



RAVEN PROGRAM OUTCOMES REPORT

Long-Term Results and System Impact
Since Implementation



Raven Program: Executive Summary

Launched in 2022, Raven is a specialized supportive housing and recovery program for young adults with complex mental health, substance use, justice and child protection involvement. It is designed to improve outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood while reducing reliance on high-intensity public systems.

Young people entering Raven have typically cycled through shelters, hospitals, custody and treatment programs without achieving stability. Raven serves as a critical bridge between child and adult systems, providing stable housing and integrated supports so youth can remain connected to care rather than being discharged into homelessness or ongoing crisis. The program focuses on providing:

- Stable housing with 24/7 relationship-based support
- Coordinated recovery, addictions and mental health supports
- Assistance navigating justice, health and child intervention systems

Key Outcomes

Recovery & Health

Youth remained housed during relapse and recovery attempts, allowing stabilization rather than repeated detox and system cycling.

- 86% engaged in recovery supports
- 71% accessed opioid agonist treatment
- 79% were sober or actively in recovery at discharge

Housing Stability

Raven acts as a stabilization step between crisis environments and independent living.

- 71% of discharges to stable housing
- No youth discharged back to unsafe or homeless situations

Justice Outcomes

Housing continuity allowed youth to meet court conditions, sustain recovery and reduce custody-release-homelessness cycling.

- 94% supported to attend court to address justice issues
- 54% completed justice requirements and are "out of the system"
- 33% on track to complete probation/parole/CSOs

Complexity of Youth Entering Raven



Mental Health Diagnosis



Time in Calgary Young Offender Centre



Using Meth / Fentanyl



Involvement with Child Protection Services

Employment Readiness & Participation

Engagement in work and training occurred once housing and recovery stabilized.

- 69% participated in employment programming
- 23% had paid work experience and/or gained independent employment

Family & Child Intervention Prevention

Stabilization supported family reunification and prevention of child apprehension.

- Five infants born to participating youth remained in parental or kinship care
- System cost reduction of \$550K (cost of an infant entering care is ~\$110K/year)

Cross-Ministry Impact

Rather than youth moving between systems sequentially, Raven stabilizes them across systems at the same time:

| System | Impact |
|--------------------|--|
| Recovery & Health | Less crisis care, overdose and detox cycling |
| Justice | Reduced breaches and custody cycling |
| Housing | Prevention of chronic homelessness |
| Child Intervention | Prevention of children entering care |
| Income Support | Movement toward employment and independence |

Conclusion

Youth with complex needs often cycle between emergency housing, hospitals, custody and treatment without sustained improvement. Raven interrupts this pattern by providing stable housing, time, relentless engagement and coordinated relationships that allow recovery and transition to adulthood to take hold.

The impact is clear: when housing and connection are sustained, emergency service use declines, engagement in recovery increases, family relationships strengthen and youth remain housed through crises while moving toward independence.

Raven, therefore, operates not simply as housing but as an upstream stabilization intervention. By addressing housing, health, justice and family needs together, it reduces pressure on multiple public systems while supporting high-risk youth to transition safely and successfully into adulthood.

The youth served by Raven were not beyond help; they were beyond the reach of traditional systems. By combining housing stability with consistent, relationship-based, and recovery supports, Raven interrupts homelessness, reduces justice involvement, prevents child apprehension, and improves recovery and mental health outcomes to ultimately change life trajectories and create long-term stability.

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Introduction

The Raven program is an innovative system-bridging housing and recovery model designed to meet the needs of Alberta's most complex and vulnerable youth. Each youth served by Raven presents a complex combination of strengths, needs, lived experiences, and involvement with multiple public systems, including Children and Family Services, health and mental health care, addiction treatment, housing and social supports, and public safety services. Since its launch in 2022, Raven has proven to be a critical intervention point between child protection and adult housing systems, delivering life-saving outcomes while reducing high-cost system usage across the social services, justice and health sectors.

Raven's focus is to promote recovery and housing stability at the individual level while reducing repeated system involvement more broadly. From intake through discharge, the data demonstrate the program's role in coordinating care, providing intensive wraparound supports, and creating pathways toward long-term stability. In doing so, Raven helps reduce reliance on high-cost systems such as justice, acute health, and emergency housing through targeted and sustained intervention. Stabilization for these youth is gradual and requires consistent, relationship-based engagement and close collaboration with health, housing, justice, and community partners. In this report, "system outcomes" refers to measurable changes in youth reliance on high-intensity public services, including child intervention, emergency health care, justice involvement, and emergency housing.

This report builds on the initial evaluation of the program by examining outcomes across all youth served since Raven's launch. Rather than describing the model itself, the focus here is on what has occurred over time when youth are provided stable housing, consistent relationships, and integrated recovery and mental health supports.

As youth remain engaged in the program, patterns begin to emerge. Stabilization is gradual and rarely linear, but the data shows movement away from crisis and toward safety, recovery, and independence. The findings presented in this report illustrate how sustained, relationship-based housing combined with coordinated clinical and recovery supports can change individual trajectories and reduce reliance on high-intensity public systems.

Youth entering the Raven Program arrive with significant and overlapping needs across multiple public systems. At intake, 96% of youth had a diagnosed mental health condition, 94% had previously spent time in the Calgary Young Offender

Complexity of Youth Entering Raven



Mental Health Diagnosis



Time in Calgary Young Offender Centre



Using Meth / Fentanyl



Involvement with Child Protection Services

Centre, and 87% were actively using methamphetamine or fentanyl. A further 87% had involvement with Child Protection Services. These patterns demonstrate that Raven is serving youth who have already interacted extensively with mental health, justice, substance use, and child welfare systems, often without achieving stability. Rather than presenting a single issue, youth enter the program with co-occurring challenges and long histories of system contact, requiring a coordinated and intensive response. Raven provides a single, integrated intervention intended to interrupt this cycle and support sustained stabilization.

How Raven Impacts Public Systems

Raven's outcomes extend beyond individual wellbeing to measurable changes in youth reliance on high-intensity public services. As a program that serves young adults with cross ministry involvement, Raven operates as an upstream stabilization initiative impacting multiple public systems at the same time.

| Public System | Typical Pathway Without Stabilization | Observed Outcome in Raven |
|---|--|--|
| Homelessness & Shelter System | Shelter cycling, rough sleeping and chronic homelessness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth not returning to emergency shelters Transition to independent or supported housing Reduced shelter reliance |
| Child Intervention | Youth aging out of care → homelessness → crisis → their own children enter care. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants remaining in parental or kinship care Reunification with family/natural supports Fewer anticipated apprehensions Families stabilizing instead of fragmenting Strengthening family connections and networks of support |
| Health & Recovery | ER visits, overdose, psychiatric admission, crisis transport, detox cycling. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT)¹ and recovery Fewer crisis escalations once stabilized Sustained connection to primary and outpatient care Staff coordinating medical access instead of emergency use |
| Justice/ Public Safety | Homelessness ↔ victimization ↔ charges ↔ custody ↔ release ↔ homelessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth remaining housed while under court orders Youth supported to comply with probation conditions Sobriety during custodial placements Reduced revolving-door contact |
| Income Support / Labour Market Participation | Disengagement from school → survival income → long-term income assistance → limited workforce attachment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement in employment programming and coaching Participation in paid work experience placements Youth earning independent income Increased readiness for education, training, and apprenticeships Reduced reliance on income assistance |

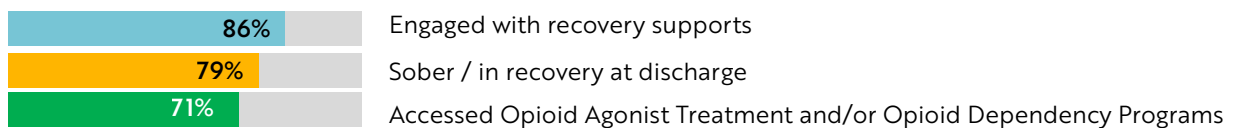
¹ OAT refers to Opioid Agonist Treatment – inclusive of any prescription medication for Opioid Replacement treatment (such as methadone, sublocade, suboxone etc.), monitored by a doctor as a treatment for recovery or maintenance.

These patterns show that The Raven functions as a stabilization point across multiple public systems simultaneously. Rather than youth moving sequentially from one system to another (housing, justice, health, or child intervention), stable housing and coordinated supports allow needs to be addressed at the same time. As stability increases, reliance on emergency and high-intensity services decreases while engagement in planned care, family supports, and employment increases. This indicates that the program operates as an upstream intervention that reduces downstream system involvement.

Program Outcomes: Recovery Progress

Recovery supports are central to stability, healing and long-term wellbeing at Raven. The program integrates trauma-informed case management with on-site recovery supports so youth can access addictions and mental health care without the barriers or delays common in community systems. Rather than engaging only during crisis, Raven supports youth across the full course of recovery. Youth entering Raven often had extensive prior treatment involvement and repeated stabilization attempts. The program's primary impact is sustaining engagement in care long enough for recovery and stabilization to occur.

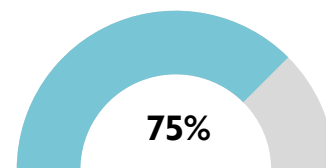
Key Recovery Indicators



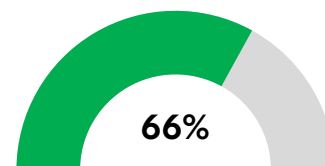
Access to Opioid Agonist Treatment and / or Opioid Dependency Programs is also a key indicator of progress toward recovery and long-term stability.

Most youth entering Raven already had significant histories of substance use and prior treatment involvement. Before admission, 75% of youth had participated in treatment services such as detox, counselling or residential programs, and 66% had experienced at least one stay under the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs (PChAD) program. Among the 24 youth with prior treatment involvement, there were a combined 70 intensive treatment episodes (62 PChAD and 8 Recovery Stabilization and Detox stays), demonstrating the level of acuity and repeated service contact prior to entering the program.

Prior to Raven: High Service Cycling



Prior Treatment Engagement



Placements at secure or mandated residential stabilization programs

Youth had 70 prior stays in secure or mandated treatment programs

before entering Raven, highlighting a pattern of high service cycling that stabilized once consistent housing and support were in place.

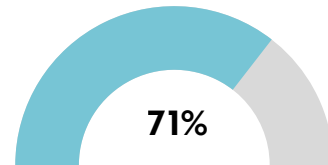
Of the 31 youth served, 28 presented with substance use concerns. While in Raven, 24 of those 28 youth (86%) engaged with the Recovery Coach onsite and other recovery supports, including addictions counselling, detox and residential treatment. Most commonly, youth were engaged with the Opioid Agonist Treatment or are linked to the Opioid Dependency Program (which provides OAT along with a range of holistic recovery services and health supports).

Engagement frequently required persistence; eight youth accessed detox a total of 19 times, with four youth returning three or more times. These repeated attempts represent continued engagement in recovery rather than disengagement from care. Only 14% of youth with substance use concerns did not engage in recovery supports while in Raven.

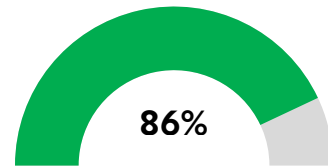
Eight youth accessed detox services
a total of 19 times

At discharge, recovery outcomes reflected meaningful stabilization. Eleven youth (79% of those discharged) were sober or actively engaged in recovery. This group included five youth who completed residential treatment, three who achieved sobriety through outpatient supports, two who were sober while in custodial settings and one youth with no presenting substance use concerns. Three additional discharged youth left the program while still participating in recovery supports, though not yet sober. Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate that Raven functions as a

During Raven: Sustained Engagement in Recovery

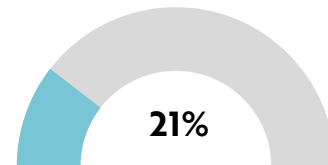


Accessed OAT / Opioid Dependency Program While in Raven

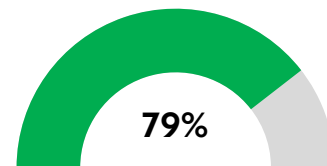


Engaged with Recovery Supports While at Raven

At Discharge: Stabilization and Success



Engaged in Recovery (Not Yet Sober)



Sober / Actively in Recovery

stabilization and engagement environment where youth remain connected to treatment long enough for recovery to become possible.

79% of youth left Raven sober or actively engaged in recovery,
demonstrating stabilization at program exit.

Strengthening Recovery Supports in Raven

Over the past year, Trellis implemented deliberate and measurable changes to strengthen alignment with Alberta's Recovery-Oriented Practice (ROP) framework. These changes embed recovery-oriented principles into daily service delivery, staffing and system coordination, ensuring youth are supported not only in crisis but throughout their recovery journeys.

To increase recovery capacity, Trellis introduced a dedicated Recovery Coach role. The Recovery Coach works directly with youth to reduce barriers to treatment and support self-directed recovery planning. The role includes twice-weekly recovery groups and individualized one-on-one sessions tailored to each youth's goals, readiness and chosen recovery pathway. This approach recognizes multiple pathways to recovery and supports youth to engage voluntarily and consistently in care.

The Recovery Coach also provides critical system navigation. Youth are supported with treatment applications, intake preparation, transportation planning and advocacy with providers. Given the complexity and limited accessibility of treatment services, this function helps ensure youth are not excluded from care due to administrative barriers, missing documentation or wait-list processes, which are a central principle of Alberta's recovery-oriented system.

Trellis has also expanded staff training to embed recovery-oriented practice across the entire team further. One Raven Case Manager is a trained Recovery Coach, an additional Case Manager and a frontline staff member are currently being certified, and the remainder of the staff are slated to be certified by fall 2026 (based on available training opportunities). This distributes recovery expertise across the program and ensures youth receive consistent recovery-focused support regardless of which staff member they are working with.

At the leadership level, the Raven Program Manager completed the Empowering Pathways Certificate, strengthening the program's alignment with recovery-oriented care. This training informed ongoing practice improvements, including the use of strengths-based language, support for self-determination, relapse-responsive approaches and recognition of multiple recovery pathways.

Together, these changes demonstrate how Raven operationalizes recovery-oriented care in practice. By combining dedicated recovery roles, trained staff and active system coordination,

the program increases youth access to treatment, supports sustained engagement and improves stabilization outcomes. This alignment strengthens Raven's contribution to Alberta's recovery-oriented system of care and its capacity to support youth toward long-term stability and independence.

System Impact: Health & Addiction Systems

Sustained engagement in Recovery and OAT shifts care from emergency responses to planned outpatient care, reducing reliance on detox cycling, crisis intervention and acute health services.

Program Outcomes in Context

A 2024 Health Canada research project examining substance use and help-seeking among youth experiencing homelessness across Canada found that approximately 30.3% of participants had accessed professional support for substance use at some point in their lifetime (21.3% voluntarily and 9.0% involuntarily). Among youth who accessed support, the most common service was addictions counselling (60.7%), followed by detox or withdrawal management (18%), treatment centres (11.5%) and other outpatient programs (11.5%).²

In contrast, engagement with recovery supports among youth participating in Raven is substantially higher. Of youth in Raven with substance use concerns, 86% engaged with recovery programming during their time in the program. This indicates that Raven functions as a consistent access point to treatment and care for a population that typically faces significant barriers to engaging with services. Rather than replacing treatment systems, the program supports youth in entering and remaining connected to them.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Raven increases treatment engagement for youth experiencing homelessness and substance use challenges, a key predictor of long-term recovery and stabilization.

Case Example

Leslie's* journey illustrates how a recovery-oriented, person-centered approach can support youth with complex needs to achieve stability and forward movement, even when progress is non-linear.

In June 2023, Leslie moved into Raven on her 18th birthday after aging out of a group care program that supported youth impacted by sexual exploitation. She arrived with significant



² Gaetz, S., O'Grady, B., Kidd, S., & Schwan, K. (2024). Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey: Health and service access findings. Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness / A Way Home Canada.

*All names in the Case Examples have been changed to protect confidentiality

substance use, involvement in high-risk environments and behavioural challenges that required intensive case management and 24/7 access to staff during her transition to adulthood. Raven approached Leslie with the understanding that safety and housing stability are foundational to recovery.

Initially, Leslie was guarded, distrustful and volatile in her interactions with staff. Early engagement focused on creating predictability, safety and consistent relationships paired with clear boundaries. The early work was simply helping her feel safe enough to stay. Over time, that consistency mattered. Leslie began to build relationships with staff and slowly became more open and reflective. She started taking a more active role in conversations about her choices and how they affected her and others.

Raven's Recovery Coach supported her to access opioid agonist treatment, counselling and recovery supports. There were periods of progress and periods of relapse. When setbacks happened, she remained housed and connected to staff. Maintaining that connection allowed her to stay linked to care instead of cycling back to unsafe environments.

During her time at Raven, Leslie also reconnected with family members after several years of little contact. Staff helped support safe, structured visits and worked alongside her to rebuild those relationships at her own pace. Having people in her life whom she trusted became an important part of her stability.

In 2025, while under a Community Supervision Order, coordinated planning supported Leslie to enter detox and then a residential treatment program, which she completed after four months. After treatment, she chose to move into an independent apartment in a sober living environment so she could continue her recovery while living more independently.

Today, Leslie remains housed, continues to engage with supports, and is managing both her mental health and substance use recovery in the community. She still checks in with staff from time to time, not because she has to, but because those relationships remain important to her.

Leslie's journey reflects the reality that recovery rarely happens in a straight line. The program's relational approach created the stability needed for change to take hold. Her progress came less from a single intervention and more from consistent housing, patient relationships and enough time to make different choices.

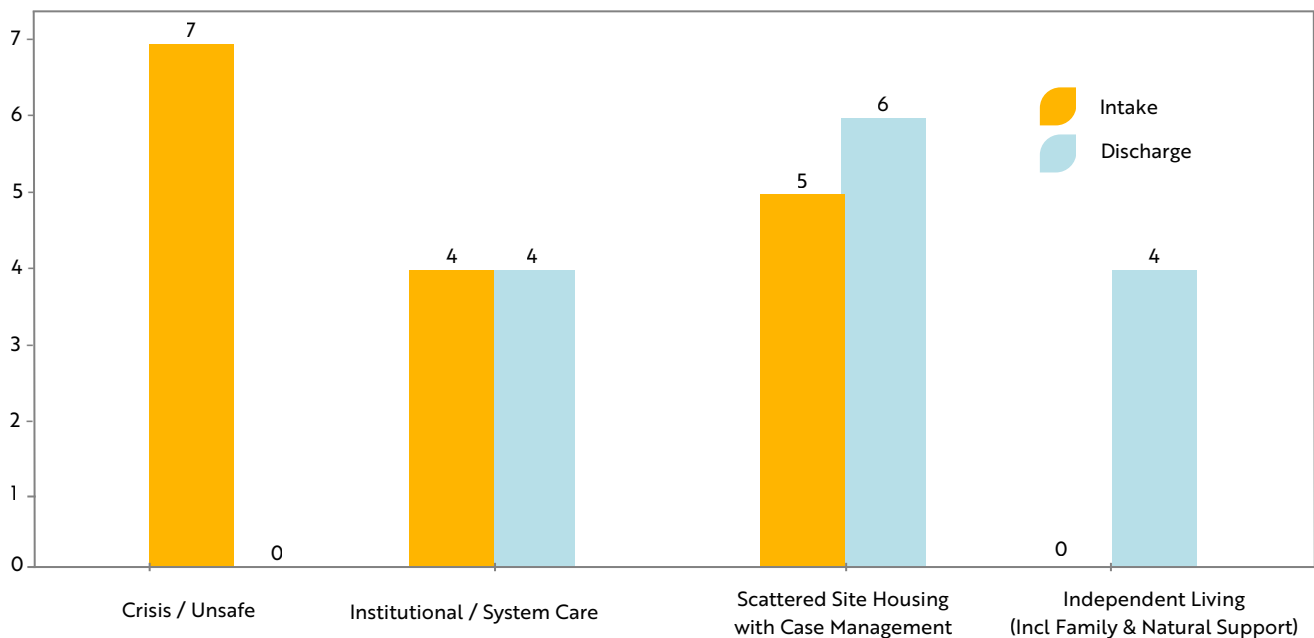
Program Outcomes: Housing Stability

Since program inception, youth have entered Raven from a range of unstable housing and system settings and exited to living arrangements that reflect increasing readiness for independence. Intakes most often occurred from crisis environments, institutional placements or unsuccessful independent living situations, while discharges demonstrated movement toward stability, including supported community housing and independent living. These patterns illustrate Raven’s role as a stabilization step between emergency or system involvement and sustainable housing in the community.

Across all youth discharged from the program, 10 of 14 transitioned to stable housing outcomes (scattered site housing with case management or independent living, including family and natural supports), representing approximately 71% positive housing discharges.

The Raven program interrupted pathways into chronic homelessness and long-term system involvement.

Housing Situation at Intake and Discharge



In Crisis / Unsafe

At intake, seven youth entered Raven from crisis or unsafe housing situations, and no youth were discharged back to crisis environments. This reflects the program’s role as an immediate stabilization option for youth who would otherwise remain in high-risk circumstances.

Through consistent supervision, supportive relationships, and coordinated services, Raven helps youth move from emergency settings toward stable housing.

The seven youth admitted from crises came from acute entry points: two were admitted directly from the hospital, two were rough sleeping, and three were referred from the Emergency Youth Shelter. These pathways illustrate the level of housing instability among youth accessing the program and Raven's function as a bridge between emergency systems and longer-term housing stability.

Institutional / System Care

At intake, four youth entered Raven from institutional or system-based placements, and four youth were also in system-based settings at the time of discharge. The youth admitted from group care were aging out and were not positioned to succeed in independent living due to significant mental health and substance use challenges, as well as involvement in gangs and experiences of sexual exploitation. Without an intermediate intervention such as Raven, they were expected to transition directly into homelessness given their risk profiles and addiction concerns.

At exit, youth remaining within systems were in structured treatment or justice settings, including detoxification programs or custodial placements. These circumstances reflect the complexity of the population served and recognize that transitions out of system involvement may require additional time as youth work toward stabilization and readiness for independence.

Scattered Site Housing with Case Management

At intake, five youth were referred from existing scattered-site housing placements. These youth had recently aged out of care and, despite being housed, were unable to maintain stability due to ongoing mental health and substance use challenges and limited independent living skills. Raven provided a higher level of structure to support stabilization and skill development.

At discharge, six youth had transitioned to scattered site housing with case management. Rather than remaining in a place-based program, they were able to live independently in the community while receiving lower-intensity support. Continued case management provides guidance and connection to services to help youth complete these programs and transition fully into independent living.

At exit, youth remaining within systems were in structured treatment or justice settings, including detoxification programs or custodial placements. These circumstances reflect the complexity of the population served and recognize that transitions out of system involvement may require additional time as youth work toward stabilization and readiness for independence.

Independent Living (Including Family and Natural Supports)

At discharge, four youth moved to independent living arrangements. One youth secured independent housing without any supports, while three youth returned to live with family or natural supports following considerable work to repair and rebuild relationships. These transitions reflect the program's focus on preparing youth for sustainable independence, including strengthening connections to supportive adults and natural networks that can provide stability beyond formal services.

Loss and Ongoing Risk

The Raven also experienced the loss of two youth during their time in Raven. Both were actively engaged in recovery efforts. One youth had completed residential treatment and achieved sobriety before a relapse that resulted in a fatal opioid poisoning. The second youth was participating in the Opioid Dependency Program and died by drug poisoning. These losses reflect the significant medical risks associated with opioid use disorder and the heightened vulnerability youth experience during periods of recovery and transition.

In recognition of the level of need among residents, Raven has strengthened its recovery-focused supports, including the addition of a dedicated Recovery Coach, expanded recovery-oriented care and enhanced connections to treatment services. The program continues to prioritize sustained engagement in recovery to reduce risk while youth work toward stabilization.

System Impact: Housing & Shelter Systems

By moving youth from crisis settings to stable housing and preventing returns to emergency shelter, Raven reduces reliance on emergency housing and outreach services and interrupts pathways into chronic homelessness

Outcomes in Context

A recent 2025 study examining both place-based and scattered-site Youth Housing Focused programs in Calgary found that approximately 39% of youth return to homelessness, while 61% remain housed, either within a housing program or in permanent housing with ongoing supports. In comparison, Raven has achieved positive outcomes in 12 out of 14 discharges (86%). This suggests Raven exceeds typical housing stability outcomes reported for similar programs in Calgary and demonstrates the program's effectiveness in supporting youth to maintain stable living situations. The findings indicate that an intensive, relationship-based approach may contribute to stronger stabilization and a reduced likelihood of youth cycling back into homelessness or system involvement.

³ Jadidzadeh, Ali and Kneebone, Ron. (2025) "Youth in Calgary's Housing Programs: A Case Study." University of Calgary, School of Public Policy. Research Paper, Volume 18:14. Accessed at <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/sppp/article/download/80879/58399>

Case Example

In August 2023, a youth named Blossom moved into Raven as she aged out of group care and faced an uncertain transition into adulthood. Since the age of six, she had lived almost entirely in therapeutic placements and came to the program with complex needs, including cognitive impacts related to FASD, multiple mental health diagnoses and a trauma-related functional seizure disorder. Blossom's history included significant self-harm, suicide attempts and frequent seizures, and she required continuous supervision and coordinated care. Raven's role was not only to provide housing, but to create a stable and predictable environment where her health, safety and recovery could be supported together.



Supporting Blossom required staff to adapt their practice and deepen their clinical understanding of her seizure disorder. Raven staff received training from a physician at the Alex Health Centre and worked closely with a Trellis therapist to develop an individualized care and recovery plan. The plan included trauma-informed de-escalation strategies, early recognition of seizure symptoms and clear emergency response procedures. Staff monitored seizure patterns and shared information with her medical team, allowing treatment and supports to be adjusted as her needs changed.

A key part of the work was helping Blossom take an active role in her own care. With staff, she created a personal safety plan so she could communicate when she felt a seizure approaching. Her room was also adapted to reduce injury risk and improve accessibility. As predictability and trust increased, her health stabilized, and her overall well-being improved. Blossom also faced risks related to grooming and sexual exploitation and needed support in understanding consent, safety and adult decision-making. Raven connected her with a specialized outreach program, and through regular contact with a trusted outreach worker, she gradually built confidence and insight in these areas.

During her time in Raven, Blossom chose to pursue sobriety. The stability of housing, consistent relationships and therapeutic support provided the space for recovery to become possible and for her to begin planning for independence.

In the summer of 2025, she decided she was ready to move into the community with a friend. Blossom continues to live independently, remains sober and actively manages her physical and mental health. She still checks in with the Raven team to share updates and milestones, reflecting the lasting relationships built through consistent, recovery-oriented support.

Program Outcomes: Justice Involvement

Many youth entering Raven had prior or ongoing involvement with the justice system. For this population, justice contact is rarely isolated; it is typically connected to homelessness, victimization, substance use and survival behaviours. Without stabilization, youth frequently cycle between street environments, charges, custody and release, often returning immediately to unsafe housing situations. Raven functions as an interruption point in this cycle.

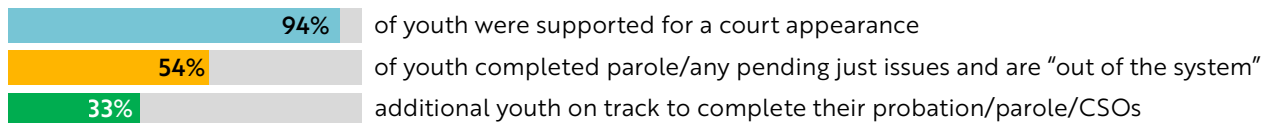
By providing stable housing, consistent supervision and coordinated support during periods of legal involvement, the program allows youth to remain housed and connected to care while meeting court expectations. Youth have remained engaged with Raven while under probation orders, maintaining contact with staff, attending appointments and continuing recovery supports. In several cases, youth were able to complete court conditions while living at Raven rather than being discharged to homelessness.

The stability of housing and daily structure reduced missed court dates, breaches and escalating justice involvement. Some youth also spent time in custodial settings during their involvement with the program. Importantly, Raven maintained a connection during these periods. Youth returned to housing after release and were re-engaged in supports immediately, reducing the common pattern of release to homelessness. For certain youth, this continuity supported sobriety during custody and engagement with treatment upon release.

Rather than justice involvement ending a youth's housing placement, Raven provided a consistent point of return. This continuity allowed legal supervision, recovery engagement and housing stability to occur simultaneously. As a result, youth were less likely to re-enter emergency systems following custody and more likely to move toward stabilization.

During the program, 29 of 31 youth were on probation, and 27 were supported by staff to attend court appearances. Raven clients were supported to complete specialized programs, including the Calgary Indigenous Court programming, filing Gladue Reports, completing Forensic Adolescent Program, completing the Provincial Mental Health Diversion program, Arnika Centre (Developmental Disabilities Mental Health) assessments, and other similar justice interventions – all collectively diverting these youth from additional incarceration and putting them on pathways to engage with their recovery and reintegration.

By maintaining housing, daily routines, and consistent adult relationships, youth were able to meet legal obligations and engage more appropriately with the justice system. Rather than justice involvement disrupting progress, Raven helps stabilize youth so court processes can be managed safely and constructively.



System Impact: Justice / Public Safety

Raven interrupts the justice-homelessness cycle by stabilizing youth during periods of legal involvement rather than after system discharge.

Program Outcomes in Context

Research consistently demonstrates a strong intersection between youth homelessness and justice system involvement in Canada. For example, O'Grady, Gaetz, and Buccieri (2011)⁴ report that approximately 44% of youth experiencing homelessness have been arrested, underscoring the extent to which justice contact is a common feature of young people's housing instability. This high rate of arrest reflects the structural vulnerability of unhoused youth, who are more likely to be policed, criminalized for survival activities and drawn into cyclical justice involvement. At the same time, evidence from a systematic review by Leclair et al. (2019)⁵ suggests that while housing interventions alone do not automatically reduce criminal justice involvement, stable housing may provide an essential platform for improving justice-related outcomes when combined with appropriate supports. In this way, housing stability can function as a foundational intervention that creates the conditions for youth to address legal issues, reduce recidivism risk and disengage from justice system involvement over time.

Case Example

Before coming to Raven, Marcus had been deeply involved in the justice system. As a teenager, he had accumulated multiple charges, including theft-related offences and had been incarcerated three times at the Calgary Young Offender Centre. His justice involvement was not simply behavioural; it was closely connected to untreated mental health concerns, unstable housing and his difficulty managing complex systems independently.



When Marcus was referred to Raven, he was at high risk of continued incarceration and long-term justice system entrenchment. He had experienced ongoing housing instability and had been moving between temporary arrangements that made it nearly impossible to comply with court expectations or treatment plans. As trust developed, Marcus began working closely with his Raven Case Manager to approach the justice system in a new way: not as a crisis to avoid, but as a process he could navigate successfully with support. Through Raven staff advocacy and

⁴ O'Grady, B., Gaetz, S., & Buccieri, K. (2013). Tickets...and more tickets: A case study of the enforcement of the Ontario Safe Streets Act. *Canadian Public Policy*, 39(4), 541-558.

⁵ Leclair, M.C., Deveaux, F., Roy, L., Goulet, M.-H., Latimer, E.A., & Crocker, A.G. (2019). The impact of Housing First on criminal justice outcomes among homeless people with mental illness: A systematic review. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*

coordination, Marcus was referred to and accepted into a Mental Health Diversion Program. This program offered an opportunity to address the underlying causes of his behaviour while avoiding further criminal charges, but it required strict attendance, regular meetings and ongoing compliance, expectations that had previously been major barriers for him. To meet program requirements, Trellis provided weekly on-site counselling, reducing barriers related to transportation and appointment access.

Marcus was also supported under a Community Treatment Order, which assisted with medication adherence and mental health stabilization. Due to the high expectations and organizational demands of diversion programming, the youth required intensive support with transportation, appointment reminders, and accompaniment to court, probation, counselling and medical appointments. Through consistent staff involvement and daily structure, Marcus demonstrated noticeable stabilization and successfully completed all program requirements, ultimately avoiding the laying of a criminal charge.

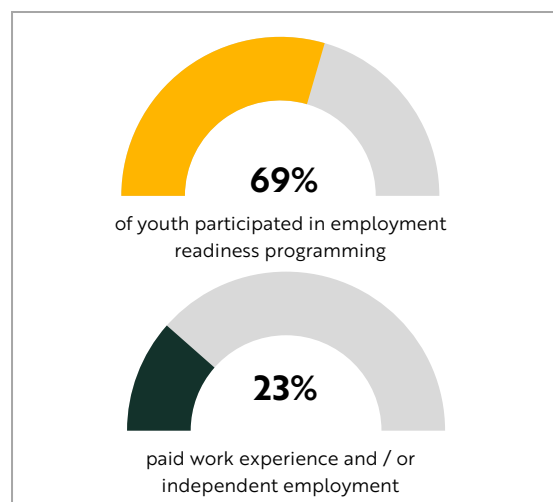
Justice diversion programs can be highly effective but can also present significant barriers for youth with complex needs, including frequent appointments across multiple locations and strict compliance expectations, which can result in failure even for youth who are motivated to change. Raven’s ability to provide housing continuity, daily structure and hands-on system navigation made sustained engagement possible.

This case highlights how maintaining housing and coordinated support during legal involvement can prevent further system entrenchment and support meaningful justice diversion outcomes.

Program Outcomes: Employment Readiness & Participation

Employment readiness and connection to structured daytime activity are important indicators of stabilization and preparation for independence for youth in Raven.

Among youth who exited the program (n = 14), most engaged with employment supports before discharge, with some securing independent paid employment or completing formal training and apprenticeship. Across all 31 unique youth served, 69% (21 youth) accessed employment services, most commonly individualized employment coaching.



Additional opportunities included work experience placements, job readiness activities, and independent employment. For this population, employment typically emerges after foundational stability is achieved. Many youth enter Raven without consistent sleep routines, self-care habits, mental health stability or substance use management, making immediate workforce participation unrealistic. As housing and recovery stabilize, youth are gradually able to attend appointments reliably, maintain daily routines and build the confidence required to engage in work or training.

Participation in employment programming, therefore, reflects a later stage of progress rather than an initial goal. Youth who engaged in employment supports were able to do so because the program scaffolded stability first, such as supporting basic routines, health and recovery and then introduced education, training and work opportunities at the appropriate time. Several youth were discharged once they demonstrated readiness to maintain employment or training independently in the community.

These outcomes suggest Raven functions as a bridge between crisis and independence, helping youth build the practical skills, confidence and consistency required for sustained participation in the workforce.

System Impact: Workforce Participation & Long-Term Independence

Employment participation represents movement away from long-term system dependence and toward financial independence and community integration.

Program Outcomes in Context

Research consistently indicates that employment participation among youth experiencing homelessness is closely tied to housing stability. Collins et al. (2019) found that youth were generally only able to meaningfully pursue employment or education once stable housing had been established.⁶ Within this context, Raven's supportive housing environment creates the conditions necessary for youth to begin exploring work, training and educational pathways.

Federal analysis of youth employment programming further suggests that supporting youth to engage in employment has substantial public value, with a social return on investment estimated at approximately 18% annually, resulting in long-term cost savings through increased earnings and reduced reliance on social systems.⁷ As a result, early employment engagement during stabilization may contribute to longer-term independence beyond the program period.

Emerging evidence also shows that employment participation provides psychosocial benefits beyond income. Supported employment interventions have been associated with

⁶ Collins C. C., Bai R., Crampton D., Fischer R., D'Andrea R., Dean K., Lalach N., Chan T., Cherney E.. 2019. "Implementing Housing First with Families and Young Adults: Challenges and Progress Toward Self-Sufficiency." *Children and Youth Services Review* 96 (2019): 34–46. Accessed at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740918304675?via%3Dihub>

⁷ Government of Canada. (2021). "Incremental Impact Analysis of the Youth Employment Strategy – Career Focus Stream." Accessed at <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/technical/incremental-impact-career-focus.html>

improvements in self-esteem, identity development and social competency among youth experiencing homelessness.⁸ Youth who obtain paid employment report higher self-efficacy and confidence compared to unemployed peers, and strengths-based vocational supports are linked to increased community integration.⁹ Raven’s employment coaching, work experience opportunities and skill-building supports align with these evidence-based mechanisms by helping youth gradually build capacity for independence while housing stability is established.

Case Example

During her time at Raven, Jordan took part in the Trellis Work Experience Program at the Calgary Stampede after reaching enough stability to try employment.

Before coming to Raven, keeping routines was difficult for her. She struggled with follow-through, missed appointments and often withdrew from situations where expectations felt overwhelming. As housing stabilized and staff worked with her on daily routines such as waking up on time, managing hygiene and attending appointments, employment became a realistic next step.



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With support from staff, Jordan completed the application and interview process herself and secured a placement. Throughout the program, she attended every shift, arrived on time and worked in a busy public environment where she interacted with supervisors and customers appropriately. Staff noted that she began reminding herself about schedules and preparing for work the night before without prompting.

The change in confidence was noticeable. Jordan took pride in wearing her uniform and chose to share her job with people from her past, including staff from a previous placement. She told Raven staff it was the first time she had felt proud of something she had done. After receiving her first pay, she made plans to spend the money on an activity she had wanted to try for years: a horseback riding workshop.

⁸ Collins C. C., Bai R., Crampton D., Fischer R., D’Andrea R., Dean K., Lalich N., Chan T., Cherney E.. 2019. “Implementing Housing First with Families and Young Adults: Challenges and Progress Toward Self-Sufficiency.” *Children and Youth Services Review* 96 (2019): 34–46. Accessed at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740918304675?via%3Dihub>

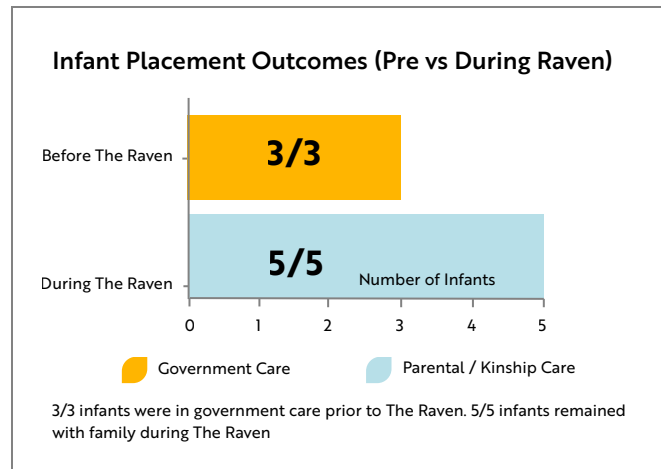
⁹ Government of Canada. (2021). “Incremental Impact Analysis of the Youth Employment Strategy – Career Focus Stream.” Accessed at <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/technical/incremental-impact-career-focus.html>

Following the placement, Jordan began exploring longer-term employment options and is considering applying for a permanent position. More importantly, she now maintains a daily routine, keeps appointments reliably and sees herself as someone who can work and succeed.

Program Outcomes: Family Stability and Child Intervention Prevention

Raven's impact extends beyond the youth directly served. As youth stabilize their housing, health and recovery, their family relationships often stabilize as well, creating meaningful benefits for children and natural supports connected to the program.

Before entering The Raven, three of the 31 youth served were parents, and none of their children were in their care. During their time in the program, five babies were born to youth living at Raven. Based on the youth's histories, including housing instability, substance use and system involvement, these children were at high risk of entering government care. Currently, all five children remain in parental or kinship care.



Prior to program involvement, all children born to parenting youth entered government care.
During participation in Raven, all infants remained safely in parental or kinship care.

Stabilization in Raven has also supported family reconnection. Staff work with family and natural supports to rebuild relationships, facilitate safe contact and help families access housing and treatment services. As a result, three youth have been able to safely return to live with their families after periods of estrangement and housing instability.

The program's influence extends beyond participating youth. Raven has supported family members and close connections to access housing and recovery services, helping adults connected to residents move toward stability and reducing their own system involvement.

These outcomes suggest that stabilization of a single youth can interrupt broader cycles of homelessness, system involvement and family separation. By supporting recovery and housing stability for youth, Raven contributes to improved outcomes not only for participants but also for their children, siblings and extended family networks.

System Impact: Child Intervention

Stabilization of parents and reconnection with family supports contributes to children remaining in parental or kinship care rather than entering government care.

Program Outcomes in Context

Provincial reporting on Alberta's child intervention system indicates the scale of resources required when children enter government care. In 2024–25, intervention services had an operating expense of approximately \$906.5 million, supporting an average of 8,925 active cases per month. This corresponds to an estimated annual public cost exceeding \$100,000 per child involved in intervention services. For children formally in care (an average of 7,542 cases), per-child costs are higher once placement, casework, legal and administrative expenses are included.

Direct caregiver maintenance payments alone (a single component of placement) are approximately \$10,300 annually for infants under one year of age. When combined with case management, court processes, supervision and administrative supports, the total public expenditure associated with an infant entering care reasonably exceeds \$110,000 per case per year.^{10 11}

Within Raven, five infants born to participating youth have remained in parental or kinship care rather than entering government care. While many factors contribute to these outcomes, the program's stabilization, recovery support and family reconnection work play a significant role in enabling safe care arrangements.

Using provincial cost benchmarks, prevention of even a small number of care placements represents substantial cost avoidance to the public system. The outcomes observed at Raven, therefore, suggest that housing and recovery stabilization for youth can have measurable downstream impacts not only for families but also for long-term public system pressures.

Case Example

Ellie became separated from her family after an adult formed a relationship with her while she was still vulnerable and dependent. The adult used manipulation and control, a process called grooming, to isolate her from trusted adults, discourage contact with family, and keep her reliant on him for housing, safety and belonging. Over time, this sexual exploiter cut Ellie off from her natural supports and placed her in unsafe and unstable situations. She later became pregnant during this relationship. The individual was eventually arrested for unrelated offences and is now serving a life sentence.

At referral, Ellie was 18 years old, six months pregnant, experiencing homelessness, and using substances daily. She was hospitalized for medical concerns and faced discharge directly to homelessness. A healthcare provider advised that without stabilization and engagement in treatment, her baby would likely be apprehended at birth. Ellie had previously been confined under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children's Act and supported through a Children's

¹⁰ Government of Alberta. Children and Family Services, Annual Report 2024-25. Accessed at <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/1dd52589-a078-4c71-809a-855223f5b7ec/resource/f00d4f4e-5b53-4b31-a116-d5bc6ed76c3b/download/cfs-annual-report-2024-2025.pdf>

¹¹ Government of Alberta. (2025). "Caregiver Rate Schedule." Accessed at <https://www.alberta.ca/system/files/cfs-caregiver-rate-schedule.pdf>

Advocacy Centre. Due to the complexity of her needs, stigma and discrimination, she had been unable to secure housing and remained highly vulnerable without any support system.

Raven accepted Ellie directly from hospital and provided immediate, safe housing alongside intensive, relationship-based support. Staff focused first on safety and stabilization: a private furnished unit, daily check-ins, accompaniment to appointments, and coordination with healthcare providers. From the outset, staff approached Ellie from a strengths-based perspective, recognizing her insight, independence, and motivation despite significant trauma. Ellie shared that this was the first place she had ever experienced as clean, calm, and safe, and she quickly began personalizing her unit and establishing daily routines.



Within the first week, with encouragement and coaching from staff, Ellie chose to reconnect with her father and invited him to visit. Staff supported this reconnection by helping her prepare and plan the conversation to successfully repair the relationship. What began as a single visit became regular contact. Visits increased from occasional to daily, and Ellie soon began spending time at her parents' home as well. Her family became active participants in her support plan, providing emotional stability and practical help while Raven staff continued to coordinate services for her needs.

With housing, safety and family connection established, Raven's Recovery Coach supported Ellie to engage in recovery. She completed a 12-step program, maintained sobriety, attended regular medical care and participated in more than 16 hours of individualized substance-use treatment. She also worked with staff on safety planning and healthy boundaries related to past relationships, prioritizing both her well-being and her child's.



Ellie gave birth to a healthy baby boy and parented successfully without Children's Services intervention. She later transitioned from supportive housing into her own independent apartment while remaining closely connected to her parents.

Since moving into her own home, Ellie has continued to build stability. With family support, she graduated from high school while caring for her infant, something she once believed was impossible. She remains active in recovery communities and is now engaged to a partner she met through a sober peer support group. Ellie is currently expecting her second child and describes

feeling hopeful and confident about her future. Ellie's journey highlights the transformative impact of housing stability when paired with consistent, relationship-based support. What began as an emergency housing intervention became the foundation for family reconnection, recovery, educational success and long-term independence.

Ellie now hopes other young people can access the same opportunity for safety and stability that changed the course of her life.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this report demonstrate consistent patterns across all outcome areas. When youth are provided stable housing, reliable relationships, and coordinated mental health and recovery supports, their trajectories change. Stabilization does not occur immediately and progress is rarely linear; however, over time, youth move away from crisis and toward safety, recovery and independence.

Across housing, health, justice involvement, employment participation and family connection, the same shift is observed. Prior to entering Raven, youth commonly experienced repeated system cycling, including shelter use, detox admissions, justice involvement and disconnection from education and employment. While engaged in the program, youth remained housed during periods of instability, stayed connected to care and were able to meet supervision and treatment expectations. At discharge, most transitioned to stable housing and many were sober or actively engaged in recovery, with growing participation in work, training and community life.

Importantly, the impact of stabilization extended beyond individual participants. Family relationships strengthened, children remained in parental or kinship care, and youth were less likely to return to emergency systems following custody, hospitalization or crisis. These outcomes indicate measurable changes in reliance on high-intensity public services, including emergency housing, acute health care, justice involvement and child intervention.

Raven, therefore, functions not only as a housing program but as an upstream stabilization intervention. Rather than youth moving sequentially between systems (shelter, hospital, justice and child intervention), coordinated housing and supports allow needs to be addressed at the same time. As stability increases, emergency service use decreases and engagement with planned care, family supports and employment increases.

The evidence suggests that youth with complex needs are capable of recovery, independence and community participation when services prioritize continuity of relationships, time for change to occur and integrated supports. Raven demonstrates that stabilization is a prerequisite for successful transition to adulthood, and that sustained, relationship-based interventions can interrupt patterns of chronic homelessness and repeated system

involvement. Taken together, the outcomes indicate that the program is achieving its intended purpose: supporting youth to move from crisis toward long-term stability while simultaneously reducing pressure on multiple public systems.

The youth served by Raven were not beyond help; they were beyond the reach of traditional systems.

By combining housing stability with consistent, relationship-based, and recovery supports, Raven interrupts homelessness, reduces justice involvement, prevents child apprehension, and improves recovery and mental health outcomes to ultimately change life trajectories and create long-term stability.

