

Youth Shelter Diversion Pilot

In 2002, RAFT started offering emergency shelter with four beds.

By 2007, RAFT moved to 17 Centre St., expanding to a 24 bed shelter.

At the end of 2008, 471 individual youth had accessed an emergency bed.

2008-2018: A Decade of Prevention

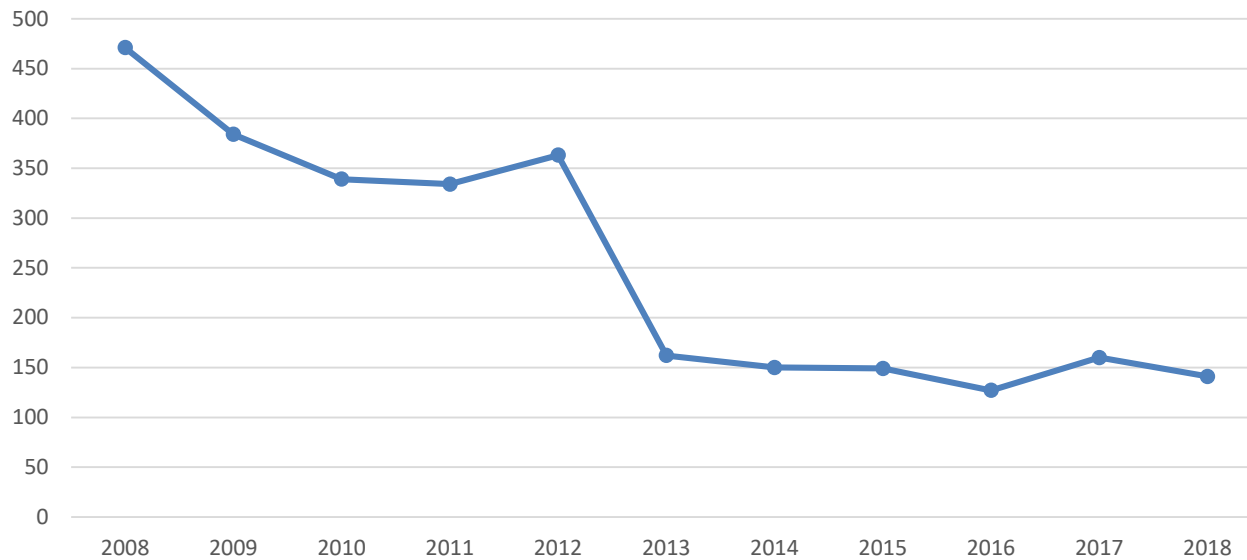
In 2008, RAFT started its first prevention program, Youth Reconnect, in Fort Erie.

Youth Reconnect has two goals:

- 1) Stabilize a student's housing in their home community
- 2) Keep students attached to their schools.



RAFT Shelter Use by Unique Individuals



Since 2008 Youth Reconnect has served 1,507 youth across all of Niagara's 12 municipalities.



Prevention has been exceptionally successful

A 70% decline in RAFT's shelter use over the last decade.

Region reports Youth (16-24) and Young Adults (25-30) use of shelters is trending downwards.

However RAFT's shelter use has largely plateaued with 130 - 160 youth accessing beds over last three years.



Search for a Solution

Of these youth approximately 50% stay for less than a month.

30% stay less than seven days.

Began looking for a service model which could address this.

Shelter Diversion offers a solution

Discovered a model of Shelter Diversion (SD) in Waterloo Region, specifically for Youth.

Argus House has been operating SD since 2015.

In 2016, Argus reported 60% decline in their shelter and Waterloo region reported 22% decline in youth accessing shelter.

RAFT partnered with Argus to adapt SD for Niagara and introduced pilot in April 2019.

What is Shelter Diversion?

RAFT's Shelter Diversion Coordinator interviews youth seeking emergency shelter, using tool developed by Argus House, to determine whether safe and appropriate alternative housing arrangements to shelter can be made, if so, we provide support to the youth. This support is flexible to meet individual's needs and has included bus tickets, taxis to family or landlord mediation.

Shelter Diversion isn't saying "NO" to shelter; it's finding best shelter or housing option available

Successful Shelter Diversion:

Prevents use of emergency shelter.

Reduces demand for emergency beds, in safe way.

Ensure that youth accessing shelter are in immediate need.



What we have learned after 22 weeks

RAFT has interviewed 133 youth seeking access to shelter.

46% youth were successfully diverted.

49% of youth have never accessed shelter before.

79% reside in either St. Catharines, Welland, or Niagara Falls.

Next Steps

1. Continue to monitor pilot.
2. Work with partner(s) shelter to expand Shelter Diversion for youth.
3. Develop infrastructure and promote knowledge sharing to support Shelter Diversion for Adults.