

Home Safe Home... ... Or Not?

Safety On The Streets

My story is not that different from other kids who run away to save their own life.

After awhile the torture from the hands of those who were meant to love me as parents became more than I could bear. Years of mental, physical, sexual abuse, years of terror and degradation. Running away was something I daydreamed about often, in great magical detail. I would meet a nice guy who would love me totally and who would take care of me like a prince charming riding into the sunset.

When I met him in high school he said I could live in the basement of his parent's house and no one would know. I knew the day I moved out of the family home I could never come back. I didn't want to anyway. So when my folks were out of the house I packed some clothes, my teddy and my toothbrush and left the house keys on the kitchen table before I locked myself out. No one came looking for me. That night, at age 14, I was violently raped by my prince as he whispered "I love you". That night I was convinced love came at the end of a fist.

After I left him I started flopping at a commune I knew about, where a bunch of COOL dudes lived and where the booze and drugs flowed. I loved escaping reality and floating away. To the outside world I created a tough false self, an armor of emotional protection that usually served me well, or so I thought. The cool dudes were bikers and soon I was involved in crime. As time passed I became more and more entrenched in a seductive, abusive, sexually exploitive slave relationship and a destructive risk-taking lifestyle. When I wasn't on drugs, I was so filled with despair and emptiness that I self harmed and attempted suicide.

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“That night I was convinced love came at the end of a fist”

Youth:

These children often survive by staying with friends, or being involved in the sex trade or illegal activity • Young people prefer to align with other youths due to strong peer orientation and distrust of adults • Casual, unskilled, minimum-wage jobs do not provide the resources needed for secure, safe housing • Many avoid and/or are ineligible for child welfare, adult service or income support • Largest gap in services is for 16 & 17 year olds • Young females constitute 1/3 – 1/2 of homeless youth • Adult services and shelters are inappropriate and often dangerous for youth • Youth shelters are often only in larger cities and often gender mixed • Those in and from government care, and lesbian and gay youth overrepresented in shelters • Many are victims of sexual/physical/psychological abuse

Aboriginal:

22% of homeless are First Nations and 9% are Métis • Many experience lower education and income levels, higher unemployment and poverty levels • Racism and discrimination very common experience

Families:

Most homeless families are headed by women • Most at risk for homelessness when extended family and friend resources are exhausted • Most at risk are when domestic violence occurs • Child custody issues may increase the risks

Women

Often must exchange sexual or domestic services for shelter • Suffer greater levels poverty, family violence, addictions, mental and physical health problems and lack of affordable housing • Aboriginal women at greatest risk of violence and poverty • Less likely to have strong /positive spiritual connections • Frequently experience unfit housing, harassment by landlords and other tenants and/or unsafe neighborhoods • Concerns about nutrition, cleanliness, safety of belongings/children/self • With immigrant/refugee status they may not be eligible for some social supports • Upon leaving a shelter, more single women and one-third of young mothers remained homeless

Fast Facts:

Overall:

- Homeless individuals are 35 times more at risk of experiencing violence
- 75% have concerns for their safety
- 68% have been victims of crime
- 91% of the most vulnerable have been victims of violence



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I tried to return to my family home once, but when I got there they didn't live there anymore. I didn't know where they went. With no other family in Canada I was utterly alone.

On the streets your body is your currency as a girl, and you do what you have to do to survive. In time drugs become more important than food and a scavenger existence was played out in order to find a bed or some safety. After awhile you don't use the term rape anymore, you just garner energy to numb out and shut down. You soon stop fighting and start dying from the inside out.

If I was sober, the movie of childhood trauma would play over and over and over until I couldn't stand it anymore and I would feel like exploding. I would do damn near anything to make it stop. Heroin killed the pain at first and needles made it happen quicker. Often I didn't know what was real or fantasy anymore and would respond to the crazy voices that seemed to follow me around. Robbed, raped, treated like I was invisible, I would beg, I would steal. What's mine is mine, what's yours is mine; I am going to take it. Overdoses, lets go to the psych ward again, take pills, go to jail, tricks for cigarettes; death seemed like my only escape.

One night I passed out in the backyard of a Christian pastor's house. He and his wife took me in. I was hungry and they fed me. I was in tatters and they clothed me. I was broken and they showed me that I had value and was loved.

No magic. A slow process of healing that continues today 30 years later. My life has now been dedicated to journeying alongside those whose lives have been devastated by trauma, those who find themselves homeless and houseless.

And I am full of gratitude.

Susan

Fact Sheet

Literacy and safety:

People from low income families, the long-term unemployed, seniors, people with disabilities, and marginalized racial and cultural minorities are more likely to experience literacy barriers and more poverty. This directly impacts access to safe and affordable housing.

This population may:

Experience higher levels of stress • Work in unsafe or dangerous jobs • Have difficulty reading and understanding safe operating instructions for machinery or appliances

Low literacy may affect access to health services, financial assistance, human rights, resources and other opportunities:

May experience difficulties with understanding prescriptions and other health information • May face literacy barriers if 1st language is not English or French • May feel powerless and scared, leaving them more vulnerable to victimization and other safety issues



FOR INFORMATION & HELP

ADDICTIONS

12 step Recovery Church
Central United Church
131-7 Avenue SW
403-269-3701

Renfrew Recovery Centre (24-hour service)
1611 Remington Rd. N.E.
403-297-3337

Aventa Addiction Treatment for Women
610 25th Ave. S.W.
403-245-9050
www.aventa.org

Calgary Alpha House Society Detox Centre
203 15th Ave. S.E.
403-234-7388 (24 hour)

Sunrise – Native Addictions Services
1231 34th Ave. N.E.
403-261-7921
www.nass.ca

DISABILITIES

Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary
#134, 3359 – 27th St. N.E.
403-263-6880
www.ilrcc.ab.ca

HEALTH

CUPS Community Health Centre
128 Seventh Ave. S.E.
403-221-8780
www.cupshealthcentre.com

The Alex Community Health Centre
101 – 1318 Centre St. North
403-266-2622
www.thealex.ca

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre
1213 – 4th Street SW
403-955-6200

Elbow River Healing Lodge (Aboriginal)
#216, 906 - 8th Avenue SW
Ph: (403) 781-3200
healinglodge@calgaryhealthregion.ca

AIDS Calgary
110, 1603 10th Avenue SW
403-508-2500
info@aidscalgary.org

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
3rd Floor, 120 - 17 Avenue SW
403-262-2006
contact@ccis-calgary.ab.ca

Immigrant Services Calgary
#1200, 910 - 7th Avenue S.W.
403-265-1120
info@immigrantservicescalgary.ca

MENTAL HEALTH

Canadian Mental Health Association
Street Outreach and Stabilization program (SOS)
400 – 1202 Centre St. S.E.
403-297-1700
www.cmha.calgary.ab.ca

Distress Centre
300 – 1010 Eighth Ave. S.W.
Crisis line (24 hours) 403-266-1605
www.distresscentre.com

SERVICES

Servants Anonymous Society
(women exiting/at risk of sex trade involvement)
403-237-8477
info@servantsanon.com

Calgary Association of Self Help
403-266-8711
1019 Seventh Ave. S.W.
www.calgaryselfhelp.com

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA)
403-237-5888
1-877-237-5888 (toll free)

Calgary Food Bank
5000 11th St. S.E.
(Hamper Request Line) 403-253-2055
www.calgaryfoodbank.com

CUPS Community Health Centre
128 Seventh Ave. S.E.
403-221-8780
www.cupshealthcentre.com

Women's Centre
646 First Ave. N.E.
403-264-1155
www.womens-centre.org

Aspen Family and Community Network Society
13, 2115- 27 Ave NE
403-219- 3477
www.aspenfamily.org

SHELTER

Salvation Army
410-1111 (24 hour)
Centre of Hope, 420 Ninth Ave. S.E.
www.ab.salvationarmy.ca

Booth Centre
403-262-6188
631 Seventh Ave. S.E.

Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre
403-266-3600 (24 hour)
423 Fourth Ave. S.E.
www.thedi.ca

Children's Cottage Society/ Crisis Nursery
403-233-2273
(24-hour crisis line)
845 McDougall Rd. N.E.
www.childrencottage.ab.ca

Inn from the Cold
403-263-8384
106 – 110 11th Ave. S.E.
www.innfromthecold.org

The Mustard Seed
403-269-1319
102 11th Ave. S.E.
www.theseed.ca

(YWCA) Mary Dover House Residence
403-263-1550
320 Fifth Ave. S.E.
24 hour Support and Information Line:
403-237-5888

Kerby Centre Housing Registry (seniors)
403-705-3230 or 403-705-3231
housing@kerbycentre.com

Trinity Place Foundation of Alberta (seniors)
602-1st Street SE
403-269-3183

MCF Housing for Seniors
#804, Centre 70
7015 Macleod Trail SW
403-276-5541
contact@mcfhousing.com

Low Cost Housing
www.lowcosthousing.org

VIOLENCE & ASSAULTS

Calgary Police Service
Non-emergency calls 403-266-1234
Emergency calls 911
www.calgarypolice.ca

YOUTH

Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary
713 13th Ave. N.E.
403-276-9981
www.calgaryboysandgirlsclub.ca

Avenue 15
938 15th Ave. S.W.
403-543-9651

Exit Youth Shelter
112 16th Ave. N.E.
403-509-2323

McMan Youth Services
404, 315-10 Avenue SE
(403) 508-6259
calgary@mcman.ca

