housing cards with various locations and prompting questions are provided to start the story-telling process.
2. Participants will then be asked to think about what was happening for them during that phase, what their health was like, what personal relationships and connections they had, what their dreams or goals were, and what might have helped them in that specific period of time.
3. This is followed by probing young people to think about and identify their personal acts of resilience during each of their different housing circumstances. Participants have the

option of writing out their own acts of resilience or choose from several card options that will help them to start this conversation.

- Each housing experience is wrapped up with the young person’s story of resiliency. Here the person will discuss what actions they took to survive, thrive in their situation, and/or do what was best for them or others. As this is a key part of the resiliency framework, ensure that enough time and space is given to recognize and honour each participants’ acts of resiliency throughout their journey.

With this activity we aim to collect data on:

- Barriers or enablers to exiting homelessness/housing precarity
- Barriers or enablers to mobility through housing phases
- Systemic successes and failures (gaps) along the journey
- Successes and challenges associated with each stage
- Stories of resilience
- How and where information is discovered by young people
- Key drivers of decision-making along young people’s journeys

After completing the activity, young people should be given the option to review their journey maps and add to it as they see fit or redact information they no longer wish to have documented.

What to expect

Duration	+ The activity will be a main component of the interview, taking anywhere from 50–70% of the time in the interview
Requirements	+ Activity sheets + Activity cards + Markers/pens + Camera + Audio recorder
Researchers / Facilitators	+ Minimum 1 (best to have 2 researchers with one person as lead interviewers and one person as the note-taker) + The lead researcher will be a young person with lived experience of homelessness and/or precarious housing
Outputs	+ Text (transcripts, field notes) + Audio recordings + Photos + Artifacts/exercises

## 6. DEBRIEFING POST-INTERVIEW

### CONTENT DEBRIEF

It's important to conduct a debrief (either individually or as a team), immediately following an interview to ensure you are capturing your thoughts and observations while they're fresh in your mind. If it's not possible to debrief immediately after, aim to complete the debrief before the day's end; leaving it to the next day could mean forgetting details and nuances. Start by individually spending 10–15 minutes to answer your debriefing questions about the interview participant. Then, come together as a team to consolidate your notes into one document, capturing key take-aways from the interview and any observations, quotes or stories that stood out or came by surprise.

Below are examples of debriefing questions to answer. Note that all questions may not be relevant to each interview. However, it's important to complete the first 5 sections.

- 📌 Participant Profile:
- 📌 Key take-aways and immediate thoughts:
- 📌 What surprised you?
- 📌 Impactful or notable quotes:
- 📌 Impactful or notable stories:
- 📌 Any conflicts/contradictions with what others have said?
- 📌 What did you hear/see that challenges the way you've been thinking about this?
- 📌 What underlying patterns do you notice emerging that are impacting people's behaviours?
- 📌 Unanswered questions you would like to ask interviewee if you could:
- 📌 Additional questions or topics to be explored in future interviews:

### PROCESS DEBRIEF

As a team, reflect on the interview process and structure. Ask yourself how the questions and activities were received, and whether questions need to be modified for future interviews to stimulate better responses from the participants. Did you hear any feedback from the participant on the process that you might need to consider for the future? How was the space where the interview was conducted? Did you have enough time before the interview to come together as a team? Did you have enough time for the interview? This is an important step that allows you to reflect on your practice and whether any elements need to be modified or improved before the next interview. You can do this debrief by asking the following questions:

- 📌 What worked?
- 📌 What didn't?
- 📌 What could be improved?

## GLOSSARY

**Ally:** a person who belongs to a group with certain privileges and works alongside people from groups that are oppressed in relation to that privilege with the aim of creating change and increasing social justice in relation to this oppression.

**Anti-oppression:** recognizing the power imbalance that exists across different societal groups and attempting to mitigate its affects to achieve equity.

**Chronic Homelessness:** the experience of homelessness that has persisted for at least a year or more.

**Co-regulation:** the recognition and safe management of one's counter-aggressive impulses and overwhelming emotional arousal, which can be obtained through acts of support, and appropriate tone of voice and communication.

**Micro-aggressions:** brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights, invalidations, and insults to an individual or group because of their marginalized status in society

**Oppression:** use of power to disempower, marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group, often in order to further empower and/or privilege the oppressor.

**Precarious Housing:** living in housing conditions that are substandard, overcrowded, and/or unaffordable.

**Resistance:** the unconscious, direct, or indirect response from a person indicating refusal to accept or comply with any given event, in order to protect oneself from awareness of that which he/she fears will be overwhelming.

**Self-regulation:** control of oneself and one's emotions when working with clients or research participants.

**Structuring safety:** the practices of negotiating or co-constructing conditions, structures, and agreements that will make space for safe-enough work alongside survivors (i.e. youth experiencing homelessness).

**Trauma:** adverse situations/lived experience of people, preventing them from fully managing their lives.

**Youth Homelessness:** situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents/caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe, or consistent residence.

# APPENDIX A

## Study Information & Consent Form: Youth Participants

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study Name:** Solutions Lab: Pathways into and out of Youth Homelessness

**Researchers:**

1. Dr. Kaitlin Schwan, Postdoctoral Fellow, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, York University (Principal Investigator)
2. Alzahra Hudani, Research Coordinator, Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth

**Sponsor:** This research is funded by the National Housing Strategy.

**PARTICIPANT'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

We are doing a study to learn more about young people's experiences going into and coming out of homelessness or unstable housing. We would like your help.

### WHY ARE WE DOING THIS STUDY?

We are doing a study on young people's journeys into and out of homelessness and unstable housing. We want to understand what problems youth have faced in finding housing, and how our programs and services at Eva's can be improved to address these problems. We also want to know what supports youth wish they had during their experience of homelessness and how we can include these supports into our programs and services at Eva's. This study is in partnership with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Dans La Rue in Montreal, and the Pacific Community Resources Centre in Vancouver.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview and journey mapping exercise to discuss your experiences in different housing situations that you encountered. You will be asked about what happened during these times, the relationships and connections you had, how your health was, and what you wish you had. As you discuss your story with the peer interviewer, you will also illustrate your story on a journey map. During the interview, you will be able to discuss whatever you think is most important with the interviewer. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. The interview will take about 1.5-2 hours long and will be in a private room at Eva's Place or Eva's Phoenix.

### ARE THERE GOOD AND BAD THINGS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

The good thing is that you will help us learn more about how we can improve our programs and services, and how we can create other programs that will help to prevent homelessness or unstable housing situations in Toronto.

A potentially negative effect of participating is that some of the questions that are asked may require you to reflect on a time that was not very pleasant. However, you do not have to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable answering, and you can let the interviewer know by saying "No" or by picking up a card beside the journey map which reads "No," "Skip," or "Come Back." All interviews will take place in a private room and all the information you share with us will be completely confidential.

### **WHO WILL KNOW ABOUT WHAT I DID IN THIS STUDY?**

The research coordinator, peer interviewer and Youth-in-Transition worker will know that you participated in this study and will know your responses to the questions asked. We will keep your responses confidential. To do this, we will use a number instead of your name when we store your answers on secure, password protected computer at Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth. No information that discloses your identity will be published or released.

### **CAN I DECIDE IF I WANT TO BE IN THE STUDY?**

It is up to you if you want to be in the study. You can choose whether you want to participate in the interview and journey mapping exercise, but do not want to be audio recorded or have your story photographed. If you choose not to participate in the study, it will NOT affect your access to programs or services at Eva's Initiatives or other community agencies/organizations.

You can stop being in the study at any time during the study and up to two months after you participate in the interview and journey mapping exercise. There will be no negative consequences to deciding that you no longer want to be in the study. Just let the research coordinator know that you do not want to be a part of the study anymore. If you decide later that you wish you didn't participate, you can decide if you want us to destroy any responses you have already given.

### **WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

Thank you for considering participating in this study. If you have questions about this study, please contact the research coordinator, \_\_\_\_\_ at: [insert phone number], or [insert phone number].

This research has been reviewed and approved by the York University Research Ethics Board. If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this study and also want to speak with someone who is not on the research team, please contact Alison Collins-Mrakas, Manager and Policy Advisor, York University Office of Ethics at: 416-736-5914 or [acollins@yorku.ca](mailto:acollins@yorku.ca)

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth is conducting a research study to understand young people's stories into and out of homelessness, as explained to me by the research coordinator. I understand that this interview will be audio recorded, and that I can choose whether or not I want my story to be

recorded. I also understand that my journey map may be photographed, and that I can choose whether or not I want it to be photographed.

I have been made aware of the potential risks and benefits associated with my participation in the study. Any questions that I have asked about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that my decision to participate or not will be kept completely confidential. I further understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. I understand that participation or non-participation in this study will in no way impact my use of programs or services at Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth or other organization/agencies whose services I may be using.

I understand that information collected for this study is strictly confidential and that all data will be stored securely. I have been assured that no information will be released or printed that would disclose my identity unless required by the law. All data will be destroyed (shredded or deleted) 7 years after the end of the study.

**Please check the appropriate boxes:**

**1. CONSENT to Audio Record**

I voluntary consent to be audio recorded during the interview

I do NOT agree to be audio-recorded during the interview

**2. CONSENT to Photograph**

I voluntary consent to have my journey map photographed after the interview

I do NOT agree to have my journey map photographed after the interview

If you do consent to having your journey map photographed, please indicate where you consent that this photograph can be used:

In newsletters/ articles	N	Y
In print, digital and slide form	N	Y
In community presentations	N	Y
In social media	N	Y

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to participate. (Please print your first and last name).

**Participant Signature**

**Date**