

Dads Make a Difference Too!

Environmental Scan of Services for
Young Dads in the Edmonton Area



Environmental Scan of services for young dads compiled by
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The Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this environmental scan is to gather data on the resources available to young fathers in the Edmonton area. By collecting such information it is deemed important to collect data that does more than lists available services. As is evident from the research study "On Fathers Ground" (Bolte, et al., 2001) which reviews programs in Canada specifically targeted towards fathers and their life issues, there are only a couple of such programs that specifically target young fathers. This being said, such a study would not be very informative if it reviewed such programs in the Edmonton area, of which Terra Associations Young Dads Outreach Services is the most specific program relating to this service area.

It has also been suggested that this study provide a comparative between what services are available to young mothers versus young fathers, with the objective of demonstrating the imbalance between the two, services for young mothers dwarfing those available to young fathers. This exercise it is felt would simply be a waste in research resources and prove the already obvious and generally accepted amongst those working and conducting research in the area of fathering. Such a study would simply result in a scan of resources for young mothers, perhaps demonstrating that which we already know, but not informing us of what this state of services implies. The focus of this study is on services for young fathers and what the state of services, both direct and indirect services, implies in terms of how Terra Association should be developing strategies that better responds to the needs of young fathers in the Edmonton area.

As part of a broader needs assessment strategy, this environmental scan therefore is required to inform particular areas of interest that are not entirely dealt with by the focus group and one-to-one interview processes, or the literature review. Together, these three areas of research will overlap and compliment each other, providing a more complete analysis of what the needs of young fathers are, and how the Edmonton community should respond.

METHODOLOGY

The environmental scan encompasses three elements of enquiry. The first will entail the collection of data pertaining to existing human services available to young fathers. As is evidenced by the Support Network Directory of Community Resources, there are hundreds of services/resources in the Capital Region, which encompasses Edmonton and surrounding areas. In order to narrow our search, we referenced other additional sources that have examined similar target areas.

Most recently, MENInc. a network of services addressing service issues and gaps for men, conducted its own environmental scan. This is an invaluable source of information that has been utilized with the permission of MENInc. Although focusing on men as opposed to young fathers, there is obviously an overlap in the issues that are shared by these two groups. Although services for men are more general than the narrower target of young fathers, (a sub grouping of men), services for men would encompass certain programs for young men of which some would include young fathers. A focusing of our enquiry in this way will enable us to at least identify indirect services that relate more specifically to the challenges experienced by young fathers.

The same narrowing can be applied to the broader area of youth services. And therefore, another invaluable source of data has been the Edmonton Youth Services Directory.

These two sources have served to be the main starting points for data collection. There are however, other, more service area specific, sources of information. These sources include lists of funded agencies from funding sources with a mandate in a particular service area. An example of this is the list of funded agencies that Human Resources Skills Development Canada provided to the researcher.

The second element of enquiry entailed identifying the need areas that appear most relevant to young fathers. In identifying these need areas, we are then able to focus our enquiry towards those services that are most pertinent to young fathers. Terra Association is fortunate to be utilizing a client information system that collects longitudinal data on its service users that relates to changes in needs. The system utilizes a T-Score methodology, of rating the degree of need perception that a client feels at the pre-service point of intake to services, and the post-test point of discharge from services. The longitudinal measures seek to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach services in addressing those needs identified by the young father.

Monthly statistics are also collected on what other services Terra Association clients are referred. By comparing need areas to services fathers have been referred to, we have been able to target other service providers, amongst our environmental scan, who are likely to have a greater knowledge and stake in the needs and services of this target population.

A small random sampling of these services then occurred and a Key Informant survey was conducted in an effort to better enrich our understanding on the state of services for young fathers. This key informant survey became the final element of enquiry for the environmental scan study.

A side benefit of a key informant survey is similar to the self-selection process of focus group sites, that being, additional stakeholders and potential service partners can be identified or self identify. This approach is consistent with the benefits of participatory action research, whereby the evaluation process itself seeks in part to encompass, from a bottom-up approach, community development and program development objectives.

EXISTING SERVICE USER DEMOGRAPHICS

Terra Association has been providing Outreach Support Services to young fathers for the past five years. This work has involved either 1 part-time or 1 full-time Outreach Worker. This worker serves also as a resource to all other Terra Association programs, but the Outreach Worker serving young fathers carries a far larger caseload of clients than workers serving young mothers through these other programs. Although we are the only agency identified through this environmental scan that provides direct services targeting this population, we can fairly claim that because we have had a continual list of clients waiting for services, that this population is being under served by both Terra Association and the broader community.

For the year 2003, Terra Association served 37 young fathers, separately from mothers, through our Outreach Services. On reporting statistics for this year, it is important to note that some statistical areas had non-response rates (certain fields on the dbase not completed) that will have skewed results.

- The mean age of young fathers served at admission, was 19.3 years old. N=37 However, the data shows 3 incorrect entries, 1 reporting a client as one years old, and two reported as pre-natal. These entries would have brought down the mean age and therefore we could more accurately conclude that the mean age of clients served during the year of 2003 was 22-23 years of age.
- Referral sources to Terra Associations Outreach Services for young fathers include 7 referrals from "Service Contacts" and 12 referrals from natural support systems, including family, friends, partners or self referrals. N=19.
- 5 clients reported having criminal records. N=17.
- 6 out of 7 reported being with the mother of their child. The lack of data entry on this statistic deems it unreliable.
- Only 4 out of 16, 25% reported having any high school education.
- 12 out of 17 reported having incomes less than \$15,000.
- 12 out of 37 reported having no fixed address at the time of intake.
- For the remaining 25, their place of residence were as follows
 - 9 Central
 - 5 West Central
 - 4 North East
 - 2 North West
 - 1 North
 - 1 South East
 - 1 South West
 - 2 On reserve
- The ethnicity of the 37 clients served during 2003, 40% reported being Caucasian, 50.6% reported being of Aboriginal, Treaty Status, or of Metis decent. And 8.1% reported being East Indian, Ecuadorian, or Other.

Reason For Service For Open Files (Pre Measure) 2004 January 1 – June 11

Terra Association collects information on the needs/issues that service users report dealing with at the time of intake. Here we have recorded those issues that were reported by 5 or more clients, during the first 6 months of 2004, providing us with a ranking of needs that are most commonly reported by clients. N=16.

- 10 clients Family conflict
- 10 clients Grief, Separation, loss
- 10 clients Lack of parenting skills
- 9 clients Depression
- 8 clients Requires employment preparation
- 7 clients Alcohol Abuse
- 7 clients Requires job search skills
- 6 clients Cultural identity issues
- 6 clients Emotional abuse

- 6 clients Street Peer Group
- 5 clients Exposure to unsafe situations, things, or people

These figures are very similar to those reported for 2003. An issue/need that was reported more often the previous year was “Requires Positive Role Model”. Although not reported more than once at intake during this 2004 period, during focus groups and 1 to 1 surveying, this was an issues/need often self identified by participants. Requiring knowledge of community resources was another issue reported more often in 2003 than the 2004 period. There also appears to be a difference between “Accommodation” being reported as a need in 2003 (by only 8.3%) and the number reporting having no fixed address at the time of intake, being 12 out of 37.

Pre To Post Issue Severity Scores, Jan. 1, 2003 – Dec. 31, 2003

By comparing the “Sum of Issue Severity” pre service to the “Sum of Issue Severity” post service, utilizing a T-Score measure, Terra Association seeks to determine the effectiveness of services provided.

For 2003, the Sum of Issue Severity was a mean score of 9.41 pre measure, versus 4.32 mean score post measure, with T-score pre test being 50.68 versus 45.23 post test. In general, these scores demonstrate positive outcomes in the decreasing of need severity for young fathers accessing Terra Association services.

With the exception of 1 client, the higher the number of needs reported by a client, the larger the downward “Raw Score” difference experienced at the post test measure. This is helpful information when developing services and identifying immediate versus longer-term needs, and the resources that should be allocated to respond to these different need areas and severities.

EMERGENT NEED AREAS VERSUS AVAILABLE RESOURCES

This study separates needs into two subgroups. Emergent needs refer to immediate needs that are more basic in nature. These would include food, clothing, shelter, suicide and crisis intervention, detox and alcohol/drug rehabilitation, and family violence interventions. Long-term needs refer to those areas requiring attention that do not have a quick fix. These would include remedial services like employment training, life-skills, educational upgrading, parenting support, long-term counselling, or services for persistent mental health issues.

One of the significant findings in the focus group interviews was that young fathers are ill equipped to be successful parents when they learn that they are to become fathers. Many respondents explained the reasons for this being lifestyle issues, often involving drug/alcohol abuse, not planning to partner with the mother of their child, and maturity/life stage readiness.

On the other hand, they also expressed a great desire to be involved with their child, and many demonstrated that this event was a major catalyst for change. However, some of the struggles they had at this early stage were immediate problems, and others required

periods of 2 to 3 years to increase their capacity to be in a position to have positive and healthy relationships with their children.

For this reason, we have divided the need areas and corresponding resources available to address these needs into the two areas mentioned. It is apparent that to adequately achieve positive outcomes for children, a longer-term approach is required with these young fathers. Taking a broader view of the spectrum of services, intensity of resource allocations required at different stages of service, and seamless referral, are all-important in developing successful service strategies for young fathers.

For the emergent need areas, we categorized available services within the following categories: Basic Needs; Emotional/Crisis/Counselling/Support; Housing and Shelter; Legal; Health Care; Family Violence Services; Recreation/Drop-in; and Addictions Services.

- **Basic Needs**

We often find, as is illustrated in this needs assessment that young fathers are in unstable circumstances when they first make contact with us. For this reason, Young Dads Outreach Services often involves assisting a young father with stabilizing their living situation, before dealing with longer-term issues. Addressing the basic needs for food and clothing and household items, are often the assistance that serves to develop a relationship with the young father as an entry point to longer service provision and goal planning.

In reviewing the Basic Needs appendix, it will become evident that there are two different types of services addressing basic needs. The first includes agencies such as Bissell Centre, The Mustard Seed, Edmonton's Food Bank, etc., that allow access to immediate services for food, clothing and household items. In particular, we have found the Food Bank and the Bissell Centre to be tremendous referral sources in addressing these needs.

The second includes those areas of financial aid, which through an application process, assists with Social Assistance, Child Tax Credits, Family Maintenance Enforcement, etc. These tend to be government directed services, which will assist in longer-term financial security, yet are not services that can respond to crisis situations.

Both of these service strategies are important. In general, our experience has proven that there is adequate services available to address basic needs in crisis situations. Government financial services are also supportive in addressing basic needs, but not in crisis and not in a fashion that supports these young families to stay together.

One area of concern has been with the provincial government Alberta Works department that provides financial assistance through the Supports For Independence Program. We have found that if a family includes a young father who is deemed employable, that the parents are encouraged to apply separately for services, that being, the mom as a single parent, and the father as a single employable. This serves to undermine family security and often facilitates the break up of the family. This goes against the child outcome benefits well founded in research supporting the need of father involvement with their child(ren).

Therefore, a gap in services around meeting the financial/basic needs of young families, that includes a father with barriers to employment and education, exists. It is our view that there is a need to formally explore this issue with Alberta Works, so that together, we can enhance developmental outcomes for children, through program provisions that support family stability as opposed to focusing on eligibility criteria that is individualized for each parent.

- **Emotional/Crisis/Counselling/Support**

This area refers to services that are easily accessible to young fathers in the event of crisis. Such services include those where an individual can gain access to an intake worker who will assess needs, provide emotional support, make referrals, and provide short term counselling when needed.

As demonstrated in the appendix, there is a range of such services. Terra Association however is the only agency that provides direct services to young fathers. All other services in this category are not specific to this target group. This does not mean that they are not suitable resources to young fathers when in crisis or when needing emotional support. However, because of the lack of resources specifically for young fathers, such services often struggle to make appropriate referrals to address the specific needs of young fathers. This has been well established in the Key Informant Surveys. Fathering is an important issue that requires specific attention when dealing with young men. It is often the catalyst or motivation for change in other need/problem areas. This lack of services, knowledge, and experience needed to address this issue of fathering in the broader context of a range of other serious issues, often results in young fathers falling through the cracks.

Young Dads Outreach services at Terra have been an important referral resource for those agencies that are aware of our program. It is our belief however, that many organizations do not know of this resource, and even if they did, we already lack the resources to meet the needs of all the young fathers referred to us. Our ongoing waiting list of young fathers, demonstrates the importance of Young Dads Outreach services that serve to engage a hard to reach client group. Terra Association could also broaden our public awareness efforts to increase knowledge of the importance of supporting young fathers and partner with those agencies, informally or formally, to support their work with this population.

- **Housing and Shelter**

There are six sub groupings of services under housing and shelter. These subgroups with their corresponding service providers are as follows.

1. Housing and shelter for high-risk youth.

Inner City Youth Housing Project
Youth Emergency Shelter Society

2. Single Men's Shelters

Hope Mission – Herb Jamieson Centre (Single Men’s Hostel)

3. Youth In Care

Chimo Youth Retreat Centre – SOLO Program (Supportive Independent Living Program)

Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton (Supportive Independent Living Program)

4. Aboriginal Families

Amisk Housing Corporation

Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society

Native Counselling Services of Alberta

5. Subsidized Housing

Capital Region Housing Corporation

Communitas

Edmonton Inner City Housing Society

HomeEd (City of Edmonton non-profit Housing Corporation)

6. Housing Registries and Support

Boyle Street Cooperative Services

Bissell Centre

YMCA

Terra Association

Although there appears to be a range of housing services, when broken down to their prospective sub-groups, one can see that there is not a wealth of Housing and Shelter resources, especially for young families. Not all housing services provide accommodation as in the case of housing registries.

Terra Association’s housing services has a housing worker that assists young families with finding accommodation, and also has two emergency apartments, for families that are in immediate need of shelter, until they can find longer term stable and safe housing arrangements. Again, we are the only agency with such a resource, and we find that the two apartments are not adequate in meeting the demand for this service.

Although Amisk Housing, Native Counselling Services – Cunningham Place, and a new collaboration with Communitas, are valuable resources for longer-term supportive housing, we believe there to be a greater need than what is being met. This belief is in part based upon our experience in gaining access to subsidized housing. There is a long waiting list to access housing services for example, through the Capital Region Housing Corporation.

Additional emergency housing units for families that are endorsed by Alberta Works, would go a long ways to supporting families to stay together during periods of crisis. This coupled with longer term supportive housing resources, tied in with family support and fathering initiatives, would further enhance our ability to engage young fathers into

services, support families in crisis, preventing family breakdown, and ultimately supporting positive developmental outcomes for children.

- **Legal**

As mentioned above, 5 out of 17 young fathers accessing Terra Association services in 2003 reported having criminal records. Comparing this statistic with the 1 to 1 surveys conducted with young fathers as part of this research project, the prevalence rate appears to be even higher. Of 14 participants surveyed, 8 reported having criminal records. Most reported their charges being assault related, 1 for theft, and 1 reported numerous convictions.

Attending court and assisting young fathers with navigating the criminal justice system is a major program activity of our Young Dads Outreach services, despite the fact that few clients report this as a need area at the time of intake.

Legal problems and criminal convictions and activities are seen to be both a reflection of the high risk population that makes up our caseloads, and a significant private trouble that further barriers this group from making other improvements, such as in finding employment. When the incidence of a private trouble is as high as being reported amongst our research participants, we can infer that this private trouble is significantly large enough to be viewed as a public issue.

Legal category subgroups include services for Family Violence, of which include supporting victims or treating offenders; Family Mediation/Law; Court Services; Child Welfare Advocacy; Free Legal Assistance; or Landlord/Tenant Advisory Services.

With the exception of the Edmonton John Howard Society, there are few services to assist young people with life management issues that are related to their criminal activities/involvements. Terra Association does not have an expertise in this area, but because of the significance of this issue, a collaborative partnership with an organization like the Edmonton John Howard Society that does have this expertise, makes a lot of sense. A partnership that explores how we can best assist young people with addressing criminal charges, address related need areas, promote crime prevention, and addresses barriers to employment and other areas related to having criminal charges, are all significant areas of program development that Terra Association needs to explore.

- **Health Care**

Of the 14 1-to-1 surveys conducted, only 3 individuals reported that Health was a significant need area in the past 5 years. Considering this low number in comparison to the available free health services through the public system, as well as through agencies like Boyle McCauley Health Centre and the University of Alberta Dental Clinic, there appear adequate resources available to address these needs. Key to responding to this need area appears to be casework services that can inform service users of available resources and assist them in accessing these services.

- **Family Violence**

It is unclear how prevalent the issue of family violence is amongst young fathers. Certainly in the surveys conducted and focus groups held, family violence was not reported to be a major issue. Yet, one may conclude that because of the sensitivity of this issue, young fathers may under report the significance of this problem. The above mentioned statistic reflecting a high incidence of assault charges amongst those surveyed, raises a red flag, yet we can not infer these assault charges to be family violence related. Further exploration needs to occur in this area.

There are a number of resources specifically designed to address the social problem of family violence. These include services for victims, which make up the majority of those programs, and interventions for offenders. A potential preventative and family preservation intervention for young families could be similar to that offered by the Edmonton John Howard Society's – Family Violence Prevention Centre.

Considering the importance of supporting father involvement with children, to the benefit of child development outcomes, and the significant reporting amongst young fathers of the difficulties of negotiating and mediating relationship issues in the early stages of pregnancy and post-natally, service responses are justified. Exploring potential partnerships and program modifications to address the specific needs of young families could be a valuable program development strategy in addressing the struggles that couples experience in negotiating their early relationships and the conflict that often results.

- **Recreation/Drop-in**

Service providers often find recreational services or drop-in settings to be entry points for individuals to access other services. This is particularly true with high-risk populations that are difficult to engage in services. The Boyle Street Co-op youth drop in is a good example of this, as is Ihuman. Both of these services target high-risk youth with inner-city street involvement. The Bissell Centre and The Mustard Seed have drop-ins that target adult populations with similar life issues. These are also situated in the inner city.

Although some of our service users report having accessed these drop-ins, upon becoming parents, these inner city environments are not conducive to addressing their needs, particularly with children.

Terra Association believes that there is a service gap in this area and that the concept of a drop-in setting or resource centre with a drop-in component as well as recreation services that include activities with children, would be successful service strategy to engaging young fathers into other needed services. Such programming would provide a safe environment to building relationships between young fathers and the Terra Association and with developing trust between clients and service providers that will facilitate entry into other services. Such a program component would support involvement between fathers and their children in a safe and flexible environment that provides informal support in the area of role modeling and teaching.

Focus group responses suggest that this is a program component that young fathers want and need and have identified an interest in utilizing.

- **Addictions**

Addictions as a present problem were not heavily reported in the 1-to-1 surveys. It was more often reported as a problem that had been experienced in the past, but again not for a majority of survey participants. There was a higher incidence of addictions reported as an issue in the relationship with the person that the survey participant viewed as a role model, such as a father, step father, uncle, etc.

The focus groups however, suggested that this is a much larger issue for young fathers and families, and that there was an under reporting in the 1-to1 surveys. In the focus group discussions, a significant number of young fathers identified that addictions was a major issue that they have had to struggle with. It was also strongly suggested that learning that they were to become fathers, was a momentous event motivating change. They described that the pregnancy was often unplanned and was related to lifestyle activities that include their addiction. Past familial experiences challenged their behaviour and motivated them to provide for a different upbringing for their own child.

Although having a child was a significant motivation for change, the change process was not described as an easy one. Developing stability in their lives and setting and working towards long-term goals was usually a 2 to 3 year process. At the end of this change process, young fathers reported still experiencing difficulties accessing secure employment and meeting other long-term needs.

There are a number of addictions related services available. Detoxification centres, treatment centres, after care residential programming, and youth treatment programs include some of the programming. What is lacking in the spectrum of service delivery is assessment and an addictions counselling knowledge base and skill sets amongst other service providers. With Terra Association being the only direct service available for young fathers, any expansion of services should include staff increasing their capacity to assess "Readiness for Change" issues, and integrate addictions counselling and support into a spectrum of other services.

LONG TERM NEED AREAS VERSUS AVAILABLE RESOURCES

When assessing needs and required interventions, a determination must occur as part of a service plan, as to what are emergent needs and which are long-term issues. Certainly there is a spectrum of need and services required. In a spectrum of service delivery, certain services addressing specific emergent needs should be provided prior to entering participants into longer-term type programs. In other circumstances, it may be appropriate to provide emergent and longer-term services in tandem. For any multi-service provider, intake and assessment services should explore the range of needs a client presents and develop a service plan and organize resources around the demand and importance of services as well as the variables related to successful client engagement, and long-term outcomes.

- **Employment/Training/Life skills**

In the environmental scan data table, as shown in the Employment Table appendix, there are 25 employment related organizations providing services to youth and young adults in the Edmonton area. This is likely not an exhaustive list. Although this appears to be a large number of programs, these services lack resources, experience and funding parameters to adequately address the needs of young fathers, which includes high-risk youth.

These inferences are well supported by the **Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007**. This report was prepared for the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee, which is comprised of representatives from federal, provincial, municipal departments involved in youth services. It also is comprised of other non-government stakeholders such as Aboriginal organizations that provide youth programming under Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements, with the Government of Canada.

The aim of the study was to “facilitate the collaboration and coordination of services for youth in Edmonton, as well as to identify service gaps and ‘best practices’, among other goals.”¹

When the researcher attended a focus group that was a part of the above study process, and through additional consultations with employment service providers, it became apparent to the researcher that employment, life-skills and training services are usually developed with narrow outcome criteria for participants. Employment and educational outcomes are goals for which entrance criteria are developed. For the most part, these services are not set up to address the other more emergent needs of high-risk youth, and these needs are viewed as barriers to accessing these services as well as barriers in succeeding with these narrow and short-term employment and educational goals.

The relationship between a range of needs and issues, and successful access and long-term positive educational and employment outcomes appears to have been realized through the study. “Throughout the research undertaken for the Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007, the fact that the issues impacting youth employment in Edmonton were interconnected became increasingly evident.”²

The study identified 10 major issues impacting youth employment in Edmonton. These include the following.

1. Unreliable or Inconvenient Transportation
2. Lack of Experience
3. Lack of Education or Appropriate Skills
4. Employer Attitudes and Behaviours
5. Lack of Housing or Permanent Address
6. Lack of Information on Career Planning or Job Search
7. Difficulty Accessing or Using Available Employment Resources
8. Low Self-Esteem and Unrealistic Expectations of Youth

¹ Malatest & Associates Ltd., Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007, p.i.

² Malatest & Associates Ltd., Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007, p.i.

- 9. Funding Difficulties for Service Providers
- 10. Coordination of Youth Services

Another significant finding of that study, which affirms views mentioned above in this Environmental Scan, is that “Immigrants and refugees, youth with criminal records and youth with addictions face significant barriers to labour force attachment.”³ Considering the high incidence of transience, homelessness, and criminal involvements of those individuals participating in the Terra Association research, this finding of the Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination Of Youth Services study, is significant in affirming the need to have service strategies for young fathers, which include these emergent needs as part of longer-term employment, educational programs, and other support related services.

- **Family Support & Family Support/Home Visitation**

These two service areas were categorized separately in our service category queries. See appendices: Family Support versus Family Support/Home Visitation. Although both categories outline services that are geared towards family support, they differ in the types of programming provided and service strategies/design.

The Family Support category references a number of agencies/programs with a range of services to support a range of family needs. These needs include basic needs, child-care, mentoring, cultural support, early intervention, parent education, nutritional support, etc.

The Family Support/Home Visitation category refers specifically to the Home Visitation programs that make up part of the Alberta Home Visitation Network. These programs are intensive in-home visitation services. They are often modeled on the Healthy Families America program model, and call for entrance criteria of parents with children 3 months or younger and who are able to make up to a 5 year commitment to participate in the program. Workers have small caseloads and are trained to administer outcome measurement tools that evaluate developmental outcomes of the child.

Although an excellent model in working with mothers and infants, these programs appear to lack strategies for engaging fathers in program activities, and fail to view his involvement as important in achieving positive child development outcomes. This situation goes against the extensive research that overwhelmingly states that there are different child development outcomes for healthy father involvement versus healthy mother involvement with the child. The research shows that mothers do not tend to replace the role of an absent or uninvolved father and can't compensate for the positive outcomes experienced for the child when there is a healthy father – child relationship.

The services listed in the Family Support category are in general more accessible to fathers and single fathers, and meet other types of needs. To the credit of regional approaches to this issue of engaging fathers in Home Visitation programs, the Capital Health Authority and Health Canada are jointly incorporating materials in their training modules for Health for 2 workers, that will outline the importance of father involvement

³ Malatest & Associates Ltd., Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007, p.ii.

and service strategies for engaging fathers into services. Although this is a new and healthy recognition, it is hoped that this awareness of service strategy will spread to authorities responsible for funding the Home Visitation programs.

Terra Association has two Home Visitation programs, and these two programs heavily utilize our Young Dads Outreach Worker. The lack of staffing in our Young Dads Outreach Program means that we have an ongoing waiting list of fathers needing services, a much larger caseload for the Young Dads Outreach Worker in comparison to the Home Visitation Workers, and a frustration level amongst the Home Visitation program workers who are well informed of the benefits of engaging fathers and addressing their needs in the context of family support, but are unable to access enough of this valuable resource.

We believe that these other Home Visitation Programs need to work with us and funding authorities to better address the needs of fathers and engage them as part of the family system that impacts child outcomes.

- **Education**

As noted above in the Service User Demographics section, the young fathers utilizing services at Terra Association have on average very low education levels. Only 25% in 2003 had any high school education. Because of this low level of education, goals around obtaining a high school diploma have to be long-term and will not be for everyone. In fact, very few fathers previously receiving services, reported this to be a high priority during intake, whereby they did report employment issues to be more significant.

Like employment programming, schooling systems are not developed or equipped to address the range of problems that high-risk youth present in regular schools. The lack of support in the school system to address high-risk behaviours/problems, results in many of our young fathers having to leave the school system. This belief was widely shared amongst service providers participating in the focus group the researcher attended, as part of the Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, consultation process.

There are alternative educational programs for such youth, such as the Fresh Start programs offered through the Catholic School Board, or chartered school programs such as those offered through the Boyle Street Community Services Coop. What have been reported to be a gap in services however are the types of supports youth require to access and stay in such programs. Specifically, more consistent funding attached to students for living expenses has been noted as a gap in service, as has assistance with transportation.⁴

⁴ Malatest & Associates Ltd., Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007, p.p. 13, 21, 40, 42.

CORROBORATING INFORMATION

Terra Associations service use statistics and experience working with young fathers certainly helps us to interpret some of the information that was gathered through the environmental scan. It is however, important to corroborate this analysis with other research studies and data. We have done this by performing key informant surveys and referencing other related, relevant and current studies. These studies include the MenInc. Environmental Scan concluded in 2003, the Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination Of Youth Services, 2004-2007; A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton, prepared by: Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee; and the Interim Edmonton Community Plan On Homelessness, 2003-2006, prepared by the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing.

Our young fathers consist of a high-risk population, because of the high incidence of homelessness, low education levels, employment barriers faced, high incidence of criminal activity, and addiction issues. When the research (please see the literature review in the project Final Report) solidly demonstrates the importance of healthy father involvement in achieving positive child development outcomes, we should be just as concerned about the well being of fathers of young families, and their role and relationship in the family system as we should be about the mother and her role in the family and nurturing positive child outcomes.

When exploring available resources however, it is quite obvious that services for mothers dwarf those that target young fathers. The reasons for this are likely two fold. First, we know about the difficulty of engaging young fathers. This in part is due to the differences in socialization between men and women. It is also more difficult to engage young fathers after family break-up and fathers are further marginalized, facing a range of progressive problems on their own. Secondly, societal values view the needs of men and women differently as is discussed in the MenInc. Environmental Scan.

“Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that cultural, organizational and government support for men has not kept up with the many changes and challenges in men’s lives. Culturally, there is a sense that while the role expectations for men are becoming somewhat more open and flexible, stereotypical views of what it means to be “a man” continue to remain rigid and constraining. A large number of respondents believe there is a clear relationship between how their male clients experience “being men” and the (under) utilization of services”⁵

The MENInc. study also explores the relationship between societal values and organizational barriers.

“Numerous respondents also see a relationship between organizational and societal obstacles that hinder men from receiving the help they need. Prohibitive program costs, lack of subsidies or information on program subsidies, and cost of transportation to and from groups and programs were cited as significant obstacles for a large number of male clients. Respondents noted that under utilization of services is undoubtedly a

⁵ Dr. David Long, MENInc. Environmental Scan of Services to Men in Greater Edmonton, November, 2003, p2.

reflection of the economic challenges faced by many “disenfranchised” men, including non-custodial and teenage fathers...”⁶

The responses in our Key Informant survey confirm these views of under servicing men and under utilization by men. Please see the Key Informant Survey responses in the appendix. When asked what services do you provide to young parents, all the respondents listed services that were family focused or focused on mothers. There were no direct services listed for young fathers, and this is consistent with the environmental scan. When asked what services were provided to young men, of which young fathers are a sub group, services were limited to those available to families, of which men may access as part of a family service, or youth focused and employment focused services. When asked, “what services do you provide to young fathers specifically”, no respondents answered having direct services targeting fathers specifically. Some listed anger management for children, youth, and men, family violence services for offenders, or occasionally engaging fathers in Home Visitations, but later reported being ill equipped to do this.

Clearly, men need to be serviced differently than women, just as young fathers require individualized services separate from those of young mothers.

“Respondents also offered numerous recommendations for positive change in support of men and men’s services. Culturally, they suggested a wide variety of ways in which a much more balanced, humane and whole perspective on males in our society could be cultivated. Organizationally, they identified the importance of increased resources and supports for men’s programs as well as greater awareness of and sensitivity to the male experience in program development and delivery. Finally, respondents provided a number of suggestions for positive change in the development of more “male friendly” human service policy and legislation”⁷

The Terra Association Environmental Scan also explored the continuum of needs by splitting them into two areas. Emergent needs explored demonstrates that there are significant program requirements to address related to housing, addictions, basic needs, and legal services. Long-term need areas include addressing low education levels, parenting, and employment barriers. None of these needs can be addressed in isolation. There appears recognition that these needs are interrelated, and if a long-term goal outcome is to be crime reduction and prevention, and/or positive child development outcomes, then we need to address a range of needs in tandem.

The Interim Edmonton Community Plan On Homelessness 2003-2006 speaks to this realization. “Continued emphasis must be placed on the continuum of support model; however the solution to complex social issues cannot be solved with any one type of service. Rather the community as a whole must look at the “big picture” and resources

⁶ Dr. David Long, MENInc. Environmental Scan of Services to Men in Greater Edmonton, November, 2003, p.8.

⁷ Dr. David Long, MENInc, Environmental Scan of Services to Men in Greater Edmonton, November, 2003, p.2.

allocated accordingly. The continuum of support model encompasses services from the point of entry to affordable housing initiatives.”⁸

Obviously providing shelter does not address other need areas that are going to result in the accomplishment of the long-term outcomes we are interested in achieving for children and young fathers. Yet without stable housing and a long-term housing plan, there is not enough stability to assist families with these other needs.

The need for affordable housing in the Edmonton area is tremendous and an essential need area requiring a response as it relates to successfully serving young fathers. “The fifth count of the homeless found 1915 homeless persons in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 1213 were absolute homeless (having no housing alternative) and 702 were sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodation).”⁹ Terra Association has only 2 emergency apartments for young families, of which are almost always utilized.

“There were 118 families counted, encompassing 267 children under the age of 15 and 141 caregivers. Among the families, 70% were absolute homeless, while 30% were sheltered homeless.

A majority of the homeless were single – 1507 of the 1915 [of which would include young fathers not with their partners, or who had to go to shelters because the mother of the child could not obtain social assistance if they were together]. Among them, 61% were absolute homeless compared with 39% who were sheltered homeless.

From the perspective of observed gender, most of the homeless were male (67% or 1096, not including children in families) and 31% or 513 were female.....

The number of Caucasian and Aboriginal individuals counted was evenly split at 43% each. Fourteen percent of those counted were identified as other than Caucasian or Aboriginal [this ethnic breakdown closely represents the percentages of young fathers that access Terra Association Services].”¹⁰

When we consider that Terra Association serves approximately 900 families per year, and one third of our fathers report having no housing at the time of intake, it is clear that the housing resources that we presently have are inadequate. The Interim Community Plan proposes the addition of 204 Emergency units. They are also calling for projects “addressing the emergency needs of youth (ages 15-30), families, women, individuals, some with mental health and substance abuse issues, and women and children fleeing violence are needed.”¹¹ Certainly the clients that Terra Association services include most of these areas. It is also extremely relevant when concerned about child development outcomes, to realize that the second largest group of homeless are children.

⁸ Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, Interim Edmonton Community Plan On Homelessness, p.1.

⁹ Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton, October 2002, p.1.

¹⁰ Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton, October 2002, p.1

¹¹ Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, Interim Edmonton Community Plan 2003-2006, p. 12.

The report proposes that the bulk of resources administered through the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, be prioritized towards Transitional Housing (33% or \$16 million) and Long Term/Supportive Housing (40% or 19.6%). The plan however recognizes that part of the solution to homelessness is the prevention of it. This is certainly consistent with our view that in assisting young couples early in their relationship or upon becoming parents would serve to mitigate many of the problems that force them apart. Providing counselling and mediation, eviction prevention, and assistance with goal setting, access to long-term services related to employment and education would all serve to help prevent housing crisis.

This lack of service spectrum has also been identified within the Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination Of Youth Services, 2004-2007. The plan relates to all services but heavily focuses on employment and educational barriers. The plan lists 10 major issues impacting youth employment in Edmonton, of which number 5 is “Lack of Housing or Permanent Address” and recognizes that “Immigrants and refugees, youth with criminal records and youth with addictions face significant barriers to labour force attachment.” The plan recommends some of the following strategy responses.

- Programs offering work experience placements should be extended and promoted. More promotion should be undertaken to promote youth, and especially youth at-risk, to employers.
- Widen support for experience components of high school programs.
- Programs that allow youth to access upgrading or further education with a living allowance should be fostered and promoted.
- A life skills or work experience equivalent to high school could be developed to allow those who have significant skills or work experience to receive a high school diploma.
- High school drop-outs should be encouraged to complete their high school diploma through new initiatives.
- Edmonton requires further low-income and subsidized housing to meet current demands.
- Aboriginal youth should be provided with significant information and resources for transitioning from Northern and/or reserve communities.
- Peer mentoring should be supported in order to allow for role-modeling and support, especially for at-risk and aboriginal youth.
- Service agencies should be encouraged to act as employer contact points for youth.
- Youth would benefit from “one-stop shops” that allow them to access a wide range of services under one roof.
- Service providers should provide significant one-on –one counselling for youth, and develop strong relationships with clients. Services should be offered in a way that is welcoming and aims to see the whole youth.
- Funding for service providers should be three-years in duration, to allow for staffing and program consistency.
- Client living allowances should be made consistent.¹²

¹² Malatest & Associates Ltd., for Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee, Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination Of Youth Services, 2004-2007, pp. ii & iii.

CONCLUSION

This Environmental Scan clearly demonstrates that there is a social problem related to young fathers. This social problem is reflected by the demand for services that Terra Association experiences but is also related to societal and organizational values that barrier young fathers from services, and organizations from obtaining needed resources.

In general, young fathers are a high risk group, as is reflected by the incidence of emergent needs documented. The demographics pertaining to employment, education, addictions, and the realities faced by becoming young parents, also demonstrates longer-term needs along a service continuum.

Young fathers for a few reasons are a difficult population to engage in services. Because of the large number of families that Terra Association serves, and our experience in providing outreach services to young fathers, we believe that male workers, who act as role models, and can follow/support young fathers through a continuum of services is an essential ingredient to any larger service strategy. The notion of a one-stop-shop also makes a lot of sense when considering the range of needs presented, the lack of resources, and the importance of young fathers feeling welcomed somewhere. Although Terra Association is the only agency in the Edmonton area that focuses exclusively on pregnant and parenting teens, we recognize that there are systemic changes that are required.

....”many respondents expressed hope that government policy and legislation would begin to reflect the current experiences and circumstances of men. Suggestions focused on developing government policies and legislation that recognizes changing patterns and demands of men’s relationships, family life, education, and work. Numerous respondents also called on the government to acknowledge and address the social basis of disenfranchisement of men in the judicial system (particularly during divorce and custody hearings), in homeless situations, as well as in the lives of men affected by addiction, crime, poverty, unemployment and family violence.”¹³

We also recognize from a systemic perspective, that we are not the only service provider with a stake in serving young fathers. For example, there are agencies that have expertise in areas that we do not, such as with corrections issues, or working with specific immigrant communities. We believe we have a responsibility to support and partner with those organizations to ensure as many young fathers as possible are gaining access to services, and those agencies best equipped to respond to their specific needs are supported to do so. This also goes for the numerous Home Visitation Programs, which hire exclusively female staff and under serve young fathers. These agencies have existing programs, which need to be supported to better engage and serve young fathers.

Because Terra Association is one of the few agencies with any experience in serving young fathers in the Edmonton area, and one of only a few agencies in Canada that targets young fathers specifically, we believe that we need to take a multi pronged approach to addressing the public issues and private troubles of young fathers.

We need to improve our intake and outreach services to address our waiting list of young fathers, and provide a more welcoming environment where fathers can come and meet other

¹³ Dr. David Long, MENInc. Environmental Scan of Services to Men in Greater Edmonton, 2003, p.10.

young fathers or mentors. Service solutions that address cultural needs, especially for young aboriginal men, are required. We need to provide a place where they can bring their children and feel less isolated, and provide a range of services that address short term and long-term needs, the interconnectedness of which is now being clearly understood by various government funders and coalitions.

We also believe that this environmental scan demonstrates a need for agencies including Terra Association, to address organizational readiness issues, that respond to societal values that barrier men and young fathers from services, and for other agencies serving families to obtain resources to include fathers in their approach to serving families. We therefore are beckoned to work more systemically and collaboratively with the broader community, supporting other initiatives, research and policy changes.

When concerned with crime prevention issues, breaking the cycle of poverty and crime, and achieving positive outcomes for child development, we need to recognize that in better supporting young fathers, we are also supporting young mothers, and helping fathers to have healthier relationships with their children.

APPENDIX

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

TABLES OF SERVICES