Homelessness, Crime, and the Criminal Justice System

A Research Proposal

submitted to the
National Secretariat on Homelessness

by a
Community / University Research Partnership

John Howard Society of Toronto
&
Centre for Urban and Community Studies
University of Toronto

November 2003
Research Questions

The purpose of the proposed research is to inquire into the connection between the justice system and homelessness, to examine the relationship between the police, the court system and homeless youth and adults, and to explore the systemic and structural causes of victimization and criminalization of homeless youth and adults. The research design is based on three sets of research questions.

A. The size of the problem

1. Using the Toronto area as a case study of the feasibility of collecting this type of data, how many people with no fixed address are admitted to and released from police custody, provincial court, and correctional facilities/detention centres; and how many people in homeless shelters have come from correction facilities?

B. Best practices

2. What effective service coordination strategies could be shared by various stakeholders before and after the release of detainees and inmates from prison?
3. What types of post-incarceration programs exist? What are the best practices?
4. What constructive alternatives to incarceration are available to homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless? Are these alternatives effective in reducing recidivism?

C. The police, homeless people, victimization and crime

5. What is the state of relations between the police and homeless youth and adults? How could relations be improved at the local level?
6. What are the causes and forms of violence towards and victimization of homeless youth and adults? How can the needs of homeless people in this area be met and this type of violence prevented?
7. What types of offences are committed by homeless youth and adults and how are they treated in the criminal justice system? How do regulations governing public spaces affect the offences committed by homeless youth and adults?

Because so little research has been carried out, we have decided to focus on the full set of research questions outlined in the proposal call. Before further, more detailed studies can be carried out, we need to learn more about the range of population groups involved: youth, single men, psychiatric survivors, former children in care, people with addictions, and other marginalized groups (visible minorities, Aboriginal people). There are also a number of very different “systems” involved: corrections, mental health, shelter services, welfare, health care, and law courts. Too little is known about the issue to narrowly focus at this stage. It is important to look at the problem in a broad context.
November 21, 2003

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Dear Ms. Asselin:

Re: Research Proposal – Homelessness, Crime and the Criminal Justice System

On behalf of the John Howard Society of Toronto and the University of Toronto’s Centre for Urban and Community Studies, we are pleased to submit this proposal.

Our team consists of an organization that has a long and highly respected history of providing a broad range of services to people who are involved with the criminal justice system, and a university-based research centre that has a major focus on research on homelessness and related social and housing policy issues.

The John Howard Society of Toronto has been working on the housing and related social support needs of the ex-offender population for many years. About 80% of its clients are homeless – they are released with no home to go to (“no fixed address”). This is a severe and growing problem, yet very little research has been conducted to help policy makers and service providers.

We intend to answer the six questions outlined in the proposal call. In addition, we have added a question about the number of homeless youth and adults who have been involved with the criminal justice system. We have organized these questions into three groups: the size of the problem; best practices; and the police, homeless people, victimization, and crime. We will study both youth and adults.

The research process necessary to answer these questions is exploratory and multi-method. We seek to answer all questions in your proposal call because they are inter-related, because similar data collection methods are required, and because there are efficiencies in tackling them as a group. Once a thorough exploratory study like the one we propose here has been carried out, then we can better identify more focused research questions and research tasks.

The quality, range of experience, and ingenuity of the research team is especially important for this undertaking. We feel we have the ideal mix of expertise – people who know the target population first-hand and people who are familiar with research methods and the literature on homelessness and on criminal justice.
We plan to form a small steering committee to guide the research process, hold a research inception workshop to fine-tune the research design and schedule, and to ensure that data collection and analysis are carried out jointly and in an integrated fashion by a community-based and an academic-based member of the research team.

We would be pleased to answer questions about this proposal. We are open to advice about improving it.

The research team we have assembled and the members of the steering committee we are proposing are excited about the prospect of working together on this vitally important aspect of the problem of homelessness.

Sincerely,

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Dr. Doob and Dr. Hulchanski have served together on PhD and MA thesis committees where criminal justice and policing issues were the research topic.

Business Registration Number

The project will be managed and financed through the University of Toronto.  
The business registration number is 108162330PG0002.  
The legal name of the organization is: “Governing Council of the University of Toronto.”
# Table of Contents

**Executive Summary**

1. **Qualifications and Experience**
   1.1 The John Howard Society of Toronto 3
   1.2 The Centre for Urban and Community Studies 7

2. **The Research Literature: What is Known?** 12

3. **Approach and Methodology** 16
   3.1 Overview of the Project’s Purpose and Objectives 16
   3.2 The Research Questions 17
   3.3 The Steering Committee 17
   3.4 Research Team 18
   3.5 Research Design 19

4. **Workplan** 24
   4.1 Research Schedule 24
   4.2 Deliverables 24

5. **Dissemination Plan** 25
   5.1 Research Documents and Papers 25
   5.2 Public Forum & Live Internet Webcast of Findings (with Archive) 25

6. **References Cited** 26

7. **Appendix: Research Team, Brief CVs** 27
Executive Summary

This joint project proposal by the John Howard Society of Toronto and the Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto will examine the complex interrelationships among the police, the court system, and homeless youth and adults, and explore the systemic and structural causes of victimization and criminalization of homeless youth and adults. The goal of this applied research project is to recommend programs that ensure that homeless people are subject to equitable and sensitive forms of policing, that they are treated fairly within Ontario’s criminal justice system, and help those involved in the criminal justice system to find and maintain housing.

Very little systematic research has been done on these topics in Canada. Much of the recent research comes from the United States and the United Kingdom, where the context is very different. Nevertheless, the research strongly suggests that being homeless increases the likelihood of ending up in jail and that having been incarcerated increases the length of time that homeless people spend in shelters. Most research, however, does not provide specific policy and program recommendations to address these issues.

Our first task will be to determine (a) how many people with no fixed address are admitted to and released from police custody, provincial court, and correctional facilities/detention centres; and (b) how many people in homeless shelters have come from correction facilities. While conducting this research, we will document the difficulties associated with data collection on this subject and suggest ways to improve data collection.

The second task will be to document best practices used by service providers who work with detainees and prison inmates after their release and identify alternatives to incarceration available to homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless.

The third task will be to examine the state of relations between the police and homeless youth and adults, the causes and forms of violence towards and victimization of homeless youth and adults, and how these offenders are treated in the criminal justice system. This research will involve key informant interviews and a survey of homeless adults and youth.
The research will be conducted by academic researchers with expertise in this area, in collaboration with community-based workers who have first-hand experience working with homeless people and people in the criminal justice system. A steering committee will oversee the research. Its members bring a mix of experience and expertise from community agencies and from research in the area of homelessness and criminal justice.

The research design calls for the dissemination of our findings in a variety of ways to ensure that they are accessible to decision-makers, front-line workers, and academics. In particular, we plan to hold a public forum and live Internet webcast to report on our findings and gather feedback from others.

The budget proposed for the project is $118,126 over a 12-month period.
1. Qualifications and Experience

This project combines the expertise of the John Howard Society of Toronto and the Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto.

The John Howard Society of Toronto, which offers a range of services, has first-hand knowledge about people who are involved with the criminal justice system, including the provision of support for many individuals who are or have been homeless.

The Centre for Urban and Community Studies has expertise in research on the topic of homelessness and related social policy issues and will draw upon the University’s expertise in criminology.

A steering committee will guide the research process. Its members will be confirmed (and additional members may be sought) following discussions with the funder and with the initial research team members proposed here. The “community-based” members of the research team are Mary Roberts (Executive Director) and Amber Kellen (Public Education & Advocacy) of the John Howard Society of Toronto. The academic-based research team members, from the University of Toronto, are David Hulchanski, PhD (Principal Investigator), Joe Hermer, PhD (co-investigator, a professor from Criminology and Sociology), and Sylvia Novac, PhD (project co-ordinator). We make further recommendations for steering committee members below, in section 3.3.

Data collection and analysis will be carried out jointly by a community-based member (Amber Kellen) and an academic-based member (Sylvia Novac) of the research team, with the help of a research assistant, under the supervision of the steering committee.

1.1 The John Howard Society of Toronto

www.johnhowardtor.on.ca/

The John Howard Society of Toronto supports new beginnings by providing services to people in conflict with the law and adults at imminent risk of coming into conflict with the law, in order to facilitate positive change and achieve community reintegration.

The Society seeks to accomplish the following:

Basic Needs: To assist individuals in developing a plan of action to locate and secure
their basic needs.

**Accessibility:** To offer an accessible, equitable, and non-judgmental environment, which makes individuals feel safe and comfortable.

**Support & Counselling:** To provide professional support and assistance, encouraging individuals to move toward reaching their goals and contributing to the community.

**Advocacy:** To support fair and just solutions to the specific problems facing individuals in Toronto.

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**Mandate and Goals of the John Howard Society of Toronto**

We take our name from the prison reformer John Howard (1726-90) who travelled extensively throughout Europe investigating the conditions of prisons. His seminal work, *The State of Prisons*, provided the scientific and moral basis for the massive reform of English penal practice.

In Ontario, we trace our origin to the Citizen’s Service Association (CSA), established in 1929 by General D.C. Draper, the Toronto Chief of Police who understood the critical importance of reintegration services to incarcerated men and women. In 1946, the name of CSA was changed to the John Howard Society and in 1949, the John Howard Society was incorporated as a provincial society.

In 1973, an independent Board of Directors was formed and the John Howard Society of Metropolitan Toronto was established to assume direct service responsibilities. It is one of 17 affiliate societies throughout Ontario and one of 55 affiliated offices throughout Canada, including the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Collectively, the John Howard Society is the largest community justice agency in North America.

The John Howard Society of Toronto offers stabilization and de-institutionalization programs, employment and housing services, counselling, and socio-education programs, including anger management, life skills, and the reduction of domestic violence. The Society has distinguished itself with its work in the area of community reintegration and, in particular, its work on anger management. The Society has offered anger management programs to a variety of targeted at-risk populations, including youth, parents, hostel residents, treatment centre clients, and men and women in conflict with the law. The Society has also developed workplace anti-violence programs for staff members, employees, and professionals throughout the non-profit and government sectors.
Services & Activities of the John Howard Society of Toronto

1. **Volunteer Program**: Each day, volunteers from the John Howard Society of Toronto represent the agency at four local jails with a combined population of 2,200 inmates. Volunteers provide incarcerated men with pre-release planning services, referrals, and community reintegration opportunities. Thirty volunteers support federal and provincial inmates through a letter-writing program. The Society provides drug awareness information, holds addiction support groups at local jails, and makes referrals for addiction treatment. In addition, volunteers (former clients and service users) support the work of the agency through public education programs, administration, and fundraising support.

2. **Intake and Counselling**: Individual clients meet with trained professional counsellors to develop a community reintegration plan during the intake process. Counsellors refer clients to other community agencies as needed. Crisis and emergency counselling services help clients cope in difficult situations, deal with crises, solve problems, and make positive changes. The agency uses a research-based risk-assessment tool that focuses on client identification of goals, risk factors, and outcomes.

3. **Housing Support and Referral for Homeless Individuals**: Homeless clients and men released from correctional facilities receive assistance to secure and maintain housing. Clients are supported through advocacy, mediation, and counselling services to help them stay housed. The Society sends a caseworker into detention centres to visit clients (when possible) before their release date. For clients with no home to go to, the housing caseworker determines the client’s housing needs, assesses the individual’s ability to remain stably housed, and identifies whether additional support services are required. Housing caseworkers continue to meet with clients after their release. As individual circumstances dictate, housing help will be available through referrals to private landlords, public housing providers, and other agencies that offer housing assistance.

4. **Employment Program**: Job readiness, search, and retention skills are taught in the B.E.S.T. (Basic Employment Skills Training) program. Through individual support or a group process, individuals explore career and training opportunities, employment readiness, job recruitment, and employment maintenance. This program is designed for individuals with a criminal record, sporadic work experience, low literacy levels, and other barriers that prevent people from finding and maintaining employment.
5. **Anger Management Groups**: In groups, men are offered an opportunity to learn new skills, manage feelings of anger, and appropriately communicate anger to others. Both mandated and voluntary participants are welcome. The Society also offers programs for youth (16-25), in partnership with Youth Link and St. Stephens Community House. Feedback from program participants has been very positive, even from older individuals who have experienced years of difficulty coping with angry emotions destructively expressed towards their families, at work, and in the community.

6. **Breaking the Cycle of Addiction**: In partnership with the Good Shepherd Ministries, experienced addiction and housing counsellors offer a pre-treatment program that matches individuals with the right treatment programs. Relapse prevention, housing, budgeting, and anger management are some of the issues addressed by this program.

7. **Native Outreach Program**: We are working in partnership with The Meeting Place and a network of Aboriginal-serving agencies to provide traditional teaching and spiritual help to Aboriginal inmates, including anger management strategies for adults and youths in the community, stress management, and goal-setting. These individuals are attempting to gain control of their living conditions and future plans, and will receive help in the Aboriginal community. Service providers seek to maintain the culture and traditions in a hospitable and positive community environment.

8. **Domestic Violence and Partner Services**: Socio-educational programs are available for men who have been mandated to attend following domestic assault charges. Voluntary participants are welcome in some groups. Information, support, counselling, safety planning, and community accompaniment are offered to women whose partners attend Domestic Violence programs.

9. **Public Education and Advocacy**: We work closely with other community groups to educate and involve the community in understanding crime and its causes and the social justice issues that affect clients, especially in relation to homelessness. Providing information about the criminal justice system and its impact on society is one of our primary activities.
Key Accomplishments of the John Howard Society of Toronto

**The Public Education and Advocacy Program** The interactive public education presentation “Going Straight Home?” has received positive reviews for its carefully and persuasively prepared arguments on the issues of the relationship between incarceration and homelessness. During the past year, our Public Education and Advocacy Worker has delivered 30 workshops to housing providers and allied agencies, university and community college audiences, faith groups, mental health agencies, and other social service agencies.

**The Native Outreach Program** is experiencing a renaissance. We have recently hired two Native staff members, a community worker with mainstream/Aboriginal addiction healing interests and training, and a Native traditional teacher with a master’s in Social Work and Aboriginal healing traditions. At the request of our native service users, our programs are being revamped to emphasize a cultural approach to anger management, addictions, and anti-violence work.

**The Anger Management Program** has expanded in exciting new ways. Our evening programs for men and our professional development program have grown by leaps and bounds. Parents who abuse their children and those at risk of engaging in domestic violence have warmly received a new collaboration with the Children’s Aid Society. Reports from program participants and preliminary evaluations point to significant changes in attitudes and abilities that help parents interact with their children in safe and sane ways.

1.2 **The Centre for Urban and Community Studies**

[www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/](http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/)

The Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS) promotes and disseminates multidisciplinary research and policy analysis on urban issues. The Centre’s activities are intended to contribute to scholarship on questions relating to the social and economic well-being of people who live and work in urban areas large and small, in Canada and around the world.

The Centre was established in 1964 as a research unit of the School of Graduate Studies. Its research associates include professors and graduate students from a dozen different disciplines and professionals from a variety of organizations.
The Centre includes a Community / University Research Partnership (CURP) unit, coordinated by Michael Shapcott. It promotes the exchange of knowledge between the university and community agencies and associations. "Community" refers to civil society organizations such as non-profit groups, social agencies, community organizations, or coalitions. CURP represents the University of Toronto’s contribution to applied scholarship on the practical problems and policy issues associated with urban living, particularly poverty, housing, homelessness, social welfare, and social justice issues.

CURP’s overall goals are: (1) to help define socially important and policy-relevant research agendas; (2) to link researchers and identified research needs; (3) to seek research funding sources that include, but also go beyond, traditional academic sources; and (4) to develop new ways to communicate and disseminate research findings.

CURP encourages information-sharing and collaboration between community organizations or agencies and academic researchers in designing high-quality applied research projects on urban and community issues. This proposal is an example of a CURP initiative. (For more information see the CURP section of the CUCS website: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/curp.html.)

Current Research on Homelessness

CUCS has two current research projects relating to homelessness:

**Multidimensional Impacts of Adequate Housing**

*Research team:* David Hulchanski (Principal Investigator) and Valerie Tarasuk, University of Toronto; George Tolomiczenko, St. Joseph’s Health Centre; Stephen Hwang, St. Michael’s Hospital. *Coordinator:* Sylvia Novac

*Funder:* City of Toronto SCPI; *Budget:* $65,000; *completion,* March 2004.

*Description:* This multidisciplinary applied research project helped to identify, in detail, the specific impacts of obtaining good-quality adequate housing on previously inadequately housed and homeless people. The findings were intended to make a practical contribution to knowledge about the overlapping effects of housing satisfaction, physical health, mental health, socio-economic stability, and well-being among low-income and previously unhoused people.

**Aging and Homelessness**

*Research team:* Lynn McDonald (Principal Investigator) and David Hulchanski, University of Toronto.

*Funder:* City of Toronto, SCPI; *Budget:* $63,750; *completion,* March 2004.
Description: Using statistical data on older homeless persons in Toronto, interviews with older homeless persons, and focus groups of key informants, the researchers will work to understand the characteristics of older people who are homeless; identify service and shelter needs of older homeless people; and articulate policy, funding, and service implications for the City, other levels of government, and other community-based organizations.

The Centre has also published research bulletins on homelessness and related housing issues. The full text of these and all CUCS Research Bulletins are available for free (PDF downloads) from the CUCS website:
www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/researchbulletin.html


**Rooming house residents: Challenging the stereotypes**, by Stephen Hwang, Rochelle Martin, David Hulchanski, and George Tolomiczenko, Number 16, June 2003.


Recent Publications on Homelessness by the Principal Investigator and Research Co-ordinator

Dr. David Hulchanski, who will be the Principal Investigator of this proposed research, and Dr. Sylvia Novac, research coordinator, have carried out numerous research projects on homelessness and related housing issues over the past decade. Their publications include the following:

**David Hulchanski: Selected Publications**


Eberle (main author), D. Kraus, L. Serge. All four volumes are available on-line at http://www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/housing/homeless/homless_index.htm


Canada’s homeless: Fifteen questions and answers, 1997, a 7,500-word article about the nature, extent of, and potential solutions to homelessness for the website of a national registered charity, Raising the Roof: Solutions for Canada’s Homeless. www.raisingtheroof.org


**Sylvia Novac: Selected Publications**


Joe Hermer, UofT professor of Sociology and Criminology, Member of Steering Committee and Academic Co-investigator

Joe Hermer is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminology at University of Toronto. He holds a doctorate in Socio-Legal Studies from the University of Oxford. His recent research examines the regulation and criminalization of poverty, with a particular focus on how the subsistence activities of the homeless are policed on modern streets.

Professor Hermer is currently under contract to the Law Commission of Canada to conduct a study of the character of "welfare fraud" as a crime as part of the Commission’s "What is a Crime?" research project. He previously completed a report for the Commission as a co-investigator on "Policing for the 21st Century" as part of its Order and Security research project.

Professor Hermer’s publications include:

2. The Research Literature: What is Known?

There is a very limited body of research literature on the relationships among homeless people, crime, and the criminal justice system. Much of the recent research is from the United States and the United Kingdom, where the context is very different. Although this literature indicates a strong interrelationship between homelessness, crime, and the criminal justice system, it does not provide specific or relevant policy and program recommendations.

We do know from this research that:

- previously incarcerated people tend to be homeless for a longer period of time compared to others;
- being homeless increases the risk of being incarcerated;
- there is a strong interrelationship between homelessness, mental health problems, and incarceration;
- incarceration is associated with a higher risk of being hospitalized, and in particular, of becoming HIV-positive.

Almost 10 years ago, the Department of Justice published a technical report titled: *Homelessness and the Criminal Justice System in Canada: A Literature Review* (by J. Ann Hewitt, December 1994). The review noted: “If there has been limited attention to the relationships among homelessness and the criminal justice system in the United States, there is virtually no research in Canada with such a target.” (p.vii) The report ends with the sentence: “Based on the information available through published reports, we cannot draw any conclusions about how the criminal justice system is affected by and affects homelessness in Canada.” (p.46)

In 2001 a team of researchers led by Margaret Eberle (and including David Hulchanski) write a report for the British Columbia government titled: “The Relationship between Homelessness and the Health, Social Services and Criminal Justice Systems: A Review of the Literature.” However, Section 4 of that review, on “Homelessness and Criminal Justice,” is only eight pages. Nothing very specific, up-to-date, or helpful to policy, programs and practice was found in the literature. The full report is available online at: http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/housing/homeless/Vol1.pdf

John Hagan and Bill McCarthy, in their 1998 book, *Mean Streets: Youth Crime and Homelessness*, found that homeless youth in Vancouver were much more involved in
serious, non-violent criminal activity than those in Toronto and attributed this to
differences between the cities and possibly the type of people they attract.

U.S. and U.K. research has documented aspects of the relationship between
homelessness and the criminal justice system, although the contexts are very different.
For example, a recently published article on the duration of homelessness in the U.S.
(Allgood and Warren, 2003), using data from the U.S. National Survey of Homeless
Assistance Providers and Clients, found that “the length of a homeless spell increases
with age and is longer for males, never-married persons, and those who have been
incarcerated” (p.275). The authors note that ex-convicts, “have an escape rate [i.e.,
escape from homelessness] that is 20% lower on average than individuals who have
never been incarcerated” (p.285). This finding is consistent with previous research. For
example, Allgood, Moore, and Warren (1997) found that people released from jail
typically have longer stays at homeless shelters. They conclude:

The precipitating crisis which leads to loss of private housing also affects the
length of stay. For example, residents who enter the Shelter because of specific
financial problems have longer average stays. Similarly, residents whose
homelessness arises from a family dispute are in the Shelter longer. Finally,
recent release from jail or discharge from a substance-abuse program lead to
lengthier stays at the Shelter. (Allgood, Moore, and Warren, 1997, p.78)

The only reference to policy in either of these articles is the following, by Allgood, Moore,
and Warren (1997): “individuals who were recently released from correctional or
rehabilitation facilities may benefit from remediation programs that are especially
designed for their circumstances” (p.78).

Other research has examined the experiences of people who are homeless who end up
in jail. Here is how one recent U.S. research article summarized this issue:

Changing policies in mental health and welfare are altering the character of
urban jail populations. Homeless people, many of them ex–mental-hospital
patients, occupy jail space in increasing numbers. They almost never commit
violent crimes and seldom commit any real crime. They are given a charge and
put in jail as a way to take them off the streets. The way in which official statistics
are created and kept makes it difficult to demonstrate the nature and extent of
this problem. (Chaiklin, 2001, p. 255)

Being homeless increases the likelihood of ending up in jail. And, having been
incarcerated increases the length of time that people who have no home to go to spend
in homeless shelters.
In a study that examined the extent to which the rate of homelessness was associated with clinical factors or criminal factors (e.g., criminal behaviour and arrest history) among psychiatric probationers and parolees, mental illness, and criminal involvement were found to be strong risk factors for homelessness (Solomon and Draine, 1999). In terms of service and support the study concluded that:

Individually who are homeless and mentally ill who also become involved with the criminal justice systems are more difficult to serve as a group than others without such a multiplicity of problems. Their resistance to treatment further complicates these factors. Mental health service providers should work collaboratively with probation and parole officers to develop effective interventions for this forensic population. (Solomon and Draine, 1999, pp. 85-86)

In his examination of the mental health system, homelessness, and the criminal justice system, Aderibigbe (1997) found a process of criminalization taking place in the U.S.:

Criminalization is the placement of mentally ill persons who have committed minor crimes into the criminal justice system instead of into the mental health system in psychiatric hospitals or other psychiatric treatment facilities [39]. The arrest may result in criminal sentencing to jail or prison or criminal commitment to a mental hospital by the finding of “incompetence to stand trial” or not guilty by reason of insanity. The criminalization of the mentally ill is one of the unanticipated consequences of deinstitutionalization. (Aderibigbe, 1997, p. 130)

This issue must also be examined on a population group basis. A recent study of street youth in Canada found that the risk of HIV infection increases with age and the likelihood of being infected is linked with unprotected sex, intravenous drug use, prostitution, and incarceration (Dematteo et al., 1999, p. 358). The study notes:

The link between jail or detention and HIV infection is important in the context of high rates of youth incarceration in North America. In Canada (the nation with the highest rate of youth incarceration in the Western world), upward of 12,000 (primarily male) adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 are held in some form of detention annually. (Dematteo et al., 1999, p. 364)

For homeless street-involved youth, the study notes, criminal activity and incarceration add to their personal burden of HIV/STD risks (p.365).

There are also more general health care implications. A 1999 U.K. study by James et al. examined the relation between homelessness and admission rates to hospital from the criminal justice system. It noted that the “homeless and the mentally ill are over-represented in prison populations, as are criminality and mental illness among the homeless.” The study concluded:
That the homeless, controlled for age, sex, and marital status, are 17 times more likely to be admitted to hospital through the criminal justice system than those with a fixed address provides further evidence of the significance of this form of social exclusion, and has resource implications for psychiatric services within the inner city. (James et al., 1999, p. 1158)

There is also a small body of literature on the issue of regulation directed at homeless youth and adults. Because of their visible place in public space, homeless people are subjected to a wide range of regulation that is interpreted by many as being discriminatory. As Jeremy Waldron argues in his discussion of homelessness and freedom, extensive prohibitions against the activities of homeless people has the effect of making them “unfree” to carry out even the most basic functions of life, such as eating, urinating, and sleeping (Waldron, 1991). The effect of such regulation, which ranges from laws that prohibit activities such as begging to designing park benches so they cannot be slept on, has the effect of making homeless people “invisible” and more vulnerable (Davis, 1992).

As O’Grady and Bright (2002) observe, squeegee workers in Toronto who were targeted by the police using the Safe Streets Act were displaced from central downtown locations to out-of-sight spaces such as industrial lots, ravines, and under bridges. “Having been pushed further underground by targeted policing ... many have left areas where the health and social services they require are accessible, placing them in even more perilous circumstances” (p. 38). Unfortunately, these policing strategies, often justified with empirically questionable crime control theories such as “broken windows,” have become a central tool of governing urban spaces by many city governments in North America.

In summary, the topic of homeless people and the justice system is a highly complex one. It is necessary to sort out complex interrelationships to arrive at helpful policy and program recommendations. The issue crosses many institutional boundaries and policy areas. Social scientists are often very specialized. Unless they define the research task in partnership with service providers and other knowledgeable community expertise, they may look at only one part of the problem in isolation from others and overlook crucial interrelationships.
3. Approach and Methodology

3.1 Overview of the Project’s Purpose and Objectives

The development of effective measures that prevent and reduce homelessness requires an improved understanding of the various aspects of the problem we call “homelessness.” The term homelessness is used as a catch-all for a broad range of problems that affect different groups in different ways. All homeless people lack adequate and affordable housing. Most are destitute. Many are unemployed and have difficulty finding employment. Some have other difficulties such as addictions or mental health problems.

Homelessness is the most extreme manifestation of the housing and income inequity problem in Canada. Homelessness is not only a housing problem, but it is always a housing problem. The central observation about the diverse group of Canadians known as “the homeless” is that they are people who once had housing but are now unhoused.

Having no place to live means being excluded from all that is associated with having a home, a neighbourhood, and a set of established community networks. It means being exiled from the mainstream patterns of day-to-day life. Without a physical place to call “home” in the social, psychological, and emotional sense, the hour-to-hour struggle for physical survival replaces all other possible activities.

This project focuses on seven research questions relating to people who are homeless or are at risk of being homeless and who are (or have been) involved with the criminal justice system. The overall study objectives are:

1) to better understand the nature of the relationship between homeless people and the police, the forms of violence and victimization associated with being homeless, and the types of offences (including non-criminal, provincial offences) that have resulted in incarceration;

2) to identify best practices for pre- and post-incarceration support models to help ex-inmates find housing and jobs that enable them to live independently.
3.2 The Research Questions

There are three sets of research questions.

A. The size of the problem

1. Using the Toronto area as a case study of the feasibility of collecting this type of data, how many people with no fixed address are admitted to and released from police custody, provincial court, and correctional facilities/detention centres; and how many people in homeless shelters have come from correction facilities?

B. Best practices

2. What effective service coordination strategies could be shared by various stakeholders before and after the release of detainees and inmates from prison?
3. What types of post-incarceration programs exist? What are the best practices?
4. What constructive alternatives to incarceration are available to homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless? Are these alternatives effective in reducing recidivism?

C. The police, homeless people, victimization and crime

5. What is the state of relations between the police and homeless youth and adults? How could relations be improved at the local level?
6. What are the causes and forms of violence towards and victimization of homeless youth and adults? How can the needs of homeless people in this area be met and this type of violence prevented?
7. What types of offences are committed by homeless youth and adults and how are they treated in the criminal justice system? How do regulations governing public spaces affect the offences committed by homeless people?

3.3 The Steering Committee

Mary Roberts, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Toronto, will serve as the chair of the steering committee. Membership on the steering committee will be finalized in consultation with the funder. Members should bring a mix of experience and expertise from community agencies and from research in the area of homelessness and criminal justice.

We are proposing, for example, that the following people be included on the steering committee:

- Joe Hermer, Professor of Criminology and Sociology. Professor Hermer will also contribute to the project as a co-investigator.
• Peter Menzies (MA, PhD Candidate), Manager of the Aboriginal Services Team at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. His agency, in partnership with Native, and non-Native agencies, provides individual and group counselling to Aboriginals experiencing homelessness, substance abuse and mental health issues.

• Michael Skaljin (B. Comm, M. Div), provincial manager for the Re-integration Program of the Ontario Multifaith Council. Established in 1999, the program helps ex-offenders who are released from provincial correctional institutions to successfully re-integrate into the community and diverts potentially homeless persons from the emergency shelter system. As provincial manager, Michael Skaljin maintains overall management of the program ensuring its effectiveness in maintaining the common vision including: liaising with Ministry of Public Safety and Security, community corrections agencies, faith groups, and related organizations; maintaining research and information on best practices, parallel programs, and legislation affecting operations; and developing policy, procedure, work plans, agency contracts, and performance reviews. He also has five years experience as a front-line worker in the emergency hostel system in Toronto’s inner city.

The steering committee will play a vital role in directing this applied research project and in reviewing and assessing the quality and the feasibility of the policies, programs and practices that the research team will be recommending.

3.4 Research Team

As principal investigator, David Hulchanski will supervisor the research. Professor Joe Hermer will serve as co-investigator, sharing with Professor Hulchanski the task of ensuring that the highest scientific and ethical standards are followed in the implementation of the research process.

Sylvia Novac and Amber Kellen will serve as researchers who, with the help of a research assistant, will carry out data collection and initial analysis under the supervision of Professors Hulchanski and Hermer and the steering committee. The research assistant will be a person with very strong research credentials (at the level of a doctoral student or the equivalent). Sylvia Novac will, in addition, serve as the project manager, coordinating the scheduling and the day-to-day management tasks and ensuring that the projects stays on budget.
3.5 Research Design

The study will employ a multi-method approach. It will be organized around the three sets of research questions. Although each question requires slightly different sources of data and data collection processes, the questions are closely interrelated. Given the lack of Canadian literature relevant to the questions, the process of addressing the questions is exploratory. However, there are efficiencies of scale in tackling the questions as a group with one research team that has the appropriate qualifications and community connections. Also, by taking a holistic view, we believe that our research program offers the potential to provide an improved set of findings and recommendations.

Design for Part A. The size of the problem

Question: Using the Toronto area as a case study of the feasibility of collecting this type of data, how many people with no fixed address are admitted to and released from police custody, provincial court, and correctional facilities/detention centres; and how many people in homeless shelters have come from correction facilities?

Toronto serves as an excellent case study because of the magnitude of the problem in the city. Similar problems exist elsewhere in Canada, but the scale is different.

Service providers in Toronto have no solid information about the size of the problem. The necessary data needs to come from a variety of sources and the type of data required is not always collected (or is not collected in a fashion that is easy to access).

We will attempt to collect data on, for example,

- the number of people admitted to police custody and correctional facilities/detention centres who have no fixed address;
- the number of people discharged from detention centres, police custody, and the courts with no fixed address;
- the number of people who lose their housing as a result of their incarceration (the National Association for Care and Reintegration of Offenders in England has carried out this type of research).

The first objective is to learn as much as possible, knowing that it will be difficult to assemble enough data to provide reliable indicators.

The second objective is to document difficulties associated with data collection in this area and suggest ways to overcome these difficulties. Some agencies may need to
collect data in different ways; others may have to adopt improved policies regarding the release of data that they do collect.

For example, the Toronto shelter system uses a standard intake form that includes a check-off box to indicate whether the person is “from corrections.” An analysis of this data (though it has its limitations) will indicate the extent to which people are leaving correctional facilities and going directly into a homeless shelter. We will also be able to carry out some comparisons between homeless shelter users who have and have not been involved with corrections.

We also need to explore the relationship between remand and homelessness. In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) there are four detention centres (the East Detention Centre, Maplehurst Correctional Centre, West Detention Centre and the Toronto Don Jail). Most inmates in these facilities are on remand. Custodial remand (a provincial/territorial responsibility, also referred to as pre-trial detention) occurs when a person is ordered by the courts to be held in custody while awaiting a further court appearance. Within the province of Ontario, 60% of provincial inmates are on remand (Juristat-Statistics Canada, Cat. 85-002-XIE, Vol. 23, no. 7). The number of people in remand increased 33% between 1991 and 2001. These numbers do not include all young offenders held on remand, nor do they include those who have been detained on immigration orders.

Release from remand is extremely problematic, since a "release date" is not assigned and therefore discharge planning cannot be initiated. Under these circumstances, appointments with landlords, treatment centres, or other social service and support organizations cannot be arranged in advance. Many provincial offenders also report that if they have a short sentence, and if they are in a facility outside Toronto, they are often sent back to detention centres such as the Toronto Jail to be released. This seems to be done in order to avoid the strain on smaller communities.

As this example indicates, the Toronto area offers a rich case study from which a great many of the complexities can be identified. At the same time, the documentation of the trends, the multifaceted nature of the problem, the difficulties collecting the data, and the recommendations for improved data collection, including data management systems and policies relating to sharing data, will likely be relevant to other jurisdictions.
Design for Part B. Best Practices

In Part B, the three questions will be answered by a similar method.

What effective service coordination strategies could be shared by various stakeholders before and after the release of detainees and inmates from prison?

What types of post-incarceration programs exist? What are the best practices?

What constructive alternatives to incarceration are available to homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless? Are these alternatives effective in reducing recidivism?

It is possible to carry out a research project on any one of these three areas, but given the lack of prior research and the fact that they are interrelated, it is appropriate to explore them together.

The research team will start by carrying out an extensive scan, searching for relevant reports, studies, and evaluations. We will undertake an intensive networking exercise, starting locally, then regionally/nationally, and finally internationally (focusing particularly on the U.S., U.K., and Australia). The John Howard Society has agencies at the local, provincial, and national levels with good electronic listservs and systems for sharing information. This is the base from which the Canada-wide search will begin. The aim is to identify organizations and individuals engaged in innovative and potentially relevant practices.

The researchers will produce an inventory of policies, program, and practices for each of the three questions, and produce a working paper based on this information. The inventory will contain short descriptions and references on how to obtain further information (in case others want to follow up). These descriptions will help us identify the most promising cases for in-depth documentation and analysis. The steering committee will review our findings to assess their applicability and transferability.

This is pioneering work. We do not have much prior research to build upon. We will explore the range of policies, programs, and practices and document the ones most likely to be useful in a Canadian setting. We seek to create an adequate base from which more detailed research can be carried out. For example, if we find excellent models for improved practice, further research can focus on those models.

As a final check on the potential relevance and usefulness of the options we identify, we will hold two focus groups: one with service providers, seeking their feedback on what we have found and what we plan to recommend, the other with a group of homeless or
recently homeless individuals who have been incarcerated. We will seek their feedback on what they think would be beneficial in each of the three categories.

**Design for Part C. The police, homeless people, victimization, and crime**

The policies, programs and practices identified and assessed in Part B need to be considered and evaluated in the context of the questions being asked in Part C.

Our research team will be working on Parts B and C concurrently rather than sequentially. This, we feel, is one of the methodological strengths of our research design.

The three topic areas in Part C are:

- What is the state of relations between the police and homeless youth and adults? How could relations be improved at the local level?
- What are the causes and forms of violence towards and victimization of homeless youth and adults? How can the needs of homeless people in this area be met and this type of violence prevented?
- What types of offences are committed by homeless youth and adults and how are they treated in the criminal justice system? How do regulations governing public spaces affect the offences committed by homeless people?

The three constituencies involved are:

- the police and people employed in the criminal justice system;
- homeless people;
- service providers and advocates.

We will start by identifying what is currently known elsewhere about these topics, by carrying out an extensive search for any relevant reports, studies, and evaluations. The networking exercise described under Part B will be used for Part C, to establish what is happening in other jurisdictions.

This document scan will involve both the academic and social policy literature, as well as documents generated by the criminal justice system itself, such as statistical breakdowns of prosecution and conviction rates for public space offences and police governance documents that, for example, outline community policing initiatives and justifications.
We will also carry out a series of key informant interviews. Some of these semi-structured interviews will be short and narrowly focused on particular aspects of the research questions; others will be more in-depth and explore a wider range of issues. With the help of the steering committee and our networking process, we will determine the most appropriate people to interview from among the three constituency groups (the police and those employed in the criminal justice system; homeless people; and service providers and advocates).

The first interviews will help us map the range of issues and their complexity. What we learn will help us decide exactly how many people and what types of people we want to interview from each of the three constituencies.

During this process we will also be probing for information about specific subgroups among homeless youth and adults (women, aboriginal people, visible minorities, psychiatrically disabled, and so forth).

We will also conduct a victimization survey among homeless youth and adults. With the help of service providers, a short questionnaire will be administered to clients of selected social service agencies that serve homeless people. This questionnaire will capture the nature and extent of the violence and victimization they suffer, and will provide a base from which we can conduct a range of detailed, in-depth interviews with specific informants.

By this mixed-method process – the scan for documents and research from other jurisdictions, numerous short and long interviews, and the victimization survey – we will be able to report on: (a) the state of relations between the police and homeless youth and adults and how these relations can be improved; (b) the causes and forms of violence and victimization; and (c) the types of offences that are committed and how are they treated in the criminal justice system. Our steering committee will review findings and offer advice throughout the process.
4. Workplan

The project will be completed in 12 months. There will be a start-up phase lasting about 2 to 3 months, a data collection and analysis phase lasting about 6 months and a dissemination phase lasting about 2 to 3 months.

4.1 Research Schedule

Phase I  Start-up, Months 1, 2, 3

Hold an inception workshop, establish the steering committee; hire a research assistant, refine the research design; obtain research ethics approval, carry out a thorough review of literature.

Phase II  Data Collection & Analysis, Months 4 to 9

Carry out the collection and analysis of data for all three sets of questions, as outlined in the Research Design section above.

Phase III  Dissemination, Months 10, 11 (one month reserved as contingency)

Hold a public forum and webcast; produce a number of short Research Bulletins; post appropriate materials on different websites.

4.2 Deliverables

As called for in the request for proposals, there are three deliverables.

- **Deliverable #1**: A methodology report submitted within 60 days after the contract is signed.
- **Deliverable #2**: An interim report presenting preliminary results submitted to NSH at the six-month point of the contract.
- **Deliverable #3**: A final report presenting the analysis of the results of the study submitted to NSH for approval by the end date of the contract.

Also, as outlined in the Dissemination Plan below, several short research bulletins will be produced from the final report and widely circulated. Where possible, research papers will be published in academic journals.
5. Dissemination Plan

The final report will serve as the basis on which an active dissemination campaign will be launched.

5.1 Research Documents and Papers

The Final Report. The full report will likely only be of interest to specialists. We will seek to identify this group and ensure that copies are made available to them. The professionally edited report will also be posted on both the John Howard Society website and the CUCS website (and we will encourage others to do the same). Both organizations will use their e-mail, newsletter and electronic lists to let people know the report is available.

Research Bulletins. A series of Research Bulletins (4 to 6 pages each) summarizing particular aspects of our findings will be aimed at policy makers, service providers, and advocates. They will be professionally edited and posted on websites. They are in a format that is easy to e-mail and fax. For examples of the format, see the CUCS Research Bulletin series: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/researchbulletin.html

Magazine & Journal Articles: Short articles will be produced and offered to appropriate magazines (such as CHRA’s Canadian Housing magazine). In addition, the academic researchers will likely produce one or more articles for academic journals.

5.2 Public Forum & Live Internet Webcast of Findings (with Archive)

We propose to host a one-day forum. The morning will consist of presentations of our key findings. This would be webcast live and then archived, using the e-Presence software designed by the Knowledge Media Design Institute at the University of Toronto. This software allows people to participate in the forum from any computer anywhere without the need for special software. It allows off-site participants to view and hear the presentations and then e-mail questions to the presenters during the discussion periods.

The archive copy will contain video and audio linked to the PowerPoint presentations used by the speakers. CUCS has successfully experimented with this approach to dissemination. (For example, to view the archive of our Rent Regulation Forum, go to the Rent Regulation page of the CUCS Community / University Research Partnerships website: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/curp/rent.html.)
6. References Cited


7. Appendix: Research Team, Brief CVs

J. David Hulchanski
Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto
Professor, Housing and Community Development, Faculty of Social Work
Endowed Chair: Dr. Chow Yee Ching Professor of Housing

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In addition to his duties as director of the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, David Hulchanski teaches graduate courses and supervises dissertation research on housing policy, social welfare, community development and human rights in the Faculty of Social Work. His teaching and research focuses on housing policy and related urban social and economic issues, including poverty, the relationship between health and housing, discrimination in housing markets, social housing programs, and homelessness.

Professor Hulchanski is a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the Housing Research Committee of the International Sociological Association, the Urban Affairs Association, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, and the management board of the international research journal *Housing Studies*. He has also served as North American editor for *Housing Studies*.

Professor Hulchanski is a member of the City of Toronto's Advisory Committee on Homelessness and Socially Isolated Persons and a member of the Board of Directors of Raising the Roof: Solutions for Canada's Homeless, a national registered charity. He is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Housing Corporation.

One of Professor Hulchanski’s current research initiatives is a project called “Housing Experiences of New Canadians: Comparative Case Studies of Immigrants and Refugees in Greater Toronto,” funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (see: http://www.hnc.utoronto.ca). He recently completed a review of the literature on the relationship between housing and health for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and was invited by the World Health Organization to present the keynote address at the June 2001 conference in Bonn, *Housing and Health in Europe: Designing an International Agenda*.

Before coming to the University of Toronto, Professor Hulchanski was an associate professor in the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia (1983-91) and served a term as director of the UBC Centre for Human Settlements (1988-91). He earned his master's and Ph.D. degrees in urban planning at the University of Toronto. In 1997, he was appointed to the only endowed chair in housing studies in North America, the Dr. Chow Yee Ching Chair in Housing.
Amber Kellen

Public Education and Advocacy Worker, John Howard Society of Toronto

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Amber Kellen has worked with the John Howard Society in various capacities for the past nine years. After completing her first undergraduate degree from York University, she enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work degree program through Atkinson College. Throughout her studies, Amber Kellen worked as the Court Diversion Worker at College Park Courts, pursuing her interests in Restorative Justice.

Upon the completion of her second degree, Amber Kellen accepted the honour of becoming the Spring 2000 Atkinson College Valedictorian. She continues to spend much of her time doing front-line work as a case manager, and advocacy work in the areas of housing and homelessness. Specifically, she has been exploring the connection between the provincial corrections system as it relates to barriers for reintegration and homelessness in urban settings.

Through her understanding of the relationship between jail and homelessness in her early years at the Agency, she became more involved in community activity and now serves as a member of the Homeless Advisory Committee on Socially Isolated Persons for the City of Toronto. Additionally she is chair of an affiliated subcommittee, the Councillor Liaison Project. She is an active member of the steering committee of the Network for Social Justice and co-hosts a monthly radio segment on CKLN as part of this commitment. She is a member of the Working Group on Tuberculosis, Homelessness and Corrections (a Sub-Committee of the Board of Health), and the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. She sits on the Prisoner’s Justice Day Planning Committee and is a member of various housing collaborative groups including Housing Action Now and Housing Ontario Means Everyone. Over the past year, Ms Kellen has also become active with the Housing and Homelessness Network of Ontario.

Currently, Ms Kellen is providing educational opportunities for various audiences including students, social workers, front-line staff working with people who are homeless, mental health professionals, social service managers, housing providers, and housing referral agents. She has developed and implemented an interactive multimedia workshop entitled “Going Straight Home?” which has earned considerable popularity throughout the community. In the area of advocacy, she has enhanced the presence of the John Howard Society, which has gained the reputation as a respected leader in the areas of housing, homelessness, and corrections. Recently, she has acted as an expert witness where she testified in High Court on barriers for reintegration related to the access and maintenance of housing for those leaving the correctional system. She has done some research in this area over the past few years and has also examined some of the problems associated with the private correctional facilities in parts of the U.S and here in Ontario.
Sylvia Novac

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Researcher and Consultant, Gender and Housing Issues

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Sylvia Novac is an independent research consultant specializing in gender and housing issues. She is the research coordinator for two studies at CUCS: the Housing New Canadians Research Working Group – a multi-community investigation of recent immigrants’ experiences in the Toronto rental housing sector – and an evaluation of the multi-dimensional impacts of adequate housing. Her current research also includes studies of transitional housing; service needs of older homeless adults; the relationship between family violence and homelessness; and the impacts of evictions in Toronto. In 2004, she will join a research team in Tokyo to study women’s homelessness.

As a research consultant since 1988, she has conducted policy-relevant research on the topics of women’s, youth, and family homelessness; Canadian housing policy; women’s housing status; housing issues of older women and racialized and immigrant women in Canada; housing discrimination; violence against women; and supportive, co-operative, and public housing. Her clients have included government agencies (including CMHC, Health Canada, Status of Women Canada, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Ontario Women’s Directorate, the Ontario Ministry of Housing, and the City of Toronto) as well as community-based and non-profit organizations (including Raising the Roof, the Supportive Housing Coalition, Habitat Services, the Older Women’s Network, the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, Dixon Hall, and the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto).

She is currently on the editorial board for a built environment theme issue of Women and Environments International magazine and a member of the Women’s Housing Advocacy Group (WHAG) in Toronto.

Dr. Novac received a Ph.D. in sociology from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto and a master’s degree in environmental studies from York University. She has taught as a lecturer at several universities. Before becoming a research consultant, she worked as a program evaluator and researcher in the field of children’s mental health.