

Ontario's community-based services are operating in an increasingly complex environment, shaped by rising needs, growing challenges in people's lives, and competing public priorities. With more than 40 years of experience, YSSN works at the intersection of mental health, developmental services, and crisis response, offering insight into where systems are working and where improvement is needed. YSSN Signals shares this perspective to support informed planning and collaboration across the sector.

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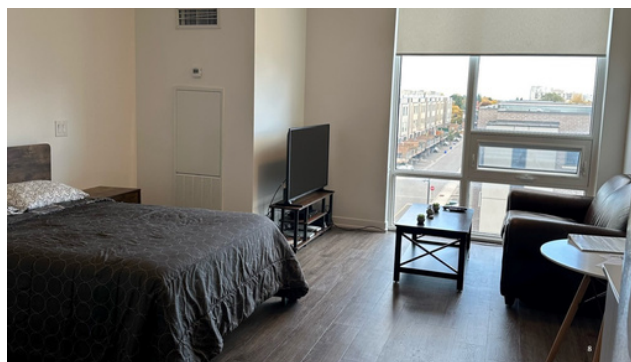
This issue draws on learning from YSSN's Safe/Crisis Beds Program.

SAFE/CRISIS BEDS

For many in today's high-pressure world, it can take just one setback for coping to turn into crisis. YSSN's Safe/Crisis Beds provide short-term stabilization for people facing acute difficulties, many with mental health needs, housing instability, or complex service histories.

Referrals come through police and paramedics, hospitals, YSSN's crisis line, and community partners. Services are delivered at no cost in a home-like setting to support safety, stabilization, and connection to ongoing supports.

The program also serves as a system pressure indicator, offering insight into coordination, service access, and post-crisis follow-through.



KEY SIGNALS (2023-24 TO 2025-26 MID-YEAR)

- Growing demand for housing-linked stabilization.
- Rising repeat admissions point to opportunities.
- Growing demand for service alignment with seniors' needs.

Learn more 

GROWING DEMAND FOR HOUSING-LINKED STABILIZATION

Access to stable housing remains a central priority across communities and governments. Experience in YSSN's Safe/Crisis Beds reinforces this focus, as a growing proportion of people accessing crisis support are experiencing housing instability. Strengthened coordination between housing and community crisis services sustains stability, reduces repeat crisis involvement, and ensures resources are used effectively where needs are greatest.

After a brain injury and denied WSIB claim led to two years of homelessness, David was referred to Safe/Crisis Beds by police. With coordinated supports, he secured housing and is rebuilding stability and family relationships.

Clients unhoused when entering Safe/Crisis Beds

2023–24:	→	57%
2024–25:	→	74%
2025–26 (mid-yr.):		74%

RISING REPEAT ADMISSIONS POINT TO OPPORTUNITIES

People who repeatedly access Safe/Crisis Beds are reflective of system gaps and limited housing resources. The program serves to divert people without stable housing from repeated emergency department visits and police involvement into lower-cost community settings. With demand exceeding capacity, expanding Safe/Crisis Beds offers a way to improve outcomes, divert from emergency rooms and police contact, and lower overall system costs.

While in withdrawal management and without stable housing, Enrique used Safe/Crisis Beds on weekends to avoid returning to a high-risk environment. This stability successfully supported his goal to remain in recovery.

% of repeat clients supported in Safe/Crisis Beds

2023–24:	→	13%
2024–25:	→	26%
2025–26 (mid-yr.):		24%

GROWING DEMAND FOR SERVICE ALIGNMENT WITH SENIORS' NEEDS

An increasing number of older adults are accessing Safe/Crisis Beds, many who fall outside the original vision for the program. Their involvement underscores the vital safety net it provides for people who are isolated or lack resources to manage challenges on their own. Strengthened collaboration across health, housing, and community services and coordinated efforts can help ensure supports align with the needs of older adults and enhance overall system capacity.

Facing eviction for "hoarding," 68-year old Evelyn was actually struggling with daily living tasks. Safe/Crisis Beds helped assess her needs and connect her to long-term supportive housing where she now lives safely and with dignity.

Clients aged 50+ supported in Safe/Crisis Beds

2023–24:	→	28%
2024–25:	→	54%
2025–26 (mid-yr.):		27%

The Bottom Line

Leveraging these insights can help inform strategic investments to build additional system capacity, strengthen cross-sector partnerships and ensure greater impact from use of public resources.