Studying and Increasing Information and Support Surrounding Homelessness In Communities
such as The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS)

For
The Drop-In Communications - Public Relations & Media
The Calgary Homeless Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS)

by
Cynthia Li
English 301 Student

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I. Abstract

II. Introduction:

<u>A. Background Information & Statement of the Problem:</u>

According to The Canadian Encyclopedia, there are approximately 35,000 Canadians every night who experience homelessness. In Calgary alone, the latest statistics from Homelesshub (2018) show there are 2911 people out of approximately 1.2 million people in the city experiencing homelessness with an average rate of 68% of those, experiencing chronic homelessness. This counts toward 51% of homelessness in Alberta. Due to the high percentage, Calgary implemented a 10-year plan to end homelessness back in 2008 which ended in 2018, led by the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF). There was a drop of more than 15% in homelessness since then even with an increasing population.

The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS) was established to alleviate poverty in the city for all. The centre focuses on ways to establish social capital, which includes health, support, resources and other factors to increase a person's capacity for independent living. Figure 1 shows how the centre can calculate social capital and an individual's capacity for independent living.

The likelihood of entering Homelessness increases as an individual's social capital is exhausted...

$$\lim_{SC \to 0} IL_{cap} = 0$$

$$SC = \sum_{k=1}^{n} SC_k$$

Where:

IL_{cap} is an individual's capacity for independent living

SC is an individual's social capital

SC_k is a component of social capital, e.g. family support, employment skills, reserves of cash/credit, friend support, self esteem, mental and physical health, ...

Figure. 1 Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (Strategic Plan 2017)

B. Statement of Problem

People at risk of homelessness or in homeless centres are some of the most vulnerable

and at risk of contracting COVID-19. This is because of limited access facilities such as

bathrooms to wash hands and less able to stay inside and self-isolate from others. Supplies such

as cleaning materials and masks are also less available. There are also medical conditions to

consider such as respiratory issues or low immune systems that require monitoring. The

Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) states that homeless centres are at high risk of

transmission of COVID-19. "Infectious disease epidemics and pandemics have a

disproportionate impact on people experiencing poverty, marginalization, stigmatization and

discrimination" (Perri et. al). The social distancing rule and other public health directives become

difficult to follow. Since COVID-19 also affects business and other centres, if those services

close they may also impact those in need of them to maintain a capacity for independent living.

There are many funds set up on Canadahelps.org for different parts of the country as well as on

the Calgary Homeless Foundation website.

In Calgary, since the beginning of April 2020, more people have been testing positive for

COVID-19 at Calgary homeless centres. Many efforts have been made to prevent the spread such

as setting up isolation centres or providing more testing. However, more support would greatly

benefit with protecting those in homeless centres including those at risk of homelessness and

front-line workers. (https://globalnews.ca/news/6873088/calgary-homeless-shelters-positive-for-covid-19/)

C. Purpose of The Report

　　The purpose of this report is to gather data and research for analysis. The research is in hopes of having a better understanding of the goals and challenges of homeless centres, especially in times such as a global pandemic and to study the effectiveness of current practices. The pandemic has shown ways in which communities can come together to support those more vulnerable and has highlighted how housing can improve in the future whether through government or local involvement. The data as well as information can be used to further study trends in challenges and solutions, for educational purposes and in proposing and creating strategies and ways to support housing.

D. Methods & Scope

　　An interview with Kala, part of the Public Relations & Media department was conducted in parts. This was to clarify important questions and information. A survey was handed out to those in the department as well to gather data. Secondary research included the website itself, news articles and official statistics. I researched questions ranging from small details to more general inquiries to identify some of the main challenges, including:

- What are the main changes to the centre since COVID-19?
- What would be most beneficial for the centre as of now, that the general public could support in?
- Is extending information and educating the general public a concern and has social media been helpful/effective in doing so?

III. Data Section

A. Changes Implemented At The Centre In Response to COVID-19

Major Changes	Details
Cleaning and Health Protocols	• Wearing of masks at all times • More hand washing stations • Mandatory hand washing or sanitizing before entering • Screening of clients for symptoms before entering • Increasing cleaning times in high risk areas • Travelling on floors changed to adhere to social distancing recommendation • Social distancing implemented in different parts such as dining areas • Tested positive or suspected of testing must isolate in a separate centre
Support in and for the Centre	• Two Satellite Shelters opened for more services and spacing • Calgary Telus Convention Centre (CTCC) • Donations • Social Media usage
Staffing and Volunteering	• Increase in staff members in all departments • Hiring of more licensed practical nurses (LPN) • Closing of non-essential areas and volunteer programs

B. Summary of Changes and Their Effectiveness

The sudden global pandemic has been a challenge to adapt to, especially concerning the unknown around the newness of COVID-19 and it's infection rate. In response, the centre and organization has been successful in adhering to health directives to reduce the spread and continue operations as normal and effectively as possible. The spread of COVID-19 in the centre has been limited due to the hiring of LPN's, leading health physicians, mandatory sanitization and wearing of masks, testing and temperature monitoring. The two alternative shelters opened have also provided more services in response to social distancing and also helps as organization for different departments such as emergencies or isolation. Though extra volunteer programs are currently closed, staff has increased out of necessity and importance. All of these changes have been greatly beneficial to reduce the spread of COVID-19, with very few people testing positive.

C. Consistency of Strategic Priorities & Challenges During COVID-19

Many operations in the centre have been and continue to be altered to ensure the safety of clients and staff. These changes are implemented to also ensure the centre can continue operations as much as possible. The strategic priorities include providing services and support whether medical, social or other. The centre continues to search for affordable housing for clients.

Much of the challenges during the pandemic still include housing goals such as helping a set number of people in a set period of time find affordable housing. As done normally, those who can provide affordable housing can contact the centre at landlords@thedi.ca. There is also a

current program on Tuesdays called #GivingTuesdayNow posted on social media to reach

donation goals. These continue to be a challenge and main focus.
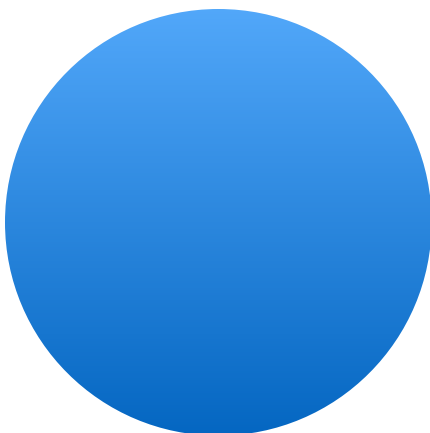
D. Survey Results

Increase or Decrease in Clients
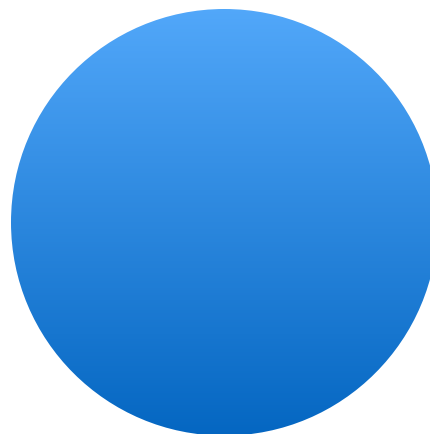

● Increase   ● Decrease
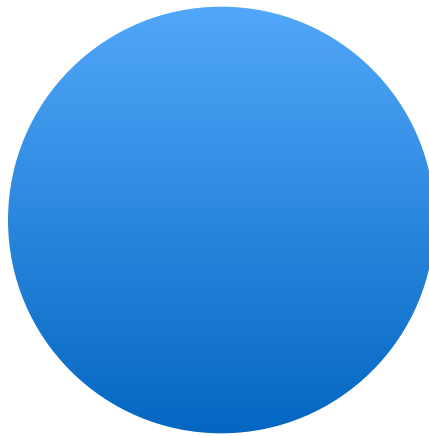
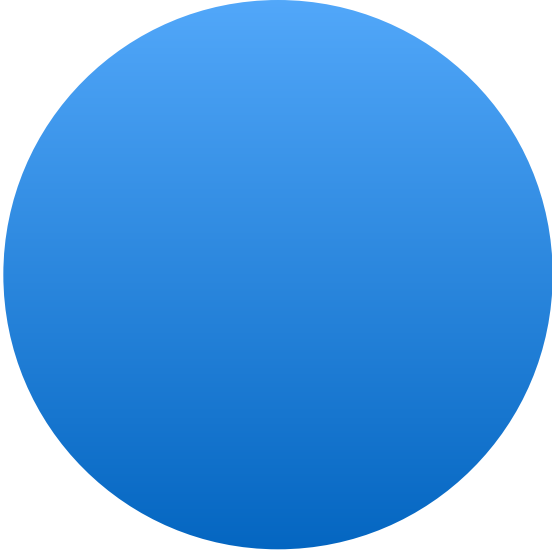Busiest Time's of the Year Before COVD-19   Since COVID-19

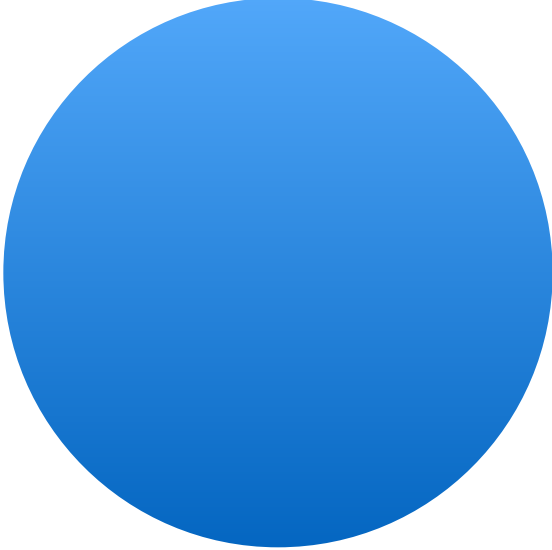● Summer ● Autumn ● Winter ● Spring   ● Summer ● Autumn ● Winter ● Spring

Most Common Donations prior to COVID-19

- Clothing
- Toiletries
- For Children
- Non-Perishable Items
- Feminine Hygiene
- Other

Most Wanted/Needed Donations

- Clothing
- Toiletries
- For Children
- Non-Perishable Items
- Feminine Hygiene
- Other

IV. Conclusion

A. Analysis of Findings

B. Summary of Findings

C. Recommendations

Some of the recommendations provided to me as well as from the analysis of the findings from the survey and interview include:

- Increase in social media presence

    - This includes popular platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. These platforms offer a variety of ways to deliver information which can then reach a larger audience. Sharing pictures, videos is included as visual stimuli. Short blurbs that capture a reader's attention can be used on Twitter. Links are easy and convenient to add on to any post for users on these sites.

    - The purpose of a stronger social media presence is to gather more support such as donations, partnerships, volunteers etc. through sharing online and making connections. Events and programs can become especially popular.

- Education

    - Bringing awareness to homelessness in communities is vital in providing support. Misinformation around homelessness can be present. Providing education on the reasons behind homelessness, effects and consequences of homelessness, ways in

which it can be solved, to a mass audience, especially specific to a location or city,

creates understanding within communities and willingness to help.

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