

# CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

CRCS NEWSLETTER – fall 2003

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CRCS UPDATES	..1
PROJECT SUMMARIES	..2
LOADING AFTER CHILDREN	..3
EVENTS	..5
CRCS PEOPLE	..6

## CRCS UPDATE

### Staff Changes

Julie Beaulac left the position of Centre Coordinator at the end of May 2003 to travel in Europe for the summer before beginning the Clinical Psychology Graduate program at the University of Ottawa in September 2003. Vivien Runnels has taken over the position of Centre Coordinator.

Taryn Ready, the City of Ottawa Coordinator has left us for the Prairies to study Nutrition at the University of Alberta. Julie Ouellette, Erin Secord and Jenna Fong administrative assistants have left to pursue their studies and other activities.

Natasha Bergeron, a graduate student in Psychology who has been involved in the Communities that Care project since its inception, left the CRCS in June to do her pre-doctoral internship at Yale University where she will be receiving further training in community and clinical psychology.

We are delighted to welcome Myriam Lebel who is working on a study with Tel/Aide/Distress Centre.



### Graduate Students from CRCS Win National Case Competition

A team of graduate students from the the Centre for Research on Community Services and School of Psychology at the University of Ottawa won the National Case Competition of the Canadian Evaluation Society this past June in Vancouver. Teams members included Gordon Josephson, Heather MacIntosh, Corien Peeters, Julie Perkins, and Angela Stewart. The team was coached by Drs. Tim Aubry and Bob Flynn. The finals of the competition, held at the annual conference of the Canadian Evaluation Society, required the students to develop and present to a panel of judges a proposal for evaluating a Federal Government project. The students were required to complete their analysis, and prepare their presentation, in a five-hour time period. In winning the competition, the University of Ottawa team beat eleven other teams from universities across Canada. You can find out more about this year's National Case Competition at the website of the Canadian Evaluation Society: <http://competition.evaluationcanada.ca/cgi/db.cgi?stat=schedule&lang=en&num=14>



# CRCS PROJECT SUMMARIES

## **Panel Study on the Health Status of Persons who are Homeless (2002-2003)**

This study is the first wave of a longitudinal study whose purpose is to examine pathways into and out of homelessness. The research objective for the first wave is to provide descriptive data on demographic characteristics, housing history, health status, and health and social service utilization and needs. Over four hundred shelter residents in five subgroups (adult women, adult men, female youth, male youth and families) were interviewed over a five-month period. Data collection for the first wave of the study was completed. The research team members for this first wave of the study were: Tim Aubry and Fran Klodawsky, Co-Principal Investigators, Susan Farrell, Robert Flynn, Tiina Podymow, Jeff Turnbull, Betsy Kristjansson, Peter Tugwell, Caroline Andrew, Doug Angus, Daniel Coulombe, Elizabeth Hay (University of Ottawa), Benham Behnia, Karen Schwartz (Carleton University), Evelyn Peters (University of Saskatchewan) and Shannon Nix of Human Resources Development Canada. A copy of a presentation on the results of the first phase of the project can be accessed at <http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crcs/eng/conf.asps> .

## **City of Ottawa Homelessness Initiatives Monitoring Project (2001 – 2002)**

This project gathered continuous series data from homelessness agencies, which are funded through the Homelessness Initiative of the City of Ottawa. The Initiative provides funds from the federal and provincial governments which are distributed to various Canadian cities. In turn, these municipalities distribute this funding to different agencies that have contact with people who are or have been homeless. Together these agencies helped over 10,000 people of all ages, sexes, and ethnicities. The City of Ottawa engaged the CRCS to gather

local data that monitored the service outputs and client outcomes of the funded agencies. This large data gathering project involved the City of Ottawa Housing Branch, University of Ottawa Centre for Research on Community Services and funded agency workers from over 45 agency teams who submit data to CRCS. **A copy of a presentation on the results of the project can be accessed at <http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crcs/eng/conf.asps> .**

## **Snapshot Survey of At-Risk Youths in Ottawa (2001-2002)**

This survey which was conducted during the last two weeks of October 2001, obtained information from 354 young people who were participants in 27 programs provided by 14 youth-serving agencies in Ottawa. The survey assessed the needs of the youths, obtained information on their schooling, psychological adjustment, and experience of violence or abuse, and inquired about the frequency with which they took part in a range of healthy extra-curricular or spare-time activities. Funded by the United Way/Centraide of Ottawa and the City of Ottawa, the project was a partnership between CRCS and the Network of Youth Service Providers in Ottawa (often called the “Popcorn” network). The research team included Joan MacDonald, Paul Basevitz, and Bob Flynn from CRCS. To download the final report, click on “Online Publications” on the CRCS web site <http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/crcs/eng/publ.asp> under the heading “At-Risk Children and Adolescents, including Child Welfare”, Report on Snapshot Survey (Weeks of October 15-29, 2001) of Participants in Programs of Network of Youth Service Providers in the Ottawa Area. The document in French “Bien-être des enfants et jeunes à risqué » can be viewed at <http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/crcs/fra/publ.asp>

## Communities That Care

The Communities That Care (CTC) project, a community mobilization project aimed at preventing problem behaviours among at-risk adolescents, such as dropping out of school, substance abuse, delinquency, violence, and unplanned pregnancies, is now at the end of its second year of implementation in Hawkesbury and in its 1<sup>st</sup> year in two other Ontario communities. Data collection on current levels of risk and protective factors in the lives of adolescents as well as on problem behaviours is underway in Hawkesbury by means of a self-report questionnaire administered in schools. It is anticipated that approximately 600 youth will participate in this study and be followed in the coming years.

### A study of the Deaths of Persons who are Homeless in Ottawa - A Social and Health Investigation

Gaining understandings of death and dying in our society has never been easy. In this study of people who were homeless and who died,

the people who were studied were members of a group of people whose day-to-day lives were substantially different to typical adult mainstream activities. The study of the deaths of persons who are homeless in Ottawa, is a qualitative study that pieces together accounts of individuals' lives, in the hope of understanding their lives and determining contributors to their deaths with the view to preventing these deaths when possible. The study which was funded by the City of Ottawa and undertaken at Saint Paul University and the Centre for Research on Community Services, incorporated the development of a sustainable methodology and the testing of this methodology through a pilot study. The study provided recommendations with regard to the findings as well as the methodology. The study's work started in April 2002 and was completed with the final report to the City of Ottawa in June 2003. Principal Investigator: Manal Guirguis-Younger and Research Coordinator: Vivien Runnels. . **A copy of a presentation on the results of the project can be accessed at <http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crcs/eng/conf.aspx> .**

## LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN

The *Looking After Children* projects are national and provincial studies investigating the developmental trajectories of children and young people in care. The projects are based on an approach originating in the UK and first piloted in an Ontario agency in 1995. Now, the *Looking After Children* (LAC) approach has been partly or fully implemented in 10 Canadian provinces and territories. LAC focuses on the promotion of positive outcomes and trajectories in the lives of children and young people in care. In addition, the approach highlights the importance of good parenting skills and the presence of a strong partnership among all adults providing care and help to children and young people in care.

The *Looking After Children* philosophy is operationalized by means of six age-appropriate versions of the Assessment and Action Record (AAR): 0-12 months, 1-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years and 15 or more

years. In 2001, Flynn, Ghazal, and Legault developed the AARs presently used in the projects which constitute a second Canadian adaptation of the original British AARs. Available in English and French, these AARs-2 retain many monitoring questions from their original British counterpart, and incorporates many items and standardized measures from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). The use of questions originating from the NLSCY both ensures that the collected information is relevant to Canadian children and youths while providing a means to directly compare children in care with a representative Canadian sample of children. The ability to compare developmental outcomes of children in care with those of their peers in the general population allows for a more accurate assessment of the degree to which children in care have attained positive (i.e., resilient)

outcomes in the face of adversity.

The projects are now into the third year of data collection using the AARs-2. We have just begun investigating the prevalence of resilience in children and young people in care as well as of factors associated with resilience. It is important to note that resilience was operationally defined, on each outcome variable, as average or above-average functioning relative to that of the general-population sample of the same age. Preliminary research findings from the first year of Ontario data suggest that there are many positive outcomes and much resilience among children and young people in care. For example, young people in care and their peers in the general population report similar levels of health, self-esteem, happiness and optimism about the future as well as relatively similar levels of positive friendship ties and of pro-social behaviours (Flynn et al., 2003). Preliminary research findings also highlighted remaining challenges in child welfare in the areas of educational attainment and emotional/behavioural development. For example, children and young people in care tend to report higher levels of anxiety and emotional distress as well as hyperactivity and inattention compared to their peers in the general population (Flynn et al., 2003; Legault et al., 2003).

The above results represent only a fraction of findings to date. The coming year (2003/2004) will be particularly busy in terms of research and development. We plan to continue investigating the prevalence of resilient outcomes and identifying individual and environmental factors associated with resilient outcomes and trajectories. These goals should be more easily achieved during the second year of data collection with a larger cross-Canadian sample size and the addition to the AARs-2 of several resilient-related constructs such as a hope scale and a coping scale. Current work is also being done towards developing a more relevant AAR for young adults aged 18-21. This work is done in anticipation of commencing in 2004, a new research endeavour investigating the various major developmental trajectories followed by young people aged 16-

21 as they leave the child welfare system and make a transition to adult life. Lastly, in the fall, child welfare organizations will obtain a confidential report outlining developmental outcomes of the children and young people in their care compared to both their provincial/national counterparts and to peers in the general population. A major objective of our current research activities is to enable child welfare organizations and provincial/territorial ministries to regularly monitor outcomes at a clinical, organizational and provincial/territorial level. It is through regular outcome monitoring that decision-makers may identify practice and policy priorities with the view of improving services and client outcomes.

Centre for Research on Community Services' staff conducting the studies are Robert Flynn, (Principal Investigator), Louise Legault (National Research Coordinator), and Hayat Ghazal (Ontario Research Coordinator).

For more information about the Canadian LAC project <http://www.cwlc.ca/html/canlac.htm> For more information about the Ontario LAC project <http://www.oacas.org/> (Home Page) Choose Our Programs - Looking After Children.

## **A New Study**

Evaluating the benefits associated with services delivered by Tel-Aide Outaouais and the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region

Tel-Aide Outaouais and the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region are two non-profit organizations that offer a 24-hour 7-days a week all year round telephone distress line serving the Ottawa and Outaouais regions. The Distress Centre and Tel-Aide Outaouais, in partnership with the Centre for Research on Community Services at the University of Ottawa, are collaborating on the design and implementation of an internal evaluation system for their crisis and volunteer program.

This evaluation project will provide the Distress Centre and Tel-Aide Outaouais with useful

information for quality assurance and service improvement. The project is funded by the Trillium Foundation, and the City of Ottawa. It began in July 2003 and will be completed in

July 2005. For further information, please contact Myriam Lebel, Project Coordinator of the evaluation project, at [mlebel@uottawa.ca](mailto:mlebel@uottawa.ca).

## EVENTS

**August 16-19, 2004**  
**6th International Looking After Children Conference**  
**5th National Child Welfare Symposium**

**Promoting Resilient Development in Child Welfare**  
**Ottawa, ON**

*Presented by:*

**Child Welfare League of Canada,  
Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare,  
Centre for Research on Community Services,  
Services to Children and Adults of Prescott-Russell,  
Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies,  
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa**

(with pre and post-conference events on Sunday,  
August 15 and Friday, August 20, 2004)

**For more information,  
please contact Shannon Balla - ph: (613) 235-4412, ext 28; email: sballa@cwlc.ca**

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## CRCS People

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**More Information or for access to project reports, presentations and other relevant material produced by CRCS please refer to :**

<http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crcs/fra/index.asp> (French)

<http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crcs/eng/> (English)