

SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM REPORT



SUMMER 2023

The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society

Prepared for The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee



OVERVIEW

The Summer Opportunities Program (SOP) run out of the Alliance Club Drop-In Centre operates throughout July and August to provide youth the opportunity to participate in a variety of recreational activities that provide them with healthy alternatives within the downtown core. The program is run by an SOP staff who maintains responsibility for activity organization while encouraging healthy relationships with the participating youth as well as working with the Alliance Club staff.

The Summer Opportunities Program allows the Victoria Youth Empowerment Society (YES) to offer preventative programming by addressing certain needs within the community which include: youth coming downtown in the summer seeking peer groups which can lead to unhealthy peer relationships, a lack of support being available for youth over the summer and the cost of summer activities which are becoming a significant barrier for families dealing within economic challenges.

SOP addresses these gaps by offering free recreational and social activities throughout the summer in an environment that also offers counselling and intervention services. This ensures that if a youth begins to destabilize or engage in unhealthy patterns of behaviours, our wrap-around service model can identify action steps and put support in place.

This program allows youth to have access to activities that they would otherwise not be able to afford, and as such creates positive opportunities for them to engage with peers while being supported by the SOP youth worker.

S O P O U T C O M E S

**Number of Youth Who Participated In Summer Opportunities in 2023: 143
(Target 130 Youth)**

Average Number of Youth Who Participated Each Week: 19

**Number of Youth Who Identified An Increase in Life Skills Development: 79
(Target 75)**

Number of Community Connections Made: 48 (Target 50)

Intended Outcomes for Summer Opportunities Program

OUTCOMES CORRELATED TO EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

NUMBER OF YOUTH*

Youth experience an increase in healthy activities

143 Youth

Youth experience improved emotional well-being
and coping strategies

79 Youth

Youth experienced positive peer and mentor relationships over
the summer

48 Youth

Youth may experience more than one outcome*

Evaluation frameworks included excel spreadsheet that tracked number of youth participants, feedback forms that corresponded to outcome measures and the tracking of community connections made on behalf of youth.



SOP Youth Worker setting up tie-dye for the youth

Over nine weeks, our Summer Opportunities Worker provided over 30 unique opportunities for youth to participate in healthy recreational activities. These activities allowed them to develop life skills while also ensuring they were connected to services throughout the summer. 143 youths attended SOP programming over nine weeks. On average, 35 meals were provided to youth per week, which consisted of lunch and snacks in between. SOP saw many youth utilizing meal services within the drop-in space and with this in mind, SOP staff utilized food-related activities to meet these basic needs, while creating an opportunity to make connections. SOP staff offered approximately 48 referrals to support youth with community resources over the summer. The most common were the following: The Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter, Sanctuary, and the Foundry Youth Clinic.

Activities this year included art projects such as tie-dye, going to local Victoria establishments like the Bug Zoo and the museum, and fun treats such as ice cream. SOP tried to balance activities and needs, so on days when activities did not go as planned, the SOP youth worker was flexible with the youth to adapt to their interests and needs on a daily basis. This flexibility looked like adjusting the activity to suit their interests, as well as adjusting activity time frames. For example, many youth enjoyed the art activities, and so our SOP worker would leave out the projects day to day and youth often chose to keep working on those rather than going on an outing.

This year, we saw the impact of the cost of living crisis on many youth, with them gravitating towards food activities and having more in-depth conversations about the costs of things such as rent and groceries. Whenever possible, referrals were made to support the youth who attended over the summer to ensure they were getting their needs met.

We also saw the Summer Opportunities program get used consistently by youth who needed social connection but did not want to participate in the 'hang-out' scene downtown. It seemed to make a difference that every day those youth knew the SOP worker would be there to offer opportunities for them that were different than just getting their basic needs met.

As an example, there was one youth who came almost every day to the summer programming. They lived on their own and often felt isolated to the point of expressing suicidal ideation which led them to use unhealthy coping mechanisms. They said that SOP gave them something to look forward to each day and through the support they received from the SOP youth worker, they built confidence enough to make relationships with other supports and had a job at the end of the summer. This story demonstrates the importance and need for summer programming for youth who may not have access to activities or healthy peer groups.



Example of an SOP Week



SOP Activity: Friendship Bracelets

Thank you again to the Victoria Youth Family Court Youth Justice Committee for the grant that allowed us to run SOP this year. We would not have been able to provide quality summer programming to youth without your generous grant. SOP allows us to ensure that youth do not destabilize over the summer, providing much needed prevention programming for youth in the downtown core.

Contact Information

Victoria Youth Empowerment Society
533 Yates St, Victoria BC
250-383-3514
www.vyes.ca

<https://www.instagram.com/vicyouthempowermentsociety/>