

Clause 10 in Report No. 6 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on April 20, 2017.

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Update on Emergency and Transitional Housing  
Belinda's Place and Youth Hub

Committee of the Whole recommends:

1. Receipt of the presentation by Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services.
2. Adoption of the following recommendation contained in the report dated March 24, 2017 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:
  1. Council receive this report for information.

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Report dated March 24, 2017 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services now follows:

1. Recommendation

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

2. Purpose

This report fulfills the commitment to report back on the impact that two new Emergency and Transitional Housing facilities had in 2016 and provides an update on the first full year of operation at Belinda's Place.

### 3. Background and Previous Council Direction

Development of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub was informed by a new Regional vision for homelessness and housing stability services

In 2012, Council adopted [New Vision and Related Operational Reforms to York Region's Emergency Shelter and Homelessness Prevention Services](#). Under this vision, strategies that help residents experiencing homelessness get housed and stay housed is key. This approach is rooted in evidence that shows that it costs less to help people sustain permanent housing than to manage crisis and find housing once someone is homeless. The Region has shifted from primarily reactive services to more proactive, permanent solutions. Two key outcomes that align with our vision and provincial homelessness reform are:

1. People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing
2. People at risk of homelessness remain housed.

In York Region's 10-Year Housing Plan, [Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone](#) the commitment was made to develop two new multi-service centres to address the gap in emergency housing for adult women and youth living in the southern municipalities.

In 2014 and 2015, Council authorized the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to execute agreements with service providers to operate Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub. Council also requested a report back on the first full year of operations at Belinda's Place.

Belinda's Place, which serves only women, opened its doors in November 2015 and is operated on behalf of the Region by The Governing Council of The Salvation Army of Canada (The Salvation Army). The Richmond Hill Youth Hub (Youth Hub), which serves youth, opened in March 2016 and is operated on behalf of the Region by 360°kids Support Services (360°kids). Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub are the first facilities in the Region to fully implement a service delivery model that focuses on providing wraparound supports such as individual counselling, housing location and life skill building.

4. Analysis and Implications

Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub address significant service gaps for adult women and youth who are homeless or at-risk

Belinda’s Place, which is York Region’s first facility for homeless and at-risk women who are not fleeing violence, has 28 single emergency housing rooms where women may stay for up to 30 days, and nine transitional units equipped with a bathroom and kitchenette where women may stay for up to one year. In addition, this multi-service centre has a drop-in program delivered by both staff and community partners for women staying at Belinda’s Place and by at-risk women living in the community.

Before the Youth Hub opened its doors, all services for homeless and at-risk youth were located in the northern part of York Region, although 70 percent of York Region youth live in the three southern municipalities. The Youth Hub provides 14 emergency beds where youth may stay for up to four months and 11 transitional beds in three apartment-style units where youth may stay for up to one year, as well as specialized supports that address their diverse and at times complex needs. The existing Richmond Hill Home Base drop-in program operated by 360°kids also moved to new space at the Youth Hub with expanded hours of service, providing homeless and at-risk youth with supports to develop the skills to be successful as they transition to independence.

Table 1 highlights the number of residents that stayed at each facility in 2016.

**Table 1**  
**Unique Individuals Who Stayed in Emergency and Transitional Housing at Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub in 2016**

	Belinda’s Place	Youth Hub*
Emergency Housing	226	80
Transitional Housing	15	17
Total**	228	86

\* The Youth Hub opened to clients in March 2016.

\*\* The number of clients who stayed in Transitional Housing in 2016 includes 24 individuals who moved to a Transitional unit from Emergency Housing (13 at Belinda’s Place and 11 at the Youth Hub). The total number of clients served has been adjusted to reflect the total number of unique individuals served across both programs.

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As a result of opening these two new facilities, an additional 314 York Region residents experiencing homelessness were able to access emergency or transitional housing and received wraparound supports.

Aftercare services and drop-in programming at Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub foster community engagement and promote housing stability

Clients of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub who return to housing in the community can access ongoing service coordination for up to one year to help strengthen their family and social support networks, build connections with community services and develop the practical skills needed to sustain a tenancy. These aftercare services are particularly crucial for women and youth with complex needs. Continued wraparound support enables them to remain stably housed in the long term.

Drop-in Services at Belinda's Place and the Home Base drop-in program at the Youth Hub make it possible to support many more at-risk residents before they need emergency housing. In 2016, 81 women used drop-in services at Belinda's Place, and Home Base served 1,143 at-risk youth.

Both programs are open seven days per week and help residents meet their basic needs, help them connect to our communities and get access to support services. Amenities that are available on a drop-in basis include:

- Meals and snacks
- Access to non-perishable food to support food security
- Washrooms, showers and laundry facilities
- Computers and telephones to assist residents with their search for housing
- Education and employment goals

Staff at Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub provide wraparound services such as housing assistance, education and employment support, and information and referrals to other community services. Community agencies also deliver services on-site through partnerships entered into pursuant to Memoranda of Understanding between the community agencies and either The Salvation Army or 360°kids. Recreational activities to encourage physical and mental health are in place. These include many that are organized by volunteers such as basketball tournaments with York Regional Police at the Youth Hub and a yoga program at Belinda's Place. These activities all support wellbeing and community engagement.

Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub are the first emergency and transitional housing facilities in York Region to fully implement the homelessness prevention service delivery model endorsed by Regional Council in 2012. They provide

## Update on Emergency and Transitional Housing Belinda's Place and Youth Hub

intensive case management, individualized wraparound supports, aftercare support and drop-in services, and this model is demonstrating its effectiveness.

Community partnerships increase the capacity to offer a wide range of services at Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub

Both Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub were designed to provide space for community agencies to deliver direct support to homeless or at-risk residents. The ability to host many different agencies in one building on a rotating basis facilitates access to a broad range of programs and services that promote long-term stability, health and wellbeing and community engagement at no additional cost to the Region. Many activities and services are organized and led by community members and local businesses on a volunteer basis.

More than 50 community partners at Belinda's Place and 24 community partners at the Youth Hub provide direct services to residents.

At Belinda's Place, services include:

- Mental health peer support (Canadian Mental Health Association)
- Seneca Work Force employment supports
- Life skills workshops and individual counselling provided by the Women's Centre of York Region

Partner-provided services at the Youth Hub include:

- MOBYSS, the Canadian Mental Health Association's mobile mental health service for youth
- Healthy relationships workshop delivered by the John Howard Society
- Computer and literacy skill building provided by the Literacy Council of York Simcoe

The iGrad program at the Youth Hub, championed by the Region and delivered through an innovative collaboration between 360°kids and the York Region District School Board, further demonstrates the impact of partnerships. A high school diploma is essential for long-term employment and education opportunities, yet keeping up with school can be challenging for homeless and at-risk youth. At the Youth Hub, an onsite classroom staffed by a York Region District School Board teacher and supported by a guidance counsellor allows these youth to work toward high school credits. The iGrad program was launched in September 2016. In the first three months of operation, 49 youth signed up for the program, four completed a credit and one youth graduated high school.

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Belinda's Place and Youth Hub

In 2016, 120 homeless women who stayed in emergency housing at Belinda's Place secured long-term housing

An additional 25 women who used drop-in services also found stable housing with the support of the Housing Workers. Sixty-eight women participating in the Aftercare Supports Program had remained stably housed in the community at the six-month check-in point. There have been many successes in enabling women with long histories of homelessness and complex needs to stabilize and become successfully housed. Due to their need for ongoing case management they have retained their housing.

Between March 2016 and December 2016, a total of 27 homeless youth received support through the Youth Hub to obtain long-term housing in the community, including 13 who were reunited with family. An additional 19 homeless youth received assistance from a Housing Worker to move into emergency and transitional housing at the Youth Hub or to a 360°kids residential program operated at another site.

Community mobilization and support for Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub plays a key role in their success

From the \$1 million contributed by the Town of Richmond Hill to help build the Youth Hub, the gift of a free 99-year lease of land for Belinda's Place by the Town of Newmarket, to ongoing donations and active volunteer work, the support of local municipalities and the broader community has enhanced the impact of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub. The development of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub was a true collaborative effort from the earliest planning stages. Community agencies, local municipalities and the private sector partnered with York Region to support the new vision and build community acceptance of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub. An innovative collaboration between the Social Services Branch and Housing Services Branch, under which Housing York Inc. (Housing York) owns and manages the facilities, leverages Housing York's property management expertise and allows the service providers to focus on supporting homeless and at-risk clients.

In 2016, 274 volunteers shared their time and skills at Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub. They provided many services including financial literacy workshops, chiropractic care and organized activities such as sewing classes, yoga or art.

Fundraising in the community has also been essential. Belinda's Place Foundation raised more than \$1 million from the local community to help build the facility, and continues to provide funding to support service enhancements such as a pilot program for seniors-specific services which began in 2017. 360°kids has committed to contribute \$1 million over four years to support service innovation at the Youth Hub. In 2016, these funds were used to purchase specialized equipment for the music studio program and the exercise room as

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well as household items to increase the “home like” feel of the emergency and transitional rooms.

Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub supports the goals of Vision 2051 and the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan

Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub directly support York Region’s goal to expand housing choices for people of all ages and stages as outlined in Vision 2051, *A Place Where Everyone Can Thrive*, and address the root cause of social and health issues through partnerships, education and the delivery of wraparound services to homeless and at-risk youth and women.

The services and programs at Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub also directly support the strategic priorities of the 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan through the provision of housing choices that meet the diverse needs of residents and by helping resident’s access basic needs.

### 5. Financial Considerations

York Region’s Homelessness Community Programs operates under an annual gross budget of \$20.6 million and the Region provides up to \$8.4 million in tax levy funding in 2017. The Ministry of Housing provides up to \$12.3 million in funding to the Region under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative for the 2017/2018 fiscal year.

The Salvation Army and 360°kids receive funding through service agreements with the Region administered by the Homelessness Community Programs Unit for the operations at Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub. The service agreements for 2016 were \$1.47 million in Regional funding for Belinda’s Place and \$1.39 million in Regional funding for the Youth Hub. In addition, the Region also provides funding to Housing York to cover operational costs for these two facilities.

### 6. Local Municipal Impact

Belinda’s Place and the Youth Hub serve women and youth from all communities in York Region and provide critical emergency and transitional housing and support services. While services are available to all youth in York Region, the Youth Hub in particular ensures youth in the southern part of the Region can access services while remaining in their communities.

## 7. Conclusion

The new service delivery model upon which Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub were designed has allowed for a fundamental transformation of York Region's approach to delivering emergency homelessness and housing stability services. In addition to addressing critical gaps in services, the new model works to break the cycle of homelessness through individualized case planning and intensive wraparound supports.

Both facilities support residents in a holistic manner to move out of crisis, effectively plan out their next steps, and get access to services they need to support long-term stability and success. Specialized staff and community partnerships to deliver a broad range of services that reflect and respond to residents' needs and York Region's realities is effective.

With the opening of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub, more homeless and at-risk residents are able to find and keep housing and connect with community-based services that help them meet their goals. When homeless and at-risk residents across the Region are supported to get housed and stay housed, they are also able to find employment and participate fully in the community. The early successes of Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub provide a valuable model as the Region continues the work to fully implement this service delivery model at its other emergency and transitional housing sites.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext 72150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

March 24, 2017

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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request



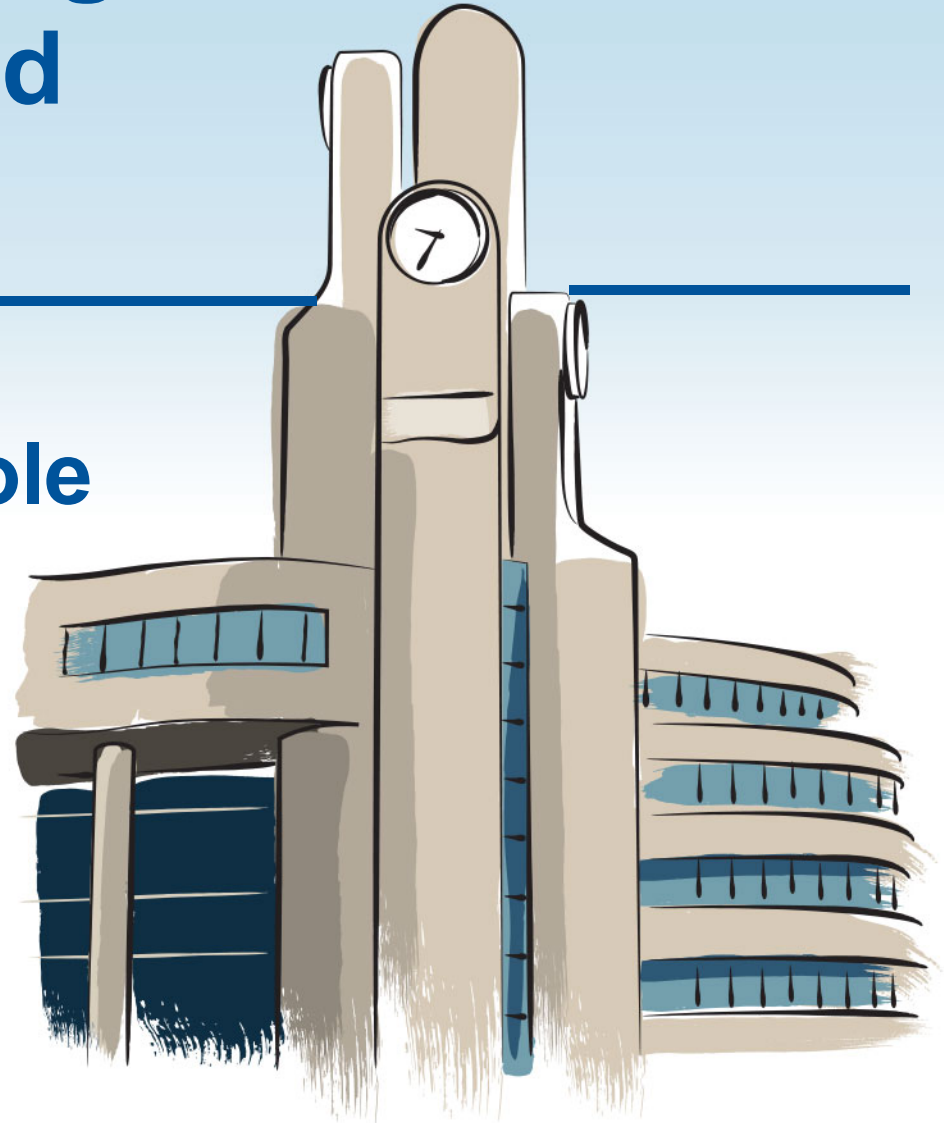
# Update on Emergency and Transitional Housing – Belinda’s Place and Youth Hub

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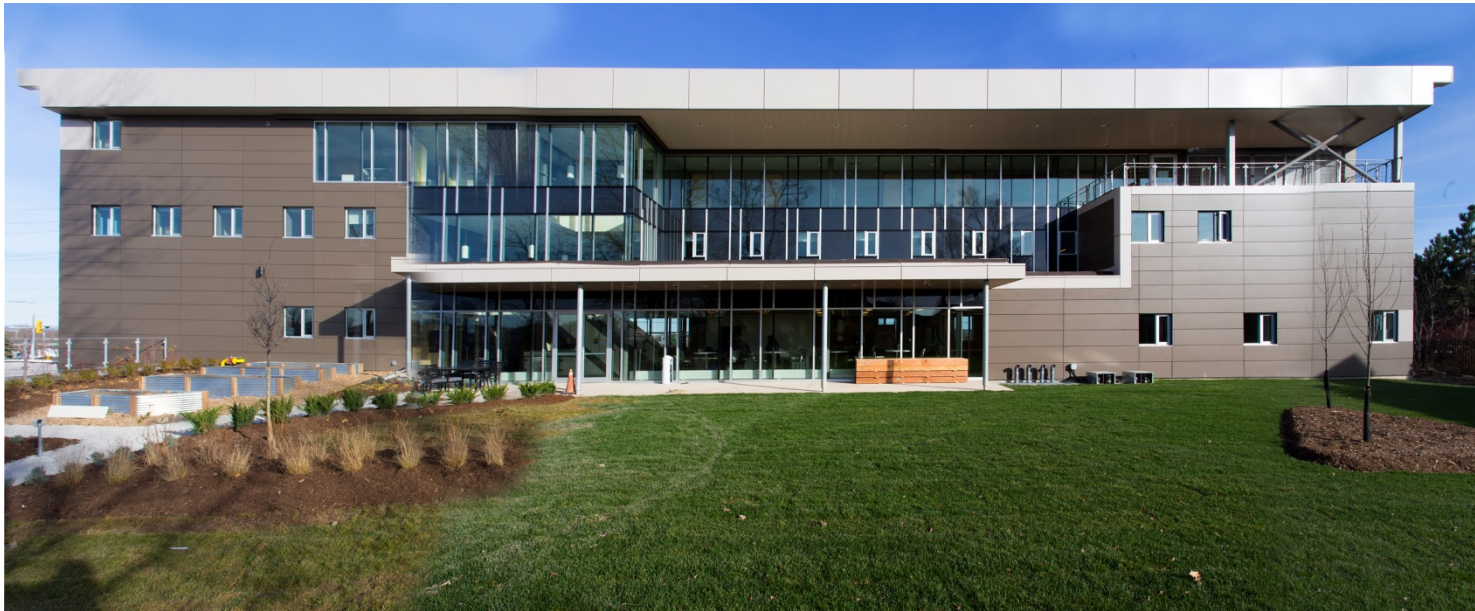
Presentation to  
**Committee of the Whole**  
(Please refer to Item F.2.1)

**Cordelia Abankwa**  
General Manager, Social Services

April 6, 2017



# Belinda's Place



# The Richmond Hill Hub



# Integrated and Coordinated Emergency Housing Services



**Integrated and coordinated services provide a more efficient and seamless level of care.**

# Community Supported Solutions to a Complex Social Issue



**Hosting many different agencies in one building allows access to a range of services. This promotes long-term stability, health, well-being and community engagement.**

# Belinda's Place and the Youth Hub Are Making a Positive Difference

**172**

Obtained Housing

**1,143**

Used the Home Base  
Drop-in Program

**81**

Used the Belinda's Place Drop-in Program

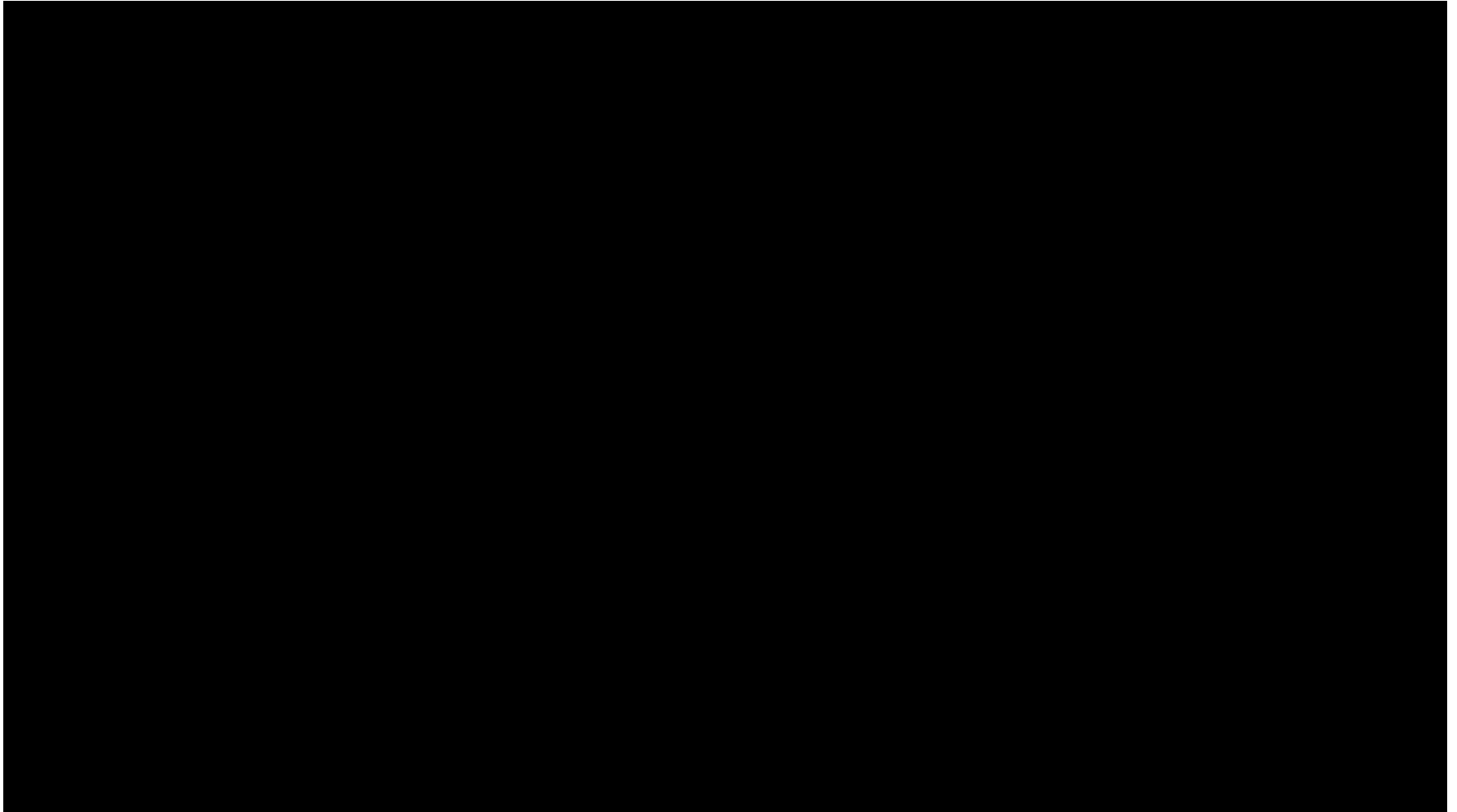
**1,721**

Referred to other  
supports and services

**314**

Stayed in Emergency and Transitional  
Housing

# Shella's Story



[\[Click here to view the Video on YouTube\]](#)

# It Takes a Village.....

