

# **Evaluation of the FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Project**

**May 2015**

Vision  Results

## Vision & Results

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# Executive Summary

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## Report Intent

FOCUS Rexdale (*Furthering Our Communities, Uniting Our Service*) is a multi-sectoral community mobilization approach to identifying and mitigating risk. In the fall of 2014, Vision & Results Inc. was contracted to undertake a formative evaluation of the FOCUS Rexdale Project. The evaluation was to determine the extent to which the goals and objectives of the project had been met during its first two years of operation. This report documents the history and impetus of FOCUS Rexdale, presents findings on strengths and opportunities, and provides recommendations for improving this initiative moving forward.

## Background

In May 2012, the Toronto Police Service, the City of Toronto, and the United Way Toronto began working together in FOCUS Rexdale to adapt the Community Mobilization Hub Model from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, to the Toronto context. This model was seen as a strategy to meet their common aim of improving community safety and well-being.

The **goals** of FOCUS Rexdale are to:

- sustainably reduce and prevent incidents of crime and social disorder
- increase community safety, security, and wellness in specific neighbourhoods of Rexdale
- build on and sustain collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders
- increase capacity building for, and with, FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods.

The **objectives** of FOCUS Rexdale are to:

- identify individuals, families, or groups in FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods who are at elevated risk of victimization or offending
- respond immediately to these situations with coordinated and integrated intervention composed of the right blend of technical capabilities and service capacities
- encourage and support systemic reform, improved social services, and social development that will have a sustainable effect on community safety, security, and wellness
- increase knowledge and awareness of social needs and solutions in FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods.

Since January 2012, when FOCUS Rexdale began operating, participating agencies have come together at weekly Situation Table meetings. They identify situations of acutely elevated risk and collaboratively determine approaches for connecting individuals or family members to services that will mitigate individual, family, or community risks.

## Methodology

This evaluation had four phases: 1) developing the evaluation framework, 2) collecting data, 3) analyzing and interpreting data, and 4) reporting findings and recommendations.

The evaluators developed key evaluation questions to assess FOCUS Rexdale's structure, processes, and outcomes. To collect data and information, the evaluators used a mixed-methods approach that included:

- observing Situation Table discussions and other meetings
- reviewing documents and reports
- reviewing the Situation Table database for the period from January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014
- interviewing stakeholders involved with designing, implementing, and operating FOCUS Rexdale
- interviewing and holding focus groups with representatives of participating agencies
- developing case studies based on eight client stories gathered from three participating agencies about situations that they supported over the past year
- surveying the representatives of the participating agencies.

The evaluators synthesized and triangulated the data and identified strengths and opportunities for improvement to foster learning, continuous quality improvement, and initiative sustainability. Recommendations for enhancing FOCUS Rexdale have been provided, along with strategic questions for consideration when determining whether and how to expand or replicate the FOCUS Rexdale model to other populations and jurisdictions.

## Key Limitations

Several limitations to this evaluation arise primarily as a result of the short project timeline and fixed resources available to complete the evaluation:

- Responses collected from interviews are based on recollection (as far as two years back) and therefore may be subject to recall bias.
- Due to the short time line and budget, clients and families were not directly engaged in the evaluation. Findings therefore do not speak to client or family satisfaction and experience or to the direct impact of FOCUS Rexdale on the client, family, or community.
- The data collected by FOCUS Rexdale is primarily quantitative, measuring outputs. Strategies to collect outcome data about the impact of the initiative on individuals, families, or the community have not been established and therefore this information is not reflected in the evaluation findings.

## Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation findings show that FOCUS Rexdale is meeting its stated objectives and is well on the way to realizing its goals. Further, the FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Project demonstrates that multi-sector, multi-agency community mobilization towards a common aim can work to improve community safety. This initiative has broken down long-standing institutional silos and developed strong relationships among

the partner agencies. Most importantly, clients and families in high-risk situations have been connected to services that they might not have been otherwise and potential harm has been reduced.

FOCUS Rexdale's **success** can be attributed to a number factors including:

- a shared passion for improving the lives of individuals at risk, neighbourhood safety, and community well-being
- an approach that focussed on quickly operationalizing the model and learning by doing versus planning, perfecting, and then doing
- significant attention and care to developing trusting, transparent, and effective relationships and partnerships among agencies
- leveraging each agency's unique expertise
- adopting and adhering to effective protocols and processes
- an ongoing mindset of continuous quality improvement.

Moving forward, the critical success factors needed to **sustain the successes** of FOCUS Rexdale and to **develop it to full maturity** include:

- strengthened commitment by the senior leadership at all participating agencies
- divestment of the initiative's management and operations to a local structure
- a proactive approach to identifying and supporting priority populations and locations in the community
- a 'theory of change' and logic model that the initiative will use to define and measure specific and intended outcomes
- an accountability mechanism and framework that stakeholders will use to self-evaluate, continuously improve, and innovate.

Overall, the findings of this evaluation indicate that FOCUS Rexdale is a highly successful initiative that should continue. FOCUS Rexdale has demonstrated the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations and the value of inter-agency collaboration. Client stories indicate that FOCUS Rexdale has directly benefited the individuals and families that it has served by connecting them to services and mitigating their risk. FOCUS Rexdale stakeholders are strongly committed and believe that this model can produce positive and sustainable outcomes in public safety and wellness.

## **Recommendations**

The evaluators recommend that FOCUS Rexdale transition from its status as a pilot project and become embedded in the local community. The following specific recommendations that focus on structure, processes, or outcomes are put forward to strengthen and improve FOCUS Rexdale's capacity to make this transition.

### ***Structure***

1. Deepen the role of the Steering Committee in facilitating systemic partnerships for FOCUS Rexdale.

2. Be more deliberate in initial agency engagement.
3. Continue to recruit additional agencies to join FOCUS Rexdale.
4. Be explicit in determining the resources required to mature and sustain FOCUS Rexdale.
5. Evolve to a governance model with a local Rexdale community Steering Committee and Co-Chairs.

### ***Processes***

6. Improve the understanding of the definition for acutely elevated risk.
7. Develop and implement strategies to aid in bringing forward situations of acutely elevated risk.
8. Determine the priority populations to focus on, including baseline and target numbers.
9. Improve the capture of information about the number and types of situations brought to the Situation Table.
10. Clarify the process for sending systemic issues to the Steering Committee.
11. Improve participating agency attendance at Situation Table meetings.
12. Develop and implement strategies to increase the timeliness of interventions.
13. Improve the capture of information about interventions.
14. Improve the capture of systemic issues identified and addressed.
15. Consider adopting a more sophisticated information management system.
16. Develop and use a continuous quality improvement framework and strengthen accountability agreements for participating agencies.
17. Develop and apply a robust 'theory of change' and logic model that articulates how Situation Table activities and interventions lead to achieving short-, medium-, and long-term goals.
18. Develop an approach, including tools, to assess the impact of the initiative and outcomes for clients and their families.
19. Commission an independent summative evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale in three to five years.

### ***Outcomes***

20. Capture and share the positive impacts of FOCUS Rexdale through a spectrum of communications strategies.
21. Develop and use a standard method for gathering information about the experiences of clients and their families with the initiative.
22. Define and clarify the full set of stakeholders that FOCUS Rexdale desires to include.
23. Develop and utilize a focused client and community outreach strategy.
24. Gather longitudinal data on the correlation between FOCUS Rexdale interventions and measures of process and outcomes.



## 1.0 Background

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### 1.1 About the FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Project

The *Furthering Our Communities, Uniting Our Service* Rexdale Pilot Project (FOCUS Rexdale) is a community mobilization initiative aimed at improving neighbourhood safety and well-being. FOCUS Rexdale is a multi-sectoral partnership encompassing several **participating agencies**<sup>1</sup> representing:

- policing/justice
- community-based and health organizations
- the City of Toronto
- health, education, and social services.

FOCUS Rexdale centres on a weekly Situation Table meeting during which participating agencies bring forward situations of **acutely elevated risk**<sup>2</sup> (AER) that they have identified in the community. They jointly determine approaches to connect individuals and family members to services for mitigation of the identified risk.

The **goals** of FOCUS Rexdale are to:

- sustainably reduce and prevent incidents of crime and social disorder
- increase community safety, security, and wellness in specific neighbourhoods of Rexdale
- build on and sustain collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders
- increase capacity building for, and with, FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods.

The **objectives** of FOCUS Rexdale are to:

- identify individuals, families, places, or groups in FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods that are at elevated risk of victimization or offending
- respond immediately to these situations with coordinated and integrated intervention composed of the right blend of technical capabilities and service capacities
- encourage and support systemic reform, improved social services, and social development that will have a sustainable effect on community safety, security, and wellness
- increase knowledge and awareness of social needs and solutions in FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods.

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<sup>1</sup> **Participating agencies** refers to those organizations that have representatives attending weekly Situation Table meetings. Section 3.2.2 contains a list of these agencies.

<sup>2</sup> As defined in the **Terms of Reference for FOCUS Rexdale**, **acutely elevated risk** refers to any situation impinging on individuals, families, groups, or places where circumstances indicate an extremely high probability of victimization from crime or social disorder. Left untended, such situations will require targeted enforcement or other emergency responses. The *acute* nature of these situations is an indicator that either chronic conditions have accumulated to the point of imminent crisis, or new circumstances have contributed to severely increased risks of victimization.

## **1.2 Purpose of this Evaluation**

Vision & Results Inc. was contracted in the fall of 2014 to complete an independent and comprehensive formative evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale. The evaluators worked closely with the FOCUS Rexdale Co-Chairs throughout the evaluation project. The goals of this evaluation were to:

- determine the extent to which the FOCUS Rexdale goals and objectives have been met
- report any emergent findings
- deliver an evaluation report that documents the history and impetus of FOCUS Rexdale, findings on its strengths and opportunities, and recommendations for its future.

## 2.0 Methodology

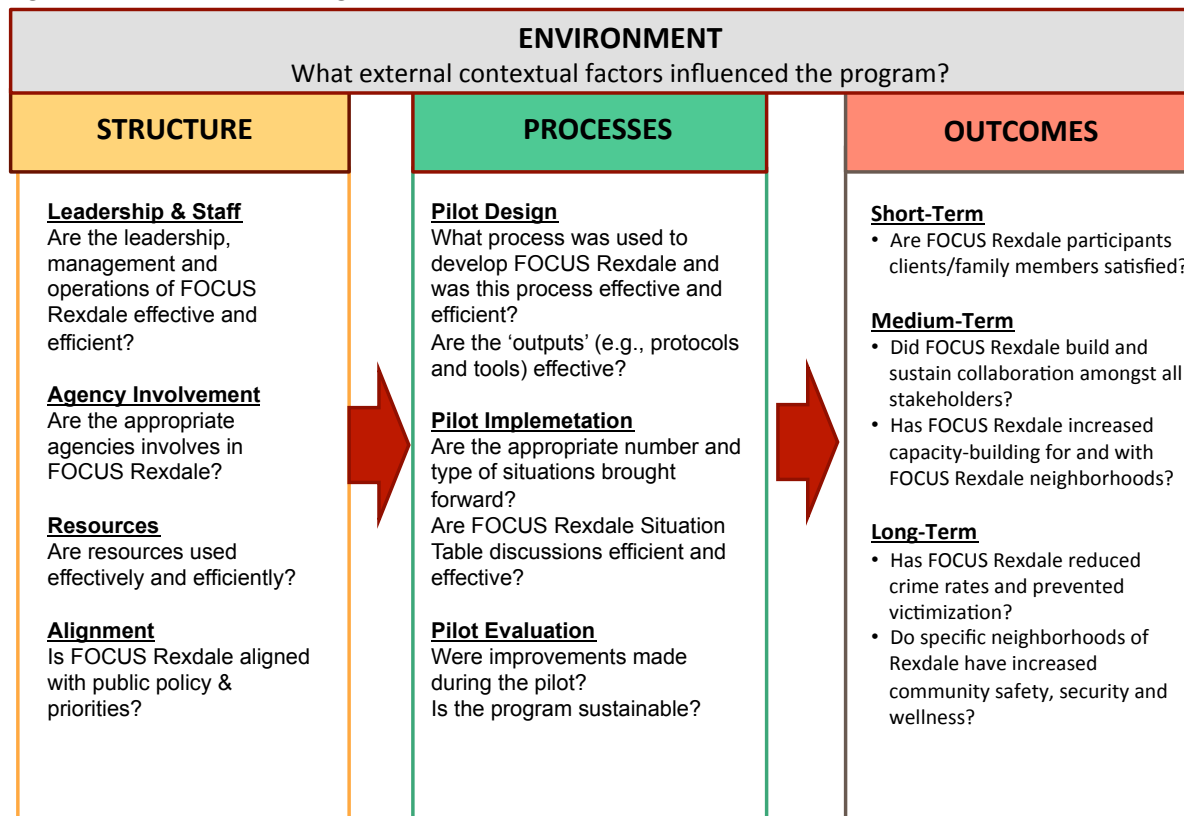
This evaluation had four phases: 1) developing the evaluation framework, 2) collecting data, 3) analyzing and interpreting data, and 4) reporting findings and recommendations.

### 2.1 Developing a Logic Model

The evaluators generated a high-level evaluation framework, as shown in Figure 1, with the input of the FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee and Co-Chairs. Key evaluation questions were developed to assess FOCUS Rexdale's *structure*, *processes*, and *outcomes*<sup>3</sup>:

- **Structure** pertains to the various human, financial, and information resources used to design and deliver FOCUS Rexdale.
- **Processes** refer to the activities that FOCUS Rexdale carried out to design, implement, and evaluate the pilot. The evaluators examined **outputs** produced by these processes such as resources, participation rates, and numbers of situations identified with AER.
- **Outcomes** are the intended impacts for end users—individuals, their family members, and the community in which FOCUS Rexdale operates. Outcomes were further segmented into short-, medium-, and long-term objectives.

**Figure 1. FOCUS Rexdale High-Level Evaluation Framework**

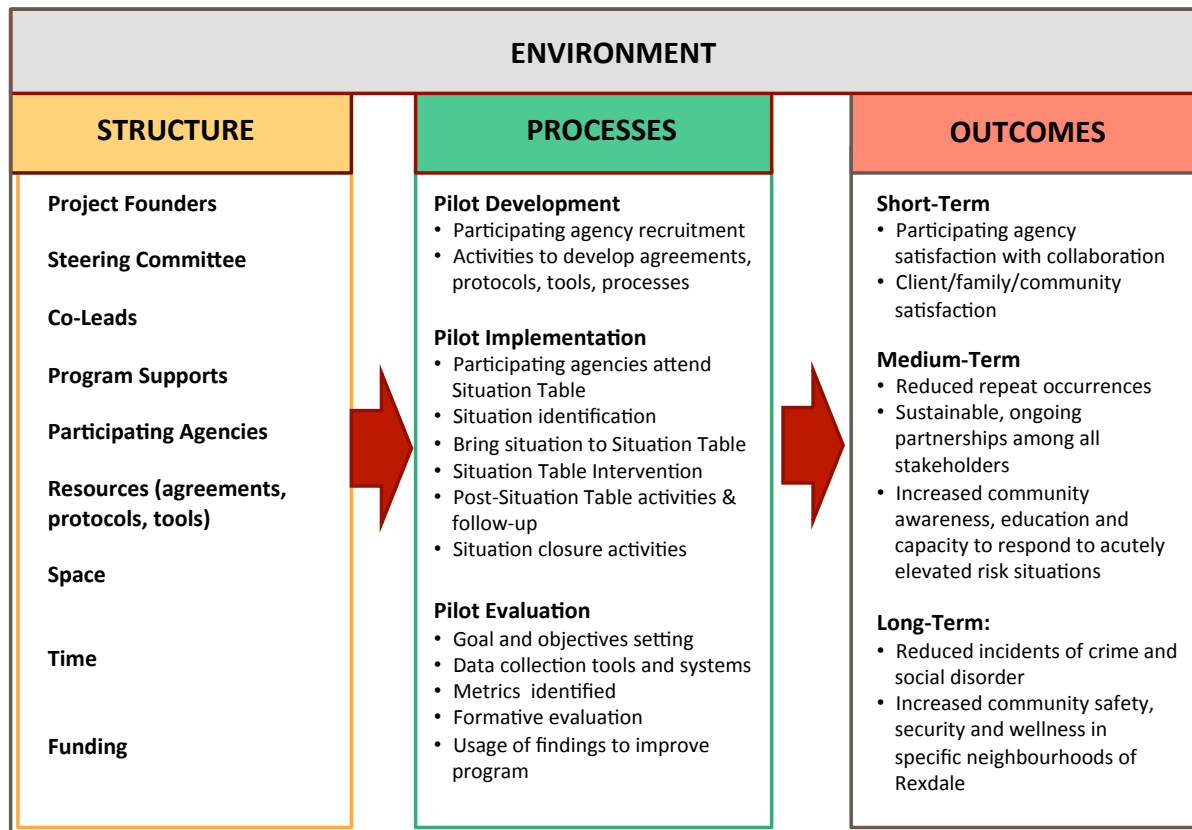


<sup>3</sup> We adopted a simplified SIPOC (Stakeholders, Inputs, Processes, Outcomes, and Customers) framework.

## 2.2 Data Collection

The evaluators used a mixed-methods approach to collect data for the evaluation. Figure 2 shows the various components of FOCUS Rexdale that were examined in the evaluation.

**Figure 2. FOCUS Rexdale Components Examined During This Evaluation**



Data were collected from:

- **Situation Table discussions and other meetings** – The evaluators observed two Situation Table meetings, attended a meeting during which FOCUS Rexdale made a presentation about the initiative to potential new program stakeholders in the community, and observed a meeting attended by participating agencies that generated ‘What’s Next’ ideas for FOCUS Rexdale.
- **Documents** – The evaluators reviewed numerous FOCUS Rexdale program documents, protocols, and tools, as well as reports on and evaluations of similar programs such as the Prince Albert Hub Model. A list of the documents reviewed is found in Appendix A.
- **Situation Table Data** – The evaluators reviewed and analyzed the database of information collected by FOCUS Rexdale between January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2014, including information on the number and types of situations and nature of agency involvement.
- **Internal Stakeholder Interviews** – The evaluators conducted several one-on-one interviews with stakeholders involved with the design, implementation, and operation of FOCUS Rexdale. A list of these individuals is provided in Appendix B.

- **Participating agency Interviews and focus groups** – Two concurrent focus groups with the representatives of participating agencies were conducted. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with several representatives of participating agencies, including recently joined agencies/representatives from housing, the school board and child and youth services sectors. The names of individuals who were interviewed or participated in a focus group are also included in Appendix B.
- **Case studies** – To obtain insight into the direct impact of FOCUS Rexdale on clients, families, and the community, three participating agencies provided eight anonymized client stories from situations that the agencies had supported over the previous year. Summary information about these situations is presented in Appendix C.
- **Participating agency survey** – The evaluators developed and administered a 15-item survey to representatives of participating agencies. The survey goal was to validate data from interviews and focus groups with participating agencies.
- **Additional meetings** – Individual and group meetings were held with the Situation Table Co-Chairs, representatives from the organizations that designed FOCUS Rexdale, the Administrative Coordinators, and the Steering Committee to gather and validate information as the evaluation progressed.

The information collection tools, including semi-structured interview and focus group guides, the survey, and the case study template were developed and vetted with the Co-Chairs prior to use.

## 2.3 Data Analysis & Interpretation

### 2.3.1 Data Analysis

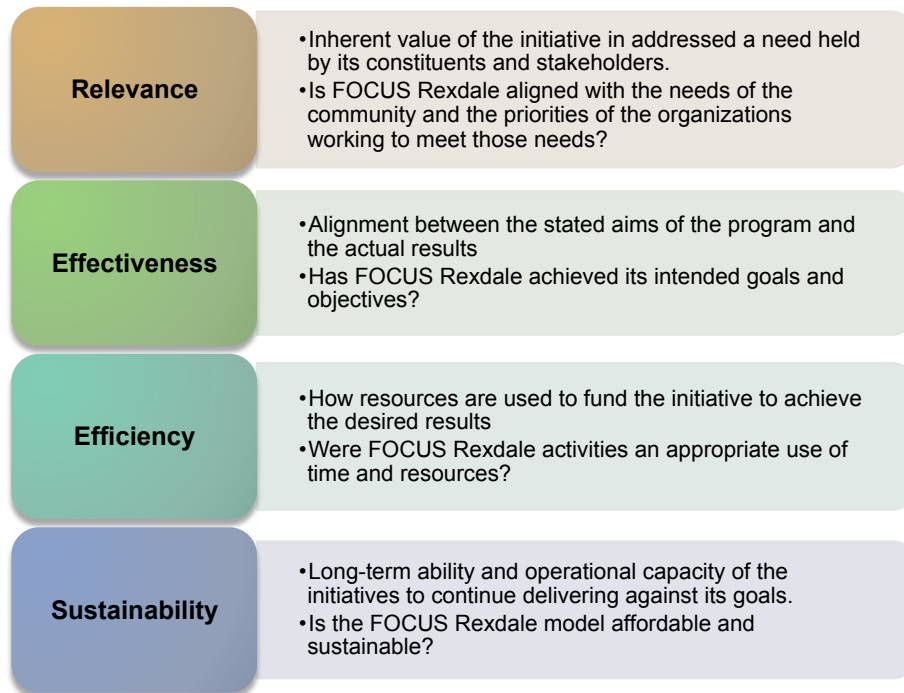
The data collected through the methods outlined above were synthesized and triangulated to arrive at key findings and opportunities for consideration. For the case studies, within and cross-case analyses were completed to identify themes regarding the impact that FOCUS Rexdale has had on the lives of individuals and/or family members. Where relevant and available, this report includes verbatim quotations from individuals involved in interviews, focus groups, and case studies.

Findings regarding strengths and opportunities have been identified for FOCUS Rexdale project partners and stakeholders to foster learning, continuous quality improvement, and program sustainability. Recommendations for enhancing FOCUS Rexdale are provided along with strategic questions for future consideration when determining whether and how to expand/replicate the FOCUS Rexdale model to other populations/jurisdictions.

### 2.3.2 Evaluation Criteria

Figure 3 shows the criteria that were used to evaluate FOCUS Rexdale.

**Figure 3. Evaluation Criteria**



### 2.4 Reporting

The evaluation findings and recommendations were reviewed and validated with the FOCUS Rexdale Co-Chairs and Steering Committee. The draft report was reviewed with the Co-Chairs and formally presented to participating agencies and other stakeholders. Upon receipt of their feedback this final report was prepared.

### 2.5 Limitations

This evaluation has several limitations that should be noted. These arose primarily from the short project timeline and fixed resources available.

- **Participant perspectives** – Evaluation participants were asked to recall and report their experiences with FOCUS Rexdale dating back to the beginning of the program, some as far back as two years ago. Responses are therefore based on recollection and are subject to recall bias. In addition, some key informants may be biased towards support of the project as there is a desire for funding for this initiative to continue beyond the pilot period. Nonetheless, an evaluation of more recent FOCUS Rexdale activities is appropriate and relevant to moving forward. The evaluators contend that this evaluation benefits from the key informants' insights and that this benefit far outweighs the effects of any biases.
- **Information on return situations or clients** – Due to privacy and confidentiality protocols, as well the procedures used to track situations, data are not currently available on the clients or situations

that have been addressed at the Situation Table and subsequently returned to the Situation Table. As discussed in section 4.0, determining a method to track these occurrences is a key opportunity.

- **Data on client satisfaction & experience** – Again, due to privacy and confidentiality protocols, as well as the short timeline available to undertake this evaluation, the case studies that captured client satisfaction and experience data were largely based on the perspectives of the agency staff that provided support to the individuals and/or family member(s). Some agencies were able to contact the individual whose situation was brought forward for the case study, whereas other agencies did not feel that this would be appropriate. In the future, gathering evaluative information directly from clients while protecting confidentiality is also an opportunity for FOCUS Rexdale to explore.
- **Quantitative data** – Data collected by FOCUS Rexdale are currently limited to inputs and outputs (process measures), therefore these evaluation findings do not speak to the impact of the initiative on clients, families, and the community (outcomes measures). FOCUS Rexdale would benefit from a detailed logic model, client-level impact assessment tools, and advanced statistical analysis to examine the correlation between interventions and system-wide changes such as increased community safety, health, and well-being. Furthermore, FOCUS Rexdale was established as a proof of concept initiative and has been operating for a relatively short time. Longitudinal data are required to better assess the impact on communities in terms of changes in measures of crime and well-being.
- **Evaluating a dynamic initiative** – From the outset, this study has strived to capture the context and dynamic and evolving nature of FOCUS Rexdale, including ongoing and parallel efforts to continuously improve, expand, and replicate the initiative. However, given the limited time available for this evaluation, providing all the details of the context for FOCUS Rexdale was not possible. This report aims to strike a balance in providing sufficient background information to give essential context for the findings and recommendations.

## 2.6 Organization of This Report

The remainder of this report contains the following sections:

- **Section 3.0 Findings** – Strengths and opportunities in the 1) structures, 2) processes, and 3) outcomes of FOCUS Rexdale.
- **Section 4.0 Recommendations** – Summary of the overall recommendations and list of detailed recommendations.
- **Section 5.0 Future Considerations** – A high-level implementation plan with recommendations for the short-, medium-, and long-term. Strategic questions for the Steering Committee to contemplate as they consider expanding or replicating FOCUS Rexdale.
- **Section 6.0 Conclusion** – Final remarks on the findings of the FOCUS Rexdale evaluation.

## 3.0 Findings

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To provide context to the evaluation findings, this section presents a brief overview of the history of FOCUS Rexdale and key facts about the initiative. The evaluation questions listed in Figure 1 are then addressed for each of the three evaluation components: 1) FOCUS Rexdale's structure, 2) processes, and 3) outcomes.

### 3.1 FOCUS Rexdale History & Key Facts

Following is a brief overview of how the FOCUS Rexdale concept arrived in Toronto and a description of how the pilot project was designed and is currently operated.

- In May 2012, Deputy Chief Peter Sloly of the Toronto Police Service identified the Community Mobilization Prince Albert (Saskatchewan) Hub Model as a possible model for the City of Toronto to improve neighbourhood safety. At the same time, the City of Toronto was studying the work of Karen McCluskey in Glasgow, Scotland. Her approach to violence reduction was the inspiration for the Prince Albert Model.
- Shortly thereafter, Greg Watts and Chris Fernandes of the Toronto Police Service, Scott McKean of the City of Toronto, Debra Shime and Lorraine Duff of the United Way Toronto, and Lisa Kostakis of Albion Neighbourhood Service undertook a site visit to Prince Albert Saskatchewan to learn about the Hub Model. All these stakeholders agreed that the Prince Albert community mobilization model could be adapted to meet their common aim of improving community safety and well-being in Toronto. They subsequently formed the FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee<sup>4</sup> to oversee and design a pilot initiative. Currently, the Toronto Police Service, United Way Toronto, and the City of Toronto still provide governance and strategic oversight for FOCUS Rexdale.
- The original catchment area for the FOCUS Rexdale initiative was to be the Toronto Community Housing properties of Mount Olive and Jamestown. However, the boundaries for FOCUS Rexdale were expanded to align with Toronto Police Service's 23 Division (Steeles Avenue to the north, Eglinton Avenue to the south, Hwy 427 to the west, and Weston Road to the east). This is the current catchment area for FOCUS Rexdale.
- Between May and December 2012, a Planning Team<sup>5</sup> was formed to: 1) engage with and recruit agencies in the community to join the initiative formally as participating agencies and 2) develop Rexdale protocols and tools, including Terms of Reference, a Privacy Protocol, and a Memorandum of Understanding. Significant work was completed to facilitate an information sharing agreement among participating agencies. Legal counsel contributed by the City of Toronto and United Way provided expertise in developing an information sharing protocol that would allow different sectors and agencies to share client information within a legislative framework.

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<sup>4</sup> The **FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee** is composed of Toronto Police Service (Peter Sloly), City of Toronto (Chris Brillinger), and United Way Toronto (JoAnne Doyle).

<sup>5</sup> The **Planning Team** included Toronto Police Service (Greg Watts and Kim Scanlin), City of Toronto (Scott McKean), United Way (Jamie Robinson and Linney Lau), Toronto Community Housing Corporation (Geoff Morgan), and Albion Neighbourhood Services (Lisa Kostakis), as well as advice from Community Justice Consultant Dr. Hugh Russell.



- The weekly FOCUS Rexdale Situation Table<sup>6</sup> meetings were launched formally in January 2013. The meetings were originally co-chaired on a rotating basis by Toronto Police Service, United Way, and the City of Toronto<sup>7</sup>. Today the meetings are chaired on an alternating basis by Toronto Police Service and City of Toronto<sup>8</sup>. United Way continues as a member of the Steering Committee.
- Administrative coordination for FOCUS Rexdale is provided by a part-time coordinator.<sup>9</sup>
- The Rexdale HUB (21 Panorama Court, Toronto, ON) is where FOCUS Rexdale Situation Table meetings take place. The weekly meetings began as two hours in length or shorter if all situations were addressed. As the process developed, the meeting times have been become shorter and typically run between 45 minutes and one hour. Agencies follow up with clients and with each other between meetings and are expected to report on the progress of a situation the following week.

## 3.2 FOCUS Rexdale Structure

This section examines three aspects of the FOCUS Rexdale structure: 1) the leadership, management, and operational structure of the project; 2) the number and type of agencies involved in FOCUS Rexdale; and 3) how resources have been used to develop and manage the initiative.

### 3.2.1 Strategic Leadership & Management

***What is the leadership and management structure of the FOCUS Rexdale and is this structure effective and efficient?***

#### Background

The strategic leadership for the pilot initiative is provided by the FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee, with day-to-day management and operations of FOCUS Rexdale carried out by the Co-Chairs of the FOCUS Rexdale Situation Table.

#### Strengths – Strategic Leadership & Management

Overall, the evaluation found that the strategic leadership and management of FOCUS Rexdale are highly effective and efficient. In the survey administered to representatives of participating agencies, the statement *“The leadership has been effective and efficient in the running the project”* received an agreement rating of 8.75/10. The following elaborates on this finding.

#### Steering Committee

- **Visionary and strategic leadership** – The leadership and management of FOCUS Rexdale were found to be both visionary and strategic. Deputy Chief Peter Sloly envisioned the potential applicability and

<sup>6</sup> **Situation Table** refers to the weekly meetings of multiple agencies during which situations are collaboratively discussed and interventions identified.

<sup>7</sup> Original Situation Table Co-Chairs were Jamie Robinson (United Way), Scott McKean (City of Toronto), and Donovan Locke (Toronto Police Service).

<sup>8</sup> Donovan Locke and back-up Jesse Riley (Toronto Police Service) and Scott McKean and back-up Dan Breault (City of Toronto).

<sup>9</sup> Formerly Linnie Lau and Minhaz Rahman, new coordinator to be identified.

benefit of the Prince Albert Community Mobilization Hub Model in Saskatchewan to the City of Toronto. Engaging the City of Toronto and the United Way Toronto demonstrated strategic leadership and recognition that a multi-sectoral and multi-agency approach, involving police, schools, mental health, and housing, was required to address the range of issues facing individuals and families in at-risk situations.

In the Prince Albert model, participation of multiple government ministries is mandated by legislation. Toronto leadership recognized that a different approach was needed to adapt the model and effectively engage cross-sectoral agency participation in a city as large and complex as Toronto.

*"It was a leadership experiment that worked...a fully empowered community that works in partnership...a made in Toronto model"*

—Peter Sloly, Toronto Police Service

The Steering Committee took a strategic approach, to develop the initiative in one neighbourhood in Toronto as a proof of concept rather than attempting to roll out the model across the entire city. This bottom-up approach was felt to be more feasible and more likely to result in success. Given the common goal of building community capacity that is shared by the key stakeholders, this local grassroots approach was believed to be more sustainable over the long term. Several stakeholders who were consulted during this evaluation cited Dr. Hugh Russell's pivotal role in advising the FOCUS Rexdale planning team to focus on getting the Situation Table up and running to see if it could work. This advice to "start small and learn as you go" and "focus on action" has served the initiative well, as discussed throughout this report.

- **Continued oversight and focus on impact** – Since the launch of FOCUS Rexdale, the Steering Committee continues to be apprised of the initiative's progress and supports it by gathering information on systemic barriers and bringing it to provincial and federal tables for discussion and resolution. This role complements and supports the work of the local participating agencies with limited time, resources, or influence to address system-wide issues. The Steering Committee is also interested in improving information collection and monitoring to better understand the impact of FOCUS Rexdale on individuals, families, and the community as a whole.

### **Project Team**

Overall, the project team that led the design and launch of FOCUS Rexdale and that oversees the day-to-day operations was found to be effective and efficient in its role. The Co-Chair and the Administrative Coordinator were also found to be effective and efficient in their respective roles. The following expands on these findings.

- **Dedicated and skilled project team** – Key informants stated that the success of FOCUS Rexdale is largely due to the passion, commitment, and dedication of the project team members. Team members worked diligently to design and launch the pilot rapidly. They were also able to bring together community agencies that had previously not worked together to "take a leap of faith" and collaborate in a venture yet to be proven locally. As FOCUS Rexdale is founded on cross-sector and cross-agency collaboration, stakeholder engagement was identified as a critical success factor for the project team and is cited as foundational to the success of FOCUS Rexdale today.
- **Effective and efficient Co-Chair function** – Feedback from participating agencies and the evaluators' observations both indicate that the Co-Chair arrangement for the Situation Table is working well and

that the Co-Chairs are effective in carrying out their roles. First, the Co-Chairs keep meetings focused and action-oriented. Second, both Chairs are working with participating agencies to increase agency involvement and enhance understanding of FOCUS Rexdale. The Co-Chairs and agencies are jointly developing back-up plans for times when the regular agency representative cannot attend a meeting and internal communication plans to support staff in bringing more situations forward to meetings.

- **Effective coordination and support** – A part-time FOCUS Rexdale Administrative Coordinator effectively performs support functions including capturing meeting actions, taking attendance, recording situations, tracking systemic issues, and maintaining the project database. The Coordinator also communicates with participating agencies to confirm that they have followed through with actions from Situation Table meetings and to offer support as required.

### **Opportunities – Strategic Leadership & Management**

- **Deepen the role of the Steering Committee in facilitating systemic partnerships to sustain FOCUS Rexdale** – The Steering Committee has a key opportunity to use its influence by engaging with large organizations such as the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Employment Services to ensure that their participation at FOCUS Rexdale Situation Table meetings is consistent and sustained. For example, there is a need to ensure that the representatives from these agencies have the support of their leadership to participate in FOCUS Rexdale and to bring forward situations at the Situation Table meetings. While the Co-Chairs have been working with these agencies over the past 24 months to encourage participation, the FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee can actively engage with the senior leaders of these large, complex organizations to discuss and address systemic barriers to their participation. The challenges with participating agency attendance and participation in meetings are discussed in more detail in section 3.2.2.

### **3.2.2 Community Agency Involvement**

***Are the appropriate agencies involved in FOCUS Rexdale?***

#### **Background**

Table 1 lists the participating agencies. While FOCUS Rexdale was developed and ready to launch in a fairly short time, implementation of the initiative has been incremental, with agencies signing on over the past two years. This has allowed participants time to become familiar with each other and develop the level of trust needed for the Situation Table (a central component of FOCUS Rexdale) to operate effectively.

**Table 1. FOCUS Rexdale Participating Agencies (2014)**

Organization
Albion Neighbourhood Services
Breaking the Cycle
City of Toronto
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment and Social Services</li><li>• Community Crisis Response Program</li><li>• Public Health – School Nurse Program</li><li>• Public Health – Investing in Families</li></ul>
Etobicoke North Probation and Parole, Youth and Adult
Ministry of Child and Youth Services, Toronto West Youth Justice Services
Reconnect
Rexdale Community Health Centre
Rexdale Community Legal Clinic
Toronto Community Housing
Toronto District School Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safe and Caring Schools</li><li>• North Albion Collegiate Institute</li></ul>
Toronto Police Service
United Way Toronto (Steering Committee member only)
Youth Employment Toronto

Upon signing a Memorandum of Understanding with FOCUS Rexdale, each participating agency assigns one of their staff to participate consistently as their representative at the FOCUS Rexdale Situation Table. Each participating agency also assigns a back-up representative should the primary representative be unavailable. Participants are empowered to: 1) nominate observed situations of AER for consideration by the Situation Table, 2) support the Situation Table in deciding if nominated situations justify an early intervention involving any participating agency, and 3) participate in the identified early intervention as a lead or assisting agency.

It was noted that a number of agencies are not formally signed on as participating agencies but do participate in FOCUS Rexdale. The following were identified as referral agencies in 2013 and 2014: Family Services Toronto, Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, Rexdale Women’s Centre, St. Elizabeth Health Care, and Toronto Community Care Access Centre. These organizations, as well as the Toronto Catholic District School Board, have been identified as key community agencies to engage in moving FOCUS Rexdale forward. Further, the Central West and Toronto Central Local Health Integration Networks have been identified as agencies to engage with FOCUS Rexdale at the Steering Committee level.

In the evaluation survey of participating agencies, respondents gave a weighted score of 7.85/10 for the statement “*The right agencies are participating in FOCUS Rexdale,*” indicating a high level of satisfaction. However, this is one of the lower survey ratings.

### **Strengths – Community Agency Involvement**

- **Range of participating agencies** – The agencies involved in FOCUS Rexdale represent a broad range of human services sectors and of both City and local agencies.
- **Sustained involvement of participating agencies** – Over the two-year pilot period, only three agencies withdrew from FOCUS Rexdale. In two cases it was decided that the agencies' mandates did not align with FOCUS Rexdale, while in the third case the participating agency was defunded. Overall, participation data indicate the ongoing commitment of most agencies to the initiative.
- **Participating agency recruitment and support** – FOCUS Rexdale Co-Chairs have been pivotal in recruiting new participating agencies to the Situation Table. They have developed and used a number of presentations to promote the program to agencies in the community. They have scheduled presentations by external providers at the Situation Table meetings and participating agencies report utilizing information from these presentations. The FOCUS Rexdale Administrative Coordinator is seen as instrumental to supporting participating agencies between meetings. The Co-Chairs have also followed up with agencies that are not regularly represented at Situation Table meetings to raise their concerns with the agency. The agency and the Co-Chairs then jointly employ problem-solving strategies to strengthen participating agency engagement moving forward.

### **Opportunities – Community Agency Involvement**

- **Be more deliberate in agency engagement** – While a key strength was the ability of the Project Team to develop and launch the project rapidly with a few agencies, some stakeholders mentioned that agency engagement could have been better. Some feel that communications and the transparency of decisions made at the outset could have been improved between the Project Team and the executive leadership of local agencies. Some participating agencies also mentioned that the orientation to FOCUS Rexdale and training for the Situation Table could have been better planned and more thorough. In hindsight, the stakeholders felt that a more planned approach with the top-down support of the Steering Committee might have prevented some of the problems with agency participation today.
- **Continue to recruit additional agencies and stakeholders to join FOCUS Rexdale** – Participating agency representatives clearly identified a need to recruit additional agencies to FOCUS Rexdale, including Rexdale Women's Centre, Children's Aid Society, and agencies that work with youth and specific cultural or religious groups in the community (for example, South Asian or Somali). Developing an inventory or database of all resources both formal and informal (such as people/groups with lived experience) would be beneficial when planning to involve additional stakeholders in FOCUS Rexdale.

### **3.2.3 Resourcing & Sustainability**

A key dimension that this evaluation assesses is the sustainability of FOCUS Rexdale, the long-term ability and capacity of the initiative to continue delivering against its goals.

***Were resources used cost-effectively for FOCUS Rexdale and is FOCUS Rexdale sustainable with the current level of resourcing?***

## Background

To date, the participating agencies have voluntarily dedicated staff time to develop the pilot, operate or attend the Situation Table weekly, follow up on risk situations, and participate in the continuous improvement of the initiative. The part-time Administrative Coordinator is the only position that is funded.

Agencies spend a varying amount of time identifying and bringing forward situations to the Table. Toronto Police Service 23 Division, which currently brings most situations forward, states that a Community Resource Officer spends several days each week reviewing cases, contacting clients to obtain consent<sup>10</sup>, and preparing background information on each situation to present at the weekly meetings. The Divisional Policing Support Unit and 23 Division both think that many more situations could be identified from across all units of the Division, and that a dedicated Officer position could facilitate this. They also suggest that this Officer should be from the Community Relations Unit, a strategy that would engage an Officer in the best position to identify situations in the community and with the appropriate investigation background.

## Strengths – Resourcing & Sustainability

- **Appropriate use of time and resources** – While the time spent by the Project Team (Toronto Police Service, City of Toronto, United Way, Albion Neighbourhood Services, and Toronto Community Housing) during the first six months to develop and launch FOCUS Rexdale was reported to be significant, the representatives of these agencies felt that the time was appropriate and a valuable investment of their respective organizations' resources. In the evaluators' experience, the Project Team embraced FOCUS Rexdale not as a new or additional project, but as a more efficient way to achieve their collective goals for the community. Team members thus believe their agency investment to be an appropriate use of resources.

The Administrative Coordinator position has been funded by the United Way Toronto and Toronto Police Service (through a proceeds of crime grant) at two days per week (0.4 full-time equivalent). This time allocation appears to be appropriate given the current scope of the Coordinator's responsibilities.

## Opportunities – Resourcing & Sustainability

- **Be explicit in determining the resources required to mature and sustain FOCUS Rexdale** – Opinions are mixed on whether additional resources or a full-time staff resource is needed for FOCUS Rexdale in future. For the most part, participating agencies state that the weekly Situation Table meetings are running smoothly and are adequately supported by the Co-Chairs and a part-time Administrative Coordinator. The time spent by participating agencies at the table is felt to be well spent and a part of their organization's role in the community.

Other stakeholders, however, suggest that more resources are required to run FOCUS Rexdale. They believe that more time and attention needs to be dedicated to improving the involvement of

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<sup>10</sup> An Information Sharing Protocol was designed and is in place so that consent is not required to present situations at the Situation Table.

existing participating agencies, in particular by re-engaging with the senior leadership of agencies and by recruiting additional agencies. Furthermore, if a goal of FOCUS Rexdale is to mobilize and build capacity among local residents, then resources must be dedicated to community outreach, awareness, and marketing. Community members must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to bring situations forward to the Situation Table. Finally, as is discussed throughout this report, the initiative requires robust data collection, analysis, and reporting to demonstrate impact. Several stakeholders noted that FOCUS Rexdale is just one initiative in the portfolio of the current Co-Chairs and that in the future, at least one individual should be working full-time and dedicated to the key functions of agency engagement, community outreach, and capacity building as well as chairing FOCUS Rexdale. A part-time data analyst was also considered necessary by some stakeholders.

Overall, developing a comprehensive and coherent human resources plan could help FOCUS Rexdale to mature to its full potential. This plan could include an assessment of the program's strategic and operational functions and identify the skills sets required to undertake these requirements. The evaluators cannot make a definitive recommendation without more detailed examination of these aspects. However, the initiative's current stage of development appears to require one individual in a strategic, stakeholder engagement role and one individual in an administrative coordination and data analyst role.

- **Evolve to a local Rexdale community Steering Committee and Co-Chair model** – While the current co-chair arrangement has worked well for the pilot stage of FOCUS Rexdale, a key question is whether this model is sustainable in the long-term. FOCUS Rexdale is just one of many city-wide initiatives being undertaken by the participating agencies acting as FOCUS Rexdale co-chairs. The current FOCUS Rexdale model has an opportunity to transition to a devolved model with a local Steering Committee, composed of the Executive Directors or local leadership of the participating agencies. The current co-chairs (along with the Steering Committee members) of FOCUS Rexdale would then assume a city-wide scope that includes addressing systemic issues, directing the expansion of the model to new communities, and developing common standards of practice and performance management.

Provided that some level of administrative and coordination support is available, this transition would help to sustain FOCUS Rexdale in the long term by fostering a greater degree of local ownership. The staging of this process must be planned carefully to maintain the effectiveness and efficiency of the Situation Table. For example, during a transition period the current Co-Chairs might want to stay involved with FOCUS Rexdale in an advisory/mentoring/coaching role to verify that standards are being met while encouraging the local structure to take hold and thrive.

### 3.3 FOCUS Rexdale Processes

This section examines the activities used to design, operate, and evaluate FOCUS Rexdale. It also includes findings on effectiveness of the outputs of the FOCUS Rexdale processes, including the definition of AER, the Memorandum of Understanding, the privacy protocol, and the data and information gathered by FOCUS Rexdale.

***What processes were used to develop the FOCUS Rexdale pilot and were these processes effective and efficient?***

***What outputs were produced during the development of FOCUS Rexdale and are these effective?***



### 3.3.1 Pilot Development

The design of FOCUS Rexdale took approximately six months, including two months for testing processes. In this time extensive stakeholder engagement was completed to identify and recruit participating agencies to FOCUS Rexdale. In addition, several protocols and tools were developed including Terms of Reference, a Memorandum of Understanding, a FOCUS Rexdale Committee Meeting Information Sharing Protocol, and a FOCUS Rexdale Script for chairing weekly meetings. An Excel spreadsheet was developed to track situations brought forward to weekly meetings. Section 1.2 provides additional information on the background and development history of FOCUS Rexdale.

#### Strengths – Pilot Development

- **Magnitude of work completed in a short time** – The evaluators note that the amount of work completed in a relatively short time to enable the launch of the Situation Table should not be underestimated. Critical factors in the initiative’s success have been 1) working through the complexities of privacy and confidentiality to develop information sharing protocols, 2) explaining the purpose of FOCUS Rexdale to different stakeholders, and 3) developing relationships with participating agencies. In the evaluators’ experience, complex and collaborative initiatives typically require significant start-up time. FOCUS Rexdale’s ability to get up and running within a relatively short time should be acknowledged and recognized.
- **Collaborative relationships with community agencies** – The Steering Committee and Project Team members worked purposefully to strengthen the relationship between their respective organizations and to foster collaboration among other organizations in the Rexdale community. From the outset, the Toronto Police Service recognized that alone they could not provide the full range of interventions needed to address the problems contributing to situations of risk in the community. Toronto Police Service therefore approached the City of Toronto and the United Way for support. The United Way was identified as a strategic partner because of its well-established relationships with a broad range of community-based agencies. Albion Neighbourhood Service and Toronto Community Housing were also identified as important local agencies needed to establish FOCUS Rexdale locally. These originating partner agencies subsequently identified and engaged other local agencies with FOCUS Rexdale, establishing a comprehensive and coordinated approach for identifying and addressing risk in Rexdale.
- **Focus on action** – The Steering Committee and Project Team also made a purposeful and strategic decision to focus on operations during the development phase, a decision that enabled the pilot to be up and running in six months. Had the focus instead been on developing the ideal governance, accountability, and data sharing arrangements between a group of agencies with little history of working together, the developmental phase could have taken substantially longer. In the evaluators’ opinion, the initiative would have lost momentum and stakeholder support along the way. The desire of the Steering Committee and Project Team to get the initiative up and running proved to be a critical success factor. Participating agencies were quickly able to witness the Situation Table in action and judge the impact and merits of the initiative themselves.



## Strengths – Outputs

- **Acutely elevated risk (AER) definition** – Participating agencies indicate that the definition of AER is effective, as indicated by an average survey rating of 8.92/10 for the statement “*The FOCUS Rexdale Acutely Elevated Risk definition is effective.*” The AER definition is clear to people who attend the weekly Situation Table meetings. One representative of a participating agency described how the definition is commonly understood as “Someone who is at risk of emotional, physical harm to self or the community at large.”
- **Workable information sharing protocol** – The approach to ensuring privacy and confidentiality of client information was a key enabler in FOCUS Rexdale becoming operational in a relatively short time. Participating agencies rated the survey statement “*The FOCUS Rexdale information sharing and privacy/confidentiality protocols are effective*” at an average score of 8.08/10.
- **Comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding** – Representatives of participating agencies have each signed this Memorandum of Understanding, which provides an overview of FOCUS Rexdale, key definitions of *situations* and *AER*, the role of participating agencies, and how discussions and information sharing are to occur. Overall, participating agencies stated that the Memorandum is appropriate.

## Opportunities – Outputs

- **Improve the understanding of the AER definition** – The AER definition is clear to those who attend the Situation Table meetings regularly. However, the definition is not clear to or consistently understood by staff from participating agencies who are not involved with the Table. For example, in the fall of 2014, Toronto Police Service delivered five training sessions to various 23 Division units to raise awareness about FOCUS Rexdale and increase referrals to the Situation Table. In these sessions, the AER definition needed to be customized and discussed with police officers using familiar language and terms. Further, sessions needed to be repeated frequently to reach every police officer working in the Division. As Adam Halagian (Toronto Police Service) said, “we need to start to normalize the process.” Staff working at different participating agencies, such as a health or social service agency, may also understand the definition differently. Participating agencies have been given information about FOCUS Rexdale, yet the number of referrals from community agencies has not increased significantly over the two-year pilot period. Communication about AER should be customized for these different stakeholder groups. There is value in developing context-specific examples and additional material to support staff in better understanding what constitutes a situation of AER. Staff can also be educated about indicators or protective factors that need to be built into the day-to-day practice of agency staff. Further, if FOCUS Rexdale intends to build the capacity of community residents and involve residents in identifying and bringing forward AER situations to the Situation Table, then considerable attention needs to be paid to developing a definition in plain language that is easily understood. The initiative could consider developing stories or case studies to illustrate typical situations or identifying specific attributes that are signs of AER.

*“The model is about taking a cop and teaching him to look through the lens of a social worker and having the social worker look through the lens of a cop.”*

—Greg Watts, Toronto Police Service

Throughout the pilot some agencies have embedded FOCUS Rexdale into their practices and procedures. For example, Breaking the Cycle built the identification of AER into their case management model, which is designed to reverse some of the negative effects experienced by young people by placing more focus on trauma-informed job coaching and less focus on trauma-informed case management history. The model used by Breaking the Cycle uses three main strategies. 1) Staff set clinical smart intervention goals to address core risk factors for each participant. These goals are established through intake, assessment, case conference, and case management and consider participant risks, needs, and strengths. 2) Staff also identify participants experiencing immediate elevated risk based on participant assessment and present these elevated risks to the FOCUS Rexdale Situation Table for an immediate and coordinated multi-agency intervention. 3) Risks that are identified as not elevated are integrated into the participant's intervention care plan.

### 3.3.2 Project Implementation

***Are the appropriate number and types of situations brought forward to FOCUS Rexdale?***  
***Are the Situation Table meetings efficient and effective?***  
***Are the interventions appropriate and timely?***

#### Background

Prior to each weekly Situation Table meeting, participants sign the FOCUS Rexdale confidentiality agreement. Participants are then invited to bring forward situations of AER in accordance with the FOCUS Rexdale Information Sharing Protocol. They share and record information about situations in ways that are consistent with the policies and standards of their home agencies. Each situation handled by the Table is assigned a number, and always referenced by that number. For the purposes of evaluation, a database of only masked and banded situation information is maintained. Participants do not record any information about any situation unless they are assigned as a lead or assisting agency for a situation.

Through discussion, the Situation Table participants determine which participating agencies should be the lead and which should support a situation, based on both agency scope/mandate and capacity. Agencies assigned to a situation are expected to collectively address the situation within 48 hours of the meeting and report back on the action taken and results at the next meeting. Often interventions consist of joint home visits or joint 'door knocks.' The FOCUS Rexdale Administrative Coordinator sends an email to the meeting participants after each weekly meeting that lists the situations addressed and lead and assisting agencies identified. The Coordinator also follows up with the lead agency in 48 hours to determine whether the situation has been addressed as per the protocol. The Coordinator reports agency findings to the Co-Chairs, who follow up if needed. Situations are closed when one of three things happens: 1) the individual or family concerned is connected with and accepts service; 2) the individual or family is connected with and refuses service; or 3) the individual or family cannot be reached. A key challenge noted by stakeholders is when a participating agency is not present at the next meeting to provide a follow-up report on a situation. This diminishes the ability of the Situation Table to update the database and document the situation and its progress or conclusion.

Situations raised at weekly meetings provide an opportunity to identify additional resources required by the Table, such as which organizations should be invited to participate in FOCUS Rexdale in order to better address situations. Meetings also provide opportunities to discuss training needs of participating agencies.

An Excel spreadsheet is used to capture situations presented during discussion at the Situation Table. The spreadsheet includes non-identifiable personal information on situations accepted for discussion at the Table, which is provided by the participating agencies and recorded according to agreed-upon protocols. From January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014, the following data items were tracked:

- Originating agency: The agency that brought forward the situation for discussion
- Type: Person or family
- Age group of individual discussed: The age groups were 16–18, 19–59, and 60+ years
- Gender of individual discussed: Male or female
- Risk factors: Drawn from 25 risk categories and more than 100 risk-associated risk factors<sup>11</sup>
- Lead agency: The agency that took the lead in coordinating the multi-agency response to the AER situation
- Assisting agencies: The agencies involved, in addition to the lead agency, in mitigating the risk
- Closure: The reason for closure
- Systemic issues: Systemic issues impacting the Table's ability to intervene
- Date discussion was opened and date the discussion was closed.

### 3.3.2.1 Number and Types of Situations

#### ***Are the appropriate number and types of situations brought forward to FOCUS Rexdale?***

From January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014, participating agencies brought 208 situations to the Situation Table and accepted a total of 203 situations for discussion — 99 in 2013 and 104 in 2014. In addition, 40 situations were accepted and utilized in late 2012 to test the model. In summary:

- 167 (82%) of the situations concerned a person, 34 (17%) of them concerned a family unit, and 2 (1%) were unknown. However, data on the number of persons comprising a family unit is not collected nor is the number of family members residing with a person. Nevertheless, the mobilization of services can be estimated to have reached close to 300 individuals during the two-year pilot period if it is assumed that each family unit has two or more persons.
- How many and which of the situations brought to the Situation Table have previously been brought to the Situation Table is not known, although participating agencies say that they only recognize one or two as returning situations.

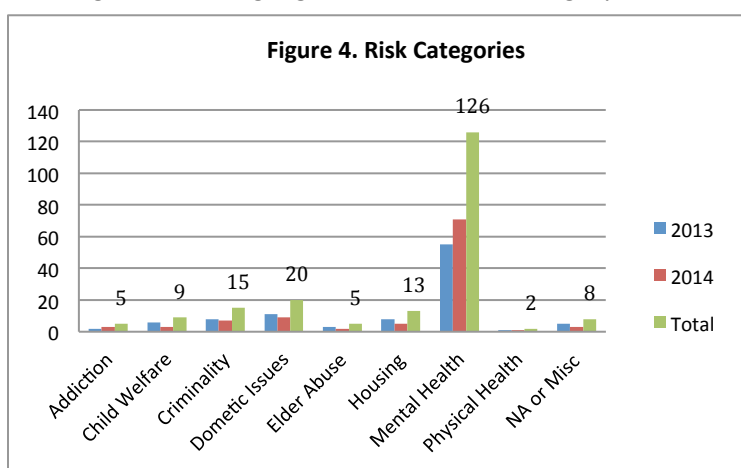
<sup>11</sup> FOCUS Rexdale adapted the risk categories and factors developed and piloted by Community Mobilization Prince Albert. Risks are grouped into 25 different risk categories, and within each category several risk factors are used to further specify the type of risk facing each person. For example *suicide*: current suicide risk, previous suicide risk, affected by suicide.

- Females made up 101 or 58% of the situations for which gender was recorded (n=174).
- The largest age group is adults aged 19–60, which accounted for a total of 97 (56%) situations for which age was recorded (n=172). Youth (16–18 years) made up 46 (27%) of the situations and elders (60+ years) accounted for 29 (17%) of situations.
- Five situations raised during the pilot period were documented as not being situations of AER, representing 2% of the total number of situations raised at the Table. For purposes of comparison, 21% of cases were considered not situations of AER in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, in a one-year period (2012/13). This may be another indicator that the AER definition is familiar to and well understood by people attending the Situation Table regularly.

### ***Categories of Situations and Risk Categories/Factors***

Each situation discussed at the Table was categorized to highlight its main risk category. The main categories for FOCUS Rexdale (Figure 4) were addictions, child welfare, criminality, domestic issues, elder abuse, housing, mental health, physical health, and miscellaneous.

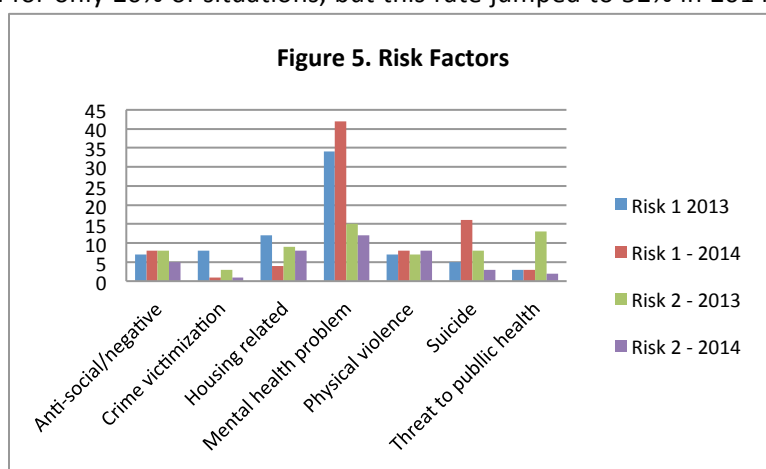
By far the largest risk category in both years was mental health, accounting for a total of 62% of situations (55% in 2013 and 68% in 2014). The next most frequent risk categories were domestic issues (9.8%), criminality (7.4%), housing (6.4%), and child welfare (4.4%).



For the 203 situations discussed at the Situation Table, 23 risk factors from eight categories were tracked and in total 431 risks were identified, an average of 2.12 risks per situation.

In 2013 a third risk factor was recorded for only 20% of situations, but this rate jumped to 52% in 2014. Conversations with the Co-Chairs clarified that this increase can be attributed to improved documentation during the pilot period, but this also speaks to the complexity of the situations being brought to the Table.

Figure 5 shows the top risk factors presented at the Situation Table. Risk 1 is the primary risk while risk 2 is a companion risk. In 2013 and 2014,



the most common risk factors (1 and 2 combined) included mental health (29%), housing (9%), suicide (9%), and physical harm (8%).

### ***Originators of Situations***

Toronto Police Service is the originator of most situations (80% and 81% in 2013 and 2014 respectively). Most participating agencies believe that it is appropriate for the Toronto Police Service to be bringing situations to the Situation Table. However, the Police Service scope does not extend to issues such as housing or mental health. Many participating agencies indicated a desire to see increased numbers of situations brought forward by other agencies so that as many individuals or families as possible benefit from the Situation Table. Please note that, while the Toronto Police Service is the originator for 80% of situations, it is lead agency for only 17% of them. This demonstrates that the Police Service is appropriately not responding to situations deemed outside their scope (discussed in more detail below).

### **Strengths – Number & Types of Situations**

- **The right types of situations are being brought forward** – The Co-Chairs and participating agencies all feel that the AER definition is well understood by those attending the Situation Table. As a result, staff are self-screening the situations that they bring to the Table and few situations do not meet the AER criteria.
- **Consideration of both the individual and family** – FOCUS Rexdale recognizes that many individuals reside within a family context. Protocols have been put in place to support both the individual and any family members involved in a situation.
- **Tracking of key risk factors** – The way in which FOCUS Rexdale has captured types of risk factors is effective for understanding situations and identifying corresponding or required interventions. In fact, as only 8 out of 25 risk categories and 23 out of more than 100 risk factors were used to classify situations over the past two years, an opportunity may exist to further adapt risk categories and factors to better reflect the local context in Rexdale. This is discussed further below.

### **Opportunities – Number & Types of Situations**

- **Develop strategies to increase the number of AER situations brought forward to FOCUS Rexdale** – A key concern expressed by FOCUS Rexdale stakeholders is whether enough situations are being addressed by the Situation Table given the time and resources invested in this initiative. Stakeholders stated that several agencies, such as Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Employment and Social Services, and the Toronto District School Board, should be bringing forward many more situations given their roles in the community. Some systemic factors were mentioned that may impede bringing forth of situations. For example, although much trust has been built between agencies and the Toronto Police Service, some still fear that introducing people to an initiative that involves police may compromise the relationship with the client or that he/she may be at risk of criminal charges. In addition, it is hypothesized that for participating agencies, referring situations to FOCUS Rexdale may be interpreted as a reduction in caseloads, putting some agencies at risk for loss of funding. Finally, participating in the Situation Table is not tied to funding or performance targets but rather the goodwill and belief in a common cause and the collective impact of the individuals representing their agencies. Nevertheless, the

*"It's a huge shift in thinking"*  
—Greg Watts,  
Toronto Police  
Service

initiative needs to consider the following approaches to address the issues identified above and to increase the number of situations brought to the Table by all participating agencies:

- **Develop customized communications materials and provide training to support each participating agency in improving its internal understanding of AER** – As discussed in section 3.2.1, clear language definitions and practical examples of AER that reflect the clients being served need to be presented to each participating agency. Further training and orientation is needed for participating agency staff to better understand what AER means and how it applies to and benefits them in their roles. The Co-Chairs should review materials as they are customized to verify a standard level of consistency and that the original definition of AER is not compromised.
- **Mine Toronto Police Service and participating agency data** to identify persons or families who frequently call for or use services – As Dave Saunders (Toronto Police Service) said, *“every Friday evening, it’s the same people.”* As Ron Taverner (Toronto Police Service) said, *“It’s not just about prevention but about dealing with the ongoing and long-term.”* By identifying persons or families who frequently need services, targets for AER situations could be established for each participating agency and staff would have a clearer sense of the types and number of situations that they are expected to bring forward.
- **Facilitate focused discussion with agency senior leadership** about common community priorities and the role of FOCUS Rexdale in addressing these priorities – The FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee should lead these discussions.
- **As part of the Memorandum of Understanding, require participating agencies to develop and implement internal agency processes for bringing forward situations** to the Situation Table each week – Although the Co-Chairs have supported several agencies in developing internal communications plans, the Co-Chairs should discuss with the Executive Directors of each participating agency clear accountability for developing and implementing the referral process and achieving agreed upon targets. Processes and targets should be included in the agency Memorandum of Understanding.
- **Develop greater comfort with privacy legislation** – In most cases, agency representatives at the Situation Table understand the data sharing protocol. However, each participating agency has different privacy policies that may not be consistent with FOCUS Rexdale or may not be well understood by staff who are expected to bring forward situations. The Co-Chairs indicated that FOCUS Rexdale has delivered to agencies several training and information sharing workshops on privacy legislation, but the perception persists that little information can be shared. Additional work needs to be done in this area to educate agencies about the privacy legislation.
- **Recruit additional agencies** to the Table to address systemic issues, including mental health, housing, and poverty that have been raised over the past two years – Additional agencies to be recruited include the two school boards and other health care providers such as hospitals, mental health agencies, and substance use treatment providers.
- **Determine the priority populations to focus on and establish baselines and targets** – The types of situations brought to the Situation Table by participating agencies to date are described by the age,

*“it’s not a Corporate thing, it’s about accountability; this will help you in your roles.”*

—Donovan Locke,  
Toronto Police  
Service

gender, and risk factor data collected. These situations depend on and reflect the number and type of participating agencies bringing forward most situations, specifically the Toronto Police Service. Situations brought forward also depend on and reflect the types of situations that participating agencies have been accustomed to identifying over the past two years, such as mental health situations.

Going forward, FOCUS Rexdale should proactively identify specific populations to focus on and these should align with the types of high-risk situations that have occurred or are occurring in the community. For example, FOCUS Rexdale could revisit prioritizing youth, given the violence that occurred at or near Rexdale high schools during the pilot phase<sup>12</sup>. Baselines and targets could then be established for reaching youth and having a defined level of impact with the target population or neighbourhood.

- **Improve the capture of information about the number and types of situations brought forward –** Capturing the following data elements better will enable FOCUS Rexdale to improve understanding of people in at-risk situations:
  - **Situations accepted and declined** – Better define and track how many situations are brought forward in total and how many are rejected because they do not meet FOCUS Rexdale criteria.
  - **Persons and families** – Improve capture data on the number of persons reached by FOCUS Rexdale. This could include consistently documenting the number of people residing with a person or the number of people that comprise a family.
  - **Re-opening of situations** – During evaluation interviews, participating agencies informally estimated that one to two situations were re-opened during the pilot phase, but they do not keep track of the number of situations or why they were re-opened. For example, it is not known whether these persons or families were identified for the same or different risk factors in a re-opened situation. FOCUS Rexdale should move to full utilization of the four-filter approach for information sharing that is being used by Situation Tables across the province. This approach, developed and refined by the Community Mobilization Prince Albert team in Saskatchewan, sets parameters on what information is shared and with whom to guide each discussion and limits disclosure of personal information. By using this approach, FOCUS Rexdale could identify instances of a situation for a family or person brought back to the Table for discussion and whether the nature of the risk is the same or different from previous discussions. The Table could develop a better response by considering what may or may not have worked in previous situations with the person or family.
  - **Age categories** – FOCUS Rexdale needs to adopt improved age categories. For example, the adult category should be divided further and a more appropriate child category should be created. These categories could align with common age brackets used by the City of Toronto.
  - **Gender** – Transgender is not an existing category and should be added.
- **Clarify the process for sending systemic issues to the Steering Committee** – A number of systemic barriers reduce the ability of participating agencies to address situations brought to the Table. A

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<sup>12</sup> FOCUS Rexdale was originally intended to prioritize youth; however, a broader focus was identified during the developmental phase.



formal process is needed for collecting, analyzing, and presenting information on these systemic barriers to the Steering Committee for discussion and action.

### **3.3.2.2 Situation Table Meetings**

The number and type of agencies participating in FOCUS Rexdale are described and discussed in the previous section. Here we examine the extent to which these agencies are attending and participating in weekly Situation Table meetings.

#### ***Is the Situation Table efficient and effective?***

##### **Background**

During the pilot phase, three organizations (Family Service Toronto, City of Toronto Parks and Recreation, and Youth Employment Services Toronto) withdrew from the partnership. Family Service Toronto and Parks and Recreation decided that they were not in a position to address the acute needs in situations presented at the Table. Youth Employment ceased delivering service in Rexdale and across the city due to a funding cut.

Overall, the number of agencies formally signed on as participating agencies has been sustained and is growing. That said, stakeholders suggest that FOCUS Rexdale should take steps to maintain and strengthen participation and engagement of participating agencies. One step would be to develop processes for participating agencies to attend Table meetings remotely, by telephone, video, or online. A second step would be ongoing outreach and promotion to current participating agencies to expedite buy-in from representative staff and their organizations more broadly. This second point was emphasized by the Toronto Police Service to see more cases brought forward by officers throughout 23 Division.

Participating agencies engage with the Situation Table in one of three ways: 1) as the originating agency, bringing forward a situation for discussion; 2) as the lead agency that is considered most appropriate to coordinate the service response, or 3) as the assisting agency, supporting the lead agency in the service response. However, the data indicate that some participating agencies are more actively engaged than others in FOCUS Rexdale.

##### ***Agency Attendance***

In 2014, 50 Situation Table meetings were held. Based on attendance data for 2014, 13 of the 15 participating agencies are attending 50% or more of the meetings, 8 of the 15 attending 60% or more of the meetings, and only 4 of the 15 attending 80% or more of the meetings.

##### ***Agencies Bringing Forth Situations***

The effectiveness of FOCUS Rexdale continues to evolve and improve. Data reviewed after the pilot phase indicate that a broader group of participating agencies are more routinely bringing situations to the Table for discussion. Overall, the number of situations an agency brought forward did not necessarily reflect the extent to which it was involved as lead or assisting agency. For example, Toronto

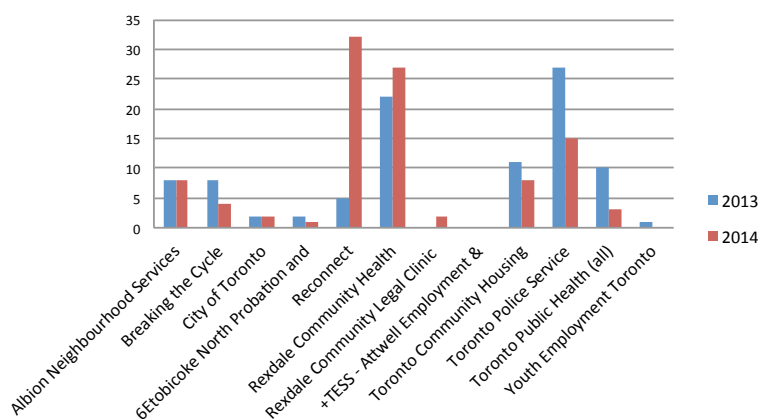


Police Service brought forward more than 80% of all situations in 2014 but was the lead agency in 15% of the situations, which was felt to be appropriate.

### Lead Agencies

In 2013, 50% of situations were referred to just two lead agencies, Toronto Police Service and Rexdale Community Health Centre (Figure 6). In 2014, 57% of situations were referred to just two agencies, Reconnect and Rexdale Community Health Centre. This suggests that the distribution of cases is not shared by the participating agencies. This may be due to the alignment between the types of risk situations being addressed by the Table and the participating agencies' mandates.

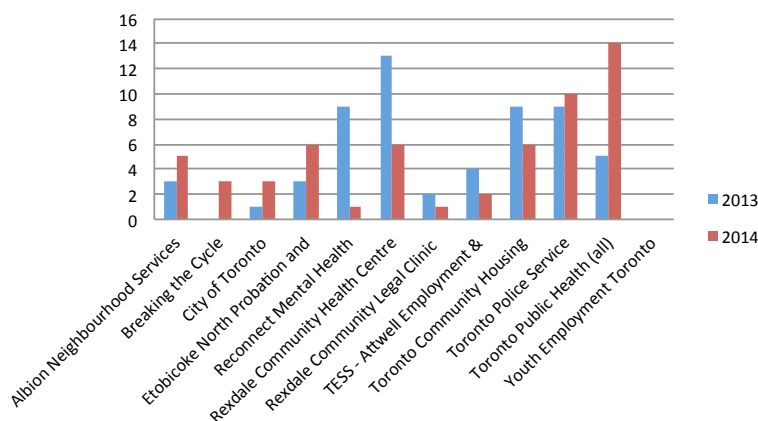
**Figure 6. Lead Agency**



### Assisting Agencies

Several participating agencies became more frequently engaged as assisting agencies between 2013 and 2014 (Figure 7). The increased involvement of some participating agencies as assisting agencies suggests that FOCUS Rexdale may be catalyzing integrated service delivery to mitigate AER.

**Figure 7. Assisting Agency**



### Weekly Situation Table Meetings

The evaluators attended two situation table meetings at the end of 2014 to observe proceedings. Evaluators asked participating agencies whether they felt that the Situation Table meetings were effective and efficient given their purpose.

### Strengths – Situation Table Meetings

- **Effective and efficient weekly Situation Table meetings** – The evaluators observed that the meetings began on time, followed the script, and were run efficiently. Participating agencies appeared to agree quickly on whether the situation was an AER for almost all situations and could rapidly identify lead and support agencies. Where debate occurred, the discussion was facilitated to encourage healthy debate and arrive at a decision relatively quickly. The increase in the number of

situations assigned to and supported by more than one agency during the pilot phase indicates that agencies have increased their capacity to work together to address situations.

- **Coordination and mobilization of services** – In many situations the originating agency differed from the lead agency. This suggests that the Table is an efficient tool to bring situations of AER to the attention of the agencies that can most appropriately deal with the presenting risk. Interviewees from participating agencies agreed that FOCUS Rexdale has successfully linked services to individuals and families who historically have been hard to serve or connect to services. Without the mobilization of services at the Table, the connection to the appropriate services might not have taken place, according to the interviewees. In particular the Table’s potential to mobilize health and mental health services can be considered particularly high.
- **Participating agencies remain engaged outside the Situation Table** – Participating agencies remain engaged with FOCUS Rexdale outside the Table, whether they attend meetings regularly or not. For example, a participating agency may be assigned a situation, either as a lead or assisting agency, whether or not they are attending weekly meetings. FOCUS Rexdale has put in place follow-up communications systems to update participating agencies on their accountabilities. It should be noted that participating agencies connect with one another between meetings to identify and seek support with situations. Those situations may be addressed without ever being raised at the formal Table meeting. This validates the strength of the interpersonal relationships and development of trust between the participating agency representatives.

### **Opportunities – Situation Table Meetings**

- **Improve participating agency attendance** – Not all participating agencies are consistently or actively participating at weekly meetings. The Memorandum of Understanding stipulates that participating agencies “Assign one of their most qualified professionals to act as back-up, should the primary member be unavailable to attend a FOCUS Rexdale meeting.” However, just over 50% of the participating agencies attended more than 60% of the meetings and only 27% have attended 80% of the meetings.

Participating agencies are all of different sizes and capacities. In some agencies a variety of staff bring cases to their FOCUS Rexdale representative for presentation at the Table. In other agencies, communication or understanding of FOCUS Rexdale is more limited and cases are brought forward by fewer staff to their FOCUS Rexdale representative. Stakeholders suggest that FOCUS Rexdale needs to be promoted continually to participating agencies and FOCUS Rexdale’s profile must be raised among all staff at participating agencies. This reduces the onus on FOCUS Rexdale representatives to identify situations.

The inconsistent attendance of agencies is well recognized by the FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee, Co-Chairs, and Administrative Coordinator. The Co-Chairs indicate that they have met regularly with participating agencies to discuss back-up plans. Additional focus and new strategies are needed to address Situation Table meeting attendance, such as:

- revisiting the Memorandum of Understanding with senior leadership of participating agencies and the expectations regarding attendance
- developing clear follow-up protocols when agencies do not attend meetings

- leveraging technology to expedite more consistent participation in Situation Tables. In-person attendance at Situation Table meetings has developed collaborative relationships, but FOCUS Rexdale should consider leveraging technology such as teleconferencing or video-conferencing to reduce travel time and encourage more regular attendance.
- improving the orientation process. Some agencies send a different individual to each Situation Table meeting. The evaluators received some feedback on providing better orientation to the purpose of the weekly meetings and how to efficiently participate. While the primary representative should be responsible for orienting the back-up individual, FOCUS Rexdale should consider developing a more inclusive orientation process.

### 3.3.2.3 Interventions & Situation Closure

#### ***Are the interventions appropriate and timely?***

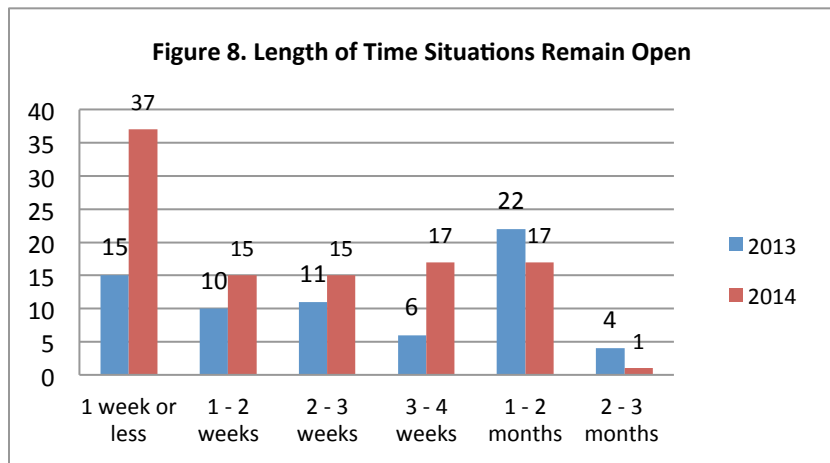
##### **Background**

Once a situation is referred to a lead agency, the lead and assisting agencies are expected to carry out tasks to mitigate the situation risk within 48 hours. The Excel spreadsheet maintained by the Administrative Coordinator tracks *date opened* and *date concluded* for each situation but does not track tasks carried out by the agencies. Further, interviews with the Coordinator and Co-Chairs indicate that the database is typically updated at the Table meeting and therefore between meetings risks that are mitigated are not documented. A situation is concluded once the agencies involved report that the AER has been mitigated.

##### ***Duration of Open Situations***

During the pilot phase, the opening and concluding dates were captured for 85% (172 of 203) situations. The 30 situations for which conclusion dates are not available are from 2013. Figure 8 shows that 25% (52 of 203) situations were concluded in one week or less, 55% were concluded within approximately three weeks, and 97% were

concluded within eight weeks. Timeliness in concluding situations increased between 2013 and 2014, with 22% of cases in 2013 concluded within one week and 36% within two weeks. In 2014, 36% of cases were concluded within one week and 50% within two weeks. Of the cases that remained open for one month or longer, the risk category was mental health.



The most common systemic issues identified for these situations, and thus the barriers to concluding the cases, were:

- lack of access to shelters when housing was identified as the risk category

- lack of access to addiction services when addiction was identified as the risk category
- need for enhanced referral processes to agencies or programs such as Public Health Intake or Access 1 when elder abuse was identified as the risk category.

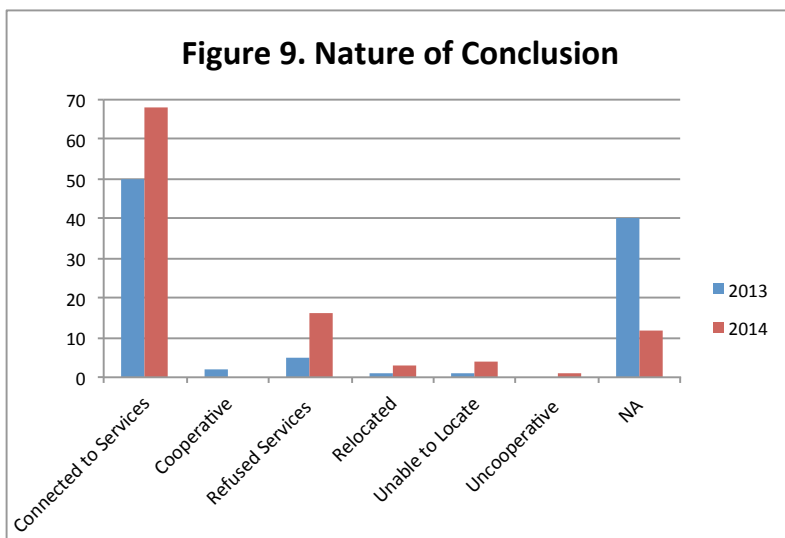
Survey responses indicate that participating agencies are satisfied with the effectiveness and timeliness of follow up:

- The survey statement *“Follow-up by agencies with the client and other agencies/providers after Situation Table meetings is effective”* was rated 8.36/10.
- The survey statement *“Follow-up by agencies with the client and other agencies/providers after Situation Table meetings is completed in a timely manner”* was rated 8.08/10.

Stakeholders indicate that because agency attendance is inconsistent at the weekly meetings, weeks can pass without additional information on whether the situation can be closed even though the Coordinator follows up with the agencies between meetings. This problem requires further exploration to identify the root causes. However, the evaluators infer that the problem may be somewhat attributed to the systemic issue of competing demands for the time of participating agency representatives.

### **Connection to Services & Client Outcomes Tracking**

During the pilot phase, 118 (58.1%) persons or families involved in a situation were connected to services (Figure 9), while 21 (10%) refused services. For 25.6% of situations, outcomes were not tracked, indicating an opportunity to improve the database and the data capture processes. This would equip participating agencies to better monitor and assess their effectiveness and efficiency.



### **3.3.2.4 Systemic Issues**

FOCUS Rexdale tracks systemic issues that impede the ability of participating agencies to mitigate risk. Seven issues were documented in 2013 and eight in 2014. While systemic issues are not documented frequently in the database, a retrospective analysis of each situation and interviews with stakeholders found that systemic issues are a significant concern. Systemic issues include a lack of much needed services for mental health, addictions, shelters, and housing. Many situations are referred to only two participating agencies at the Situation Table because no other resources are available in the area. Complex and inefficient intake and screening processes, as well as long waiting lists for services, raise barriers to responding to situations in a timely way. This is a source of frustration for participating

agencies, particularly the agency representatives who often bump up against these barriers within their own organizations.

Interviewees also suggested that FOCUS Rexdale has limited means for holding participating agencies accountable for the conditions agreed to in their Memorandum of Understanding. As one example, participating agencies do not receive funding for engaging in the initiative but are required to adapt their business models. Agency commitments should be reviewed and confirmed following this evaluation and regularly. This will ensure that collective accountabilities are in place to sustain FOCUS Rexdale moving forward.

The evaluators found that stakeholders involved in FOCUS Rexdale recognize the systemic issues as needing to be addressed. Systemic issues have been brought forward to the Steering Committee, local planning tables, and the Ontario Working Group for Collaborative, Risk-Driven Safety<sup>13</sup> (OWG). A system reform table (Toronto Systemic Reform & Vulnerability Table) has been established to address these issues.

### **Strengths – Systemic Issues**

- **Smoothly functioning situation table meetings** – As previously stated, the Co-Chairs ensure that meetings run efficiently and effectively. Meetings are scheduled for two hours each week, but are adjourned early if the two hours are not required. Most meetings are completed within one hour.
- **Increased efficiency in concluding cases** – More situations were concluded much more quickly in 2014 than in 2013.
- **Interventions are appropriate** – The participating agencies feel that individuals and their family members are connected to the appropriate services. The participating agency survey statement *“FOCUS Rexdale interventions are appropriate and timely”* was rated an average of 8.33/10.

### **Opportunities – Systemic Issues**

- **Develop and implement strategies to increase the timeliness of interventions** – In Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, the target for reaching a client is within 48 hours and it is usual practice for the lead and assisting agencies to go directly from the weekly Situation Table meeting to client homes together (“joint door knocks”). For FOCUS Rexdale, the approach at the beginning of the initiative was to contact the client by phone, for example, and wait for a response. As a result, only 25% of clients were connected to services within one week (Figure 8). However, FOCUS Rexdale demonstrates its commitment to continuous quality improvement by increasingly moving to the Saskatchewan model of joint door knocks. Participating agencies have an opportunity to continue to review their data and to innovate strategies for improving the timeliness of connecting people to services.

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on the Ontario Working Group for Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety see: <http://www.oacp.on.ca/news-events/resource-documents/ontario-working-group-owg> .

- **Improve the capture of information about interventions –**
  - **Better document the tasks completed by each agency for each situation –** The database does not capture the tasks or activities undertaken by the lead and assisting agencies to mitigate situations. FOCUS Rexdale, at this time, cannot describe the complexity of situations that agencies may be dealing with or the number of tasks required to mitigate a particular situation. This also means that agencies cannot learn from their experiences to develop new or more effective strategies for mitigating risk.
  - **Consistently record the closed status of each situation and nature of the conclusion –** FOCUS Rexdale did not consistently record closed situations during the pilot phase. In 2013, the status field was completed with the term *closed* once the *date concluded* field was populated. In 2014, the *date concluded* field was left empty and the status field was populated with the date that the situation was closed. Also, information on the nature of the conclusion was not captured for 52 (25.6%) of the 203 cases in 2013 and 2014. This indicates a need for better reporting on how situations are concluded and better monitoring of data being collected. For example, to assess the impact of the initiative over the long term, documentation would be useful on whether a risk had been mitigated, ideally with some additional information on the nature and effect of the intervention. Providing this information can empower FOCUS Rexdale to assess the success of interventions and adjust approaches accordingly.
- **Develop and implement strategy with agencies to capture the work that is occurring outside regular Situation Table meetings –** FOCUS Rexdale has catalyzed effective agency relationships and collaboration. As a result, participating agencies often contact each other to identify and resolve situations of risk between Situation Table meetings, reducing the need to present many situations at the weekly meeting. These situations are not being captured. FOCUS Rexdale may benefit from exploring the feasibility of tracking or counting additional instances of AER that are identified and addressed by participating agencies outside Situation Table meetings.
- **Improve capture of systemic issues –** FOCUS Rexdale should improve documentation of systemic issues. A concise set of categories should be created to capture these issues in a more consistent manner and a process for routinely sharing systemic issues with the Steering Committee should be developed and implemented.
- **Consider adopting a more sophisticated information management/information technology system –** Most of the opportunities documented in this report point to the need to undertake a thorough review of FOCUS Rexdale's information technology and information management (IMIT) strategy. FOCUS Rexdale needs to capture data and generate reports that will improve its capacity to effectively address situations and demonstrate accountability. This may include adding additional data elements and exploring different information management software systems. The data management software that is currently being piloted in North Bay through the OWG was mentioned by evaluation participants as an option but the requirements for provincial ownership and usage of the data raise concerns. Nevertheless, FOCUS Rexdale should investigate this and other IMIT systems that can be leveraged to capture key information over the long term.

### 3.3.3 Pilot Continuous Quality Improvement & Evaluation

#### Background

FOCUS Rexdale was developed as a pilot project and the stakeholders have continuously improved and evaluated the initiative. For example, the Steering Committee meets periodically to review the status of the pilot and discuss next steps. The Co-Chairs have continued engaging with existing participating agencies and other community agencies to improve and increase participation in FOCUS Rexdale. A six-month evaluation was commissioned in 2013 and completed by Dr. Hugh Russell during the summer of 2013<sup>14</sup> to identify opportunities for improvement. Finally, this evaluation was commissioned to comprehensively review the initiative since its conceptualization and to provide recommendations for improving FOCUS Rexdale and scaling up the model.

#### Strengths – Pilot Continuous Quality Improvement & Evaluation

- **Continued attention to improving FOCUS Rexdale** – The evaluators found that generally FOCUS Rexdale has made efforts for continuous improvement. Activities include training such as at 23 Division, support for participating agencies to ensure that their representatives have assigned back-ups, and problem-solving on engaging agencies with less involvement than desired such as the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Employment & Social Services. Targeted engagement of new participating agencies has continued throughout the pilot. Situation Table meetings are disciplined and participants continue to be held to high standards. Systemic issues are being identified and escalated to the Steering Committee and provincial tables such as the OWG.

#### Opportunities – Pilot Continuous Quality Improvement & Evaluation

- **Develop and use a continuous quality improvement framework and strengthened accountability agreements for participating agencies** – Despite the many improvements made, challenges still exist in agency participation. Further, data need to be collected consistently, comprehensively, and reliably. While the Co-Chairs have made efforts at quality improvement, improving FOCUS Rexdale needs a more rigorous approach. A continuous quality improvement framework should be developed that outlines the elements of FOCUS Rexdale to be monitored and the appropriate process and outcomes. Performance standards and expectations for each metric should be developed and incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding. Quarterly, or at least semi-annually, reviews of performance against expectations should be held with participating agencies. This activity should be monitored and discussed by the Co-Chairs and participating agencies during their check-in meetings.
- **Develop and apply a robust ‘theory of change’ and logic model** that articulates how Situation Table activities and interventions lead to achieving short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. The general theory of change that underpinned the development of FOCUS Rexdale was that cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration would improve community well-being. However, the initiative would benefit from more focused projects under its overall umbrella to reach specific pockets of the community defined by age group, culture, or location. For

*“It’s about a theory of change”*  
—JoAnn Doyle,  
United Way Toronto

<sup>14</sup> Russell, H.C., 2003. FOCUS Rexdale – The Participants Voice!



example, a dedicated priority within FOCUS Rexdale could be reducing risk for the youth population. The strategies for community outreach and participating agency engagement for the youth population may differ from strategies required for other populations. In all instances, specific activities should have expected results with both process and outcomes measures specified. A detailed logic model would articulate the relationships between these elements and accelerate learning about which strategies worked and which could be improved.

- **Develop and implement an approach, including tools, to assess the impact and outcomes for clients and their families** – FOCUS Rexdale does not track the outcome for the client of tasks undertaken by lead and assisting agencies. The initiative therefore is not able to document the impact of risk-mitigating activities on the lives of persons or families at risk, or whether the risk has actually been mitigated. The Co-Chairs have offered to support participating agencies in developing internal processes for consistent understanding and operationalization of FOCUS Rexdale within each agency. These processes currently differ among agencies, as does the documentation by participating agencies of the tasks they undertake to mitigate situations that they are assigned. FOCUS Rexdale needs to develop a method for tracking tasks performed by agencies. This can be used to validate a participating agency's commitment to the initiative, and to describe and assess the situations being addressed through FOCUS Rexdale.
- **Commission an independent evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale in three to five years** – As noted in the Limitations section of this report (section 2.5), longer-term data will be important in assessing the impact of FOCUS Rexdale on clients and the community. An evaluation three to five years from now, after appropriate accountability and data tracking mechanisms are in place, could identify additional opportunities for the initiative given the rapidly changing landscape of neighbourhood services today.

### 3.4 FOCUS Rexdale Outcomes

The **goals** of FOCUS Rexdale are to:

- sustainably reduce and prevent incidents of crime and social disorder
- increase community safety, security, and wellness in specific neighbourhoods of Rexdale
- build on and sustain collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders
- increase capacity building for, and with, FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods.

In many evaluations of initiatives, outcomes are evaluated for only the initiative's end-users or recipients and against the initiative's goals. Since FOCUS Rexdale is a pilot initiative, this evaluation considers outcomes pertaining to project leadership and management and to the participating agencies, in addition to the outcomes for clients, their families, and the community at large.

The evaluation questions addressed in this section are based on the FOCUS Rexdale goals; these were then categorized into short-, medium- and long-term timeframes and posed as questions about the impact of the initiative.



### **Short-Term (1 – 3 years)**

*Are FOCUS Rexdale participants, clients, and family members satisfied with the initiative?*

### **Medium-Term (3 – 5 years):**

*Did FOCUS Rexdale build and sustain collaboration among participating agencies?*

*Has FOCUS Rexdale increased capacity building for, and with, FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods?*

### **Long-Term (5 – 10 years):**

*Has FOCUS Rexdale reduced crime rates and prevented victimization?*

*Do specific neighbourhoods of Rexdale have increased community safety, security, and wellness?*

## **3.4.1 Short-Term Outcomes**

### ***What is the level of satisfaction of FOCUS Rexdale participants, clients, and family members?***

#### **3.4.1.1 FOCUS Steering Committee & Project Team Satisfaction**

Overall, the Steering Committee and Project Team were highly satisfied with FOCUS Rexdale and cite the following reasons:

- **Increased transparency and trust in the community** – FOCUS Rexdale has catalyzed development of trust between the Toronto Police Service 23 Division and community agencies. The Co-Chairs provided examples of how participating agencies, particularly the youth service providers, two years ago would not have believed possible the kind of partnership that exists today between themselves and the police. Improved communication has strengthened everyone's work. Better service is provided to the community when the service providers are able to call upon each other.
- **Improved use of limited community resources** – Over a two-year period, FOCUS Rexdale has helped agencies without a prior history of working together to learn about each other's missions, mandates, and scope of services, and to develop effective processes for identifying how best to allocate limited resources to meet the most acute or high-demand situations in the community. This is particularly notable given that participation in the initiative is voluntary and not supported through new funding. Rather, participating agencies are working together in new ways to make the most effective use of community resources. The Steering Committee understood at the outset that a collaborative model was needed to address community safety issues. At the Situation Table, most situations have been brought forward by the Toronto Police Service but have been addressed by other more appropriate providers in the community. This is evidence that most calls to the police are not about crimes but are from individuals and families who are not linked to the services they need.
- **Preventing calls in crisis** – Data are not available to demonstrate the impact of FOCUS Rexdale on reducing the number of inappropriate calls to the police. However, the Co-Chairs provided examples of individuals and families with long histories of police involvement who were identified at the Situation Table. Through intervention by participating agencies, these people were connected successfully to services and are no longer involved with the police. In this way, FOCUS Rexdale can

*"FOCUS Rexdale provides opportunities to leverage resourcing through resolving high demand situations"*  
—Dave Saunders,  
Toronto Police Service

help focus police services where they are needed for more efficient and sustainable use of police resources.

- **Addressing complex situations** – The Co-Chairs identified a number of individuals with mental health and addictions problems who were difficult to serve and connect to the appropriate community supports. These individuals ended up in the hospital Emergency Department or the police were called to intervene. The collaboration between the mental health providers and police at the Situation Table was a powerful strategy that connected individuals with serious mental health problems to appropriate services.

The high level of satisfaction does not negate the fact that the Steering Committee and Project Team recognize the opportunities discussed throughout this report for improving the structure and function of FOCUS Rexdale and the need to demonstrate long-term benefits of the initiative.

### 3.4.1.2 Participating Agency Satisfaction

Findings from the survey, focus groups, and follow-up interviews indicate that participating agencies are very satisfied with FOCUS Rexdale. Participating agencies rated the survey statement “ *My agency will continue to participate in FOCUS Rexdale*” an average of 9.0/10. Echoing the Steering Committee and Co-Chairs, participating agencies cite the following reasons for their level of satisfaction:

- FOCUS Rexdale has greatly improved communication and collaboration among agencies in the community.
- Participating in FOCUS Rexdale is a good use of staff time because the Situation Table meetings are focused and effective.
- FOCUS Rexdale is making an impact by connecting people to services that they would not have otherwise accessed.

### 3.4.1.3 Client and Family Satisfaction

As discussed previously, data were not captured on the impact of FOCUS Rexdale for clients and families. For this evaluation, we gathered client stories from some agencies as a means to understand the types of impact that FOCUS Rexdale has had for clients and families. Information on eight situations was gathered from 23 Division, Rexdale Community Health Centre, and Reconnect Mental Health Services. Summaries of these stories are provided in Appendix C. Analysis of these stories identified four main themes:

- Clients and families were connected to programs or services that were not known to them previously.
- In connecting individuals to programs or services, FOCUS Rexdale played a direct role in both mitigating risk and improving the lives of individuals by reducing:
  - anxiety, stress, and bullying
  - alcohol and substance abuse
  - aggressive behaviours and violence among family members and among members of the neighbourhood
  - suicidal thoughts and self-harm

*“It changed pretty much everything in my life...”*  
—FOCUS Rexdale service recipient

- potentially inappropriate interventions such as child welfare
- calls to police and the number of arrests.
- Agencies indicated that most clients were extremely thankful and grateful for the information and services that they were offered, stating that they now know where to turn for ongoing support.
- Except in a few situations, the agencies providing stories said that they have not heard from the individuals since they supported them and that this is a good sign.

### Opportunities – Levels of Satisfaction

- **Capture and share the positive impacts of FOCUS Rexdale through a spectrum of communications strategies with stakeholders, clients, and the community** – Take pause to note and share the difference made by FOCUS Rexdale on the lives of residents and the community. This is important for acknowledging the efforts of participating agencies and other stakeholders and for demonstrating accountability to funders.
- **Develop and use a standard method for gathering information about the outcomes for, and experiences of, clients and families** – As discussed previously, a key opportunity for FOCUS Rexdale is to develop a standardized method for gathering information about the experiences of client and families. The challenge for FOCUS Rexdale will be to establish an objective process that is sensitive to privacy and confidentiality for individuals and that can prevent re-victimization. One appropriate path to measure satisfaction and impact would be to have a neutral third party follow up with the individual(s) at a consistent but sufficient period of time after the case is closed at the Situation Table (e.g., six months) using a standardized interview tool.

## 3.4.2 Medium-Term Outcomes

### 3.4.2.1 Sustainable Collaborations

Over the past two years FOCUS Rexdale had significant success in bringing together organizations that had not previously worked together to identify and address AER situations in the community. Information on situations provided by participating agencies suggests that consequences could have been harmful without the mobilization of services at the Situation Table and the connection of persons and families to services.

Developing and strengthening collaborative relationships across different sectors working in the community was cited by all Steering Committee members, Project Team members, and participating agencies as one of the most valuable outcomes of FOCUS Rexdale. The survey statement: *“FOCUS Rexdale has built and sustained collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders”* was rated at an average of 9.14/10 by participating agencies. Numerous quotations from participating agency, such as the following, support this high level of collaboration.

The enthusiasm, trust and commitment built over the past 18 months among the participating agencies bodes well for the future sustainability of FOCUS Rexdale. At the same time however, as discussed throughout this report, a key risk to FOCUS Rexdale is a change in commitment level for senior leadership of the participating agencies going forward. Without the current high level of commitment, FOCUS Rexdale risks receiving less attention as new initiatives emerge.

A final observation on medium-term outcomes relates to the phrase “among all stakeholders” in the goal statement “build on and sustain collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders.” FOCUS Rexdale should more precisely define *all stakeholders*, which could be defined as people and organizations that extend beyond the participating agencies. All stakeholders could constitute all residents in the community, for example.

*“I had worked in this neighbourhood for 15 years and I didn’t know these other agencies existed.”*

*“Silos have been broken down; relationships have been formed.”*

*“We believe in it. We are not just sitting here. It has everything and resonates with us. We buy in and are committed. We trust, respect, and appreciate and know that we can put in a phone call and something will happen.”*

*“We are educating each other in our policies and professions; we have healthy discussions and challenge each other”*

*“We are learning from each other about how we can better serve our community and work together in agencies.”*

*“We are getting to know our community better; we are working to identify what else we can do to build our community together holistically.”*

—Representatives of FOCUS Rexdale participating agencies

## Opportunities – Sustainable Collaborations

- **Define and clarify the full set of stakeholders desired as part of FOCUS Rexdale:** This report frequently mentions that additional stakeholders should be engaged with FOCUS Rexdale. Further, section 3.2.2 suggests that FOCUS Rexdale could identify priority populations or establish more focused change targets. FOCUS Rexdale has an opportunity to strengthen interventions over the longer term through alignment between its priority populations and change targets and the capacity of participating agencies to address the diverse range of risks expressed at the Situation Table. At this time, this opportunity includes engaging with the schools, employment services, children’s services, and housing services more deeply. If FOCUS Rexdale is committed to community capacity, the future roles of residents in the initiative should also be articulated.

### 3.4.2.2 Increased Capacity Building

*“It was an operating model for community and police to work together towards a fully empowered community that works in partnership”*

—Peter Sloly, Toronto Police Service

A key strength of FOCUS Rexdale is its key role in building community capacity to address AER situations. In the evaluation survey, participating agencies rated the statement “*FOCUS Rexdale has increased capacity building for, and with, FOCUS Rexdale neighbourhoods*” at 8.64/10.

To build community capacity, the FOCUS Rexdale project team spent considerable time engaging participating agencies at the outset of the initiative. FOCUS Rexdale provided protocols and tools to

support and enable participating agencies as they developed and honed their knowledge about what constitutes an AER situation. FOCUS Rexdale also facilitated weekly meetings to develop agency skills for responding collectively and more rapidly to AER situations.

*“FOCUS Rexdale has further enhanced our service delivery to the most vulnerable at both operational level and leadership levels.”*

—Chris Brillinger, City of Toronto

FOCUS Rexdale would benefit from defining *capacity building*. The initiative has built capacity **for neighbourhoods** among the individuals attending weekly Situation Table meetings. These individuals are now readily able to recognize AER situations and move quickly to identifying solutions.

A number of other collaborative initiatives are also operating in the community, such as the Neighbourhood Action Partnership and Health Links. FOCUS Rexdale is already sharing information and liaising with these initiatives and should continue to maximize these collaborations in further leveraging and building community capacity.

*“There has been a shift from identifying the situation to asking right away ‘What are we going to do about this now?’”*

—Scott McKean, City of Toronto

Building capacity **with the neighbourhood** could include other organizations in the community and the general public. Mobilizing the entire community would require efforts to raise general awareness of FOCUS Rexdale and provide the public with the appropriate knowledge and avenues to bring forward AER situations. For example, FOCUS Rexdale’s profile could be increased with a communications and marketing strategy, ideally linked to strategies developed by local planning tables. The evaluators found that a focused client and community outreach strategy would be appropriate, therefore it is timely for FOCUS Rexdale to discuss and decide how to engage the general public and achieve its goals.

### Opportunities – Increased Capacity Building

- **Develop and utilize a focused client and community outreach strategy** – In keeping with the findings that more focused approaches are needed to reach priority populations/locations, FOCUS Rexdale should develop a client/community outreach strategy to reach these groups.

### 3.4.3 Long-Term Outcomes

#### 3.4.3.1 Community Safety, Security, & Wellness

The long-term goals of FOCUS Rexdale are to reduce crime, victimization, and social disorder and in doing so increase community safety, security, and wellness in specific neighbourhoods in Rexdale. Out of the 15 items in the evaluation survey, participating agencies rated the following statements the lowest:

- *“FOCUS Rexdale has sustainably reduced and prevented crime and social disorder”* was rated at 6.0/10.0.
- *“FOCUS Rexdale has increased community safety, security, and wellness in specific neighbourhoods in Rexdale”* was rated at 6.82/10.0.

Participating agencies and stakeholders note that a strong collaboration has been built but are unsure of the impact in these areas. Statistics reviewed during this evaluation indicate that from January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014, 118 (58%) persons or families involved in situations were connected to resources through FOCUS Rexdale. We could infer that, in connecting these people to services, FOCUS Rexdale reduced and prevented crime and social disorder for these individuals. The client stories in Appendix C indicate the positive benefits FOCUS Rexdale has had on the lives of individuals and their family members.

*"The impact of FOCUS Rexdale is on the quality of life for individuals and their families; they are the ones living the problems."*  
—Dave Saunders, Toronto Police Service

To measure impact on community safety, security, and wellness, data are needed on how FOCUS Rexdale affects a client or family member *after* they are connected to services. Data must include tracking whether situations are coming back to FOCUS Rexdale and need to go beyond to track whether situations are still identified in the community as an ongoing AER that has not been de-escalated. For example, an important measure would be the correlation between FOCUS Rexdale activities and process statistics such as the number of repeat AER calls made to the Toronto Police Service and other agencies. Currently the Toronto Police Service captures the number of offences by Major Crime Indicator (Appendix D); 328 incidents were recorded from January 2013 to December 1, 2014. An analysis is needed of whether and how FOCUS Rexdale supported individuals involved these incidents. Other examples of important process statistics to track regularly include the index of changes in violent crime severity, violent criminal code violations, and property crime violations.

In a more proactive approach, individuals involved in these incidents would be reviewed with a focus on repeat situations and these individuals would be moved upstream in the FOCUS Rexdale system before a call is placed to the Toronto Police Service. Similarly, other participating agencies could review lists of individuals who may be facing AER situations before calls are placed to the police. This approach would move FOCUS Rexdale further upstream in building community capacity to prevent AER situations.

Overall, the evaluation data indicate that FOCUS Rexdale has assisted at least 118 individuals plus their family members over the past two years by connecting them to services that they might not have accessed otherwise. The examples of positive impacts for individuals and family members captured in Appendix C are powerful but challenging to quantify. FOCUS Rexdale would be well-served by defining **success** more narrowly than their current long-term goals and objectives. Some stakeholders believe that the goals are 'lofty' and can never be reached. Again, FOCUS Rexdale would benefit from a robust logic model that includes identifying and linking specific activity, process, and outcome measures to targets. Longitudinal data on individuals, participating agencies, and the community are necessary to quantify the long-term impact of FOCUS Rexdale on community safety and wellness. The stories of clients, families, and community residents are also needed to understand how FOCUS Rexdale benefits them.

### **Opportunity – Community Safety, Security, & Wellness**

- **Gather longitudinal data on the correlation between interventions and measures of process and outcomes**, using a robust logic model to measure and demonstrate the impact of FOCUS Rexdale on the community over time.

## 4.0 Recommendations

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The findings of this evaluation indicate that FOCUS Rexdale has been a highly successful initiative and should be continued in the community. Participating agencies indicated their overwhelming support in the evaluation interviews and focus groups and by their survey rating of 9.92/10 for the statement that *“FOCUS Rexdale should continue in the community.”* FOCUS Rexdale is highly relevant for achieving the goals of improved community safety and well-being. FOCUS Rexdale has demonstrated the value of inter-agency collaboration and exhibits effectiveness and efficiency in its operations. Client stories indicate that FOCUS Rexdale has directly benefited the clients that it has served by connecting them to services and mitigating risk. FOCUS Rexdale has good potential for long-term sustainability. The many strengths of FOCUS Rexdale should be leveraged, such as the strong collaborations that have been built, rigorous Situation Table proceedings, and a focus on continuous quality improvement.

The major recommendations for FOCUS Rexdale are to strengthen participating agency commitment to the initiative by improving Situation Table attendance, increasing the percentage of situations brought forward by agencies beyond the Toronto Police Service, and improving the timeliness of addressing situations. A key strength of FOCUS Rexdale has been its development from the bottom up, but to build sustainability the Steering Committee must work with senior leadership of local agencies to firm up their commitment to FOCUS Rexdale. At the same time, these agencies must work together and with regional and provincial funders and stakeholders to address common systemic issues.

FOCUS Rexdale participating agencies should continue to work on improving operational metrics by:

- more effective agency participation in Situation Table meetings
- additional training of agency staff in identifying and bringing forward AER situations
- development of internal processes to bring forward situations
- identifying strategies to follow up with situations as rapidly as possible.

The other recommendations in this report relate to greater focus on achieving measurable outcomes. Specifying FOCUS Rexdale goals in more measurable terms, developing a logic model to link activities with process and outcomes measures, putting into place IMIT systems, and developing a method to gather client and family stories will enable FOCUS Rexdale to better demonstrate its impact.

Once these areas are addressed, we recommend that the management and operations of FOCUS Rexdale be transitioned to a local structure — a Steering Committee and Co-Chairs from the local agencies — for future sustainability. Clear accountabilities and a continuous quality improvement framework are required along with continued oversight by a governance structure that includes members from the current FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee.

The accomplishments and successes of FOCUS Rexdale can be celebrated. FOCUS Rexdale should develop a knowledge transfer strategy to share the initiative’s best practices and lessons learned with others and to prepare for replication or expansion of the initiative to other populations and geographies



in the City of Toronto. Other jurisdictions can benefit notably from the lessons learned by stakeholders in FOCUS Rexdale.

A summary of the evaluators' detailed recommendations is provided in Table 2 and a proposed high-level implementation plan is found in Table 3.

**Table 2. Summary of Detailed Recommendations**

<b>Structure</b>	<p><b>Governance, Management, &amp; Operational Structure</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deepen the role of the Steering Committee in facilitating systemic partnerships for FOCUS Rexdale.</li> </ol> <p><b>Community Agency Involvement</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Be more deliberate in initial agency engagement.</li> <li>3. Continue to recruit additional agencies to join FOCUS Rexdale.</li> </ol> <p><b>Resourcing &amp; Sustainability</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Be explicit in determining the resources that are required to mature and sustain FOCUS Rexdale.</li> <li>5. Evolve to a governance model with a local Rexdale community Steering Committee and Co-Chairs.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<p><b>FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Development</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Improve understanding of the definition for <i>acutely elevated risk</i>.</li> </ol> <p><b>FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Implementation – Number &amp; Types of Situations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Develop and implement strategies to aid in bringing forward situations of acutely elevated risk. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop customized materials and continue to educate and train agency representatives and staff.</li> <li>○ Mine data from the Toronto Police Service and other participating agencies.</li> <li>○ Facilitate focused discussion with agency senior leadership.</li> <li>○ As part of the Memorandum of Understanding, require participating agencies to develop and implement internal agency processes for bringing situations forward.</li> <li>○ Develop greater comfort among participating agencies with privacy legislation.</li> <li>○ Recruit additional agencies to identify new situations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>8. Determine the priority populations to focus on, including baseline and target numbers.</li> <li>9. Improve capture of information about the number and types of situations brought to the Situation Table. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Situations accepted and declined</li> <li>○ Persons and families</li> <li>○ Re-openings</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Age categories</li> <li>○ Gender</li> </ul> <p>10. Clarify the process for sending systemic issues to the Steering Committee.</p> <p><b><i>FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Implementation – Situation Table Meetings</i></b></p> <p>11. Improve attendance by participating agencies at Situation Table meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Revisit their Memorandum of Understanding with agency senior leadership and review expectations on meeting attendance.</li> <li>○ Develop clear follow-up protocols for when agency representatives are not in attendance.</li> <li>○ Use technology to facilitate meeting participation.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Implementation – Interventions</i></b></p> <p>12. Develop and implement strategies to increase the timeliness of interventions.</p> <p>13. Improve capture of information about interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities and tasks completed by agencies for each situation.</li> <li>○ Consistent recording of situation <i>closed</i> status and the nature of conclusion.</li> <li>○ Collaborative work by agencies that is occurring outside the regular Situation Table meetings.</li> </ul> <p>14. Improve capture of systemic issues identified and addressed.</p> <p>15. Consider adopting a more sophisticated information management system.</p> <p><b><i>FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Evaluation</i></b></p> <p>16. Develop and use a continuous quality improvement framework and strengthen accountability agreements for participating agencies.</p> <p>17. Develop and apply a robust ‘theory of change’ and logic model that articulates how Situation Table activities and interventions lead to achieving short-, medium-, and long-term goals.</p> <p>18. Develop and implement an approach, including tools, to assess the impact of the initiative and outcomes for clients and their families.</p> <p>19. Commission an independent evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale in three to five years.</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p><b><i>Short-Term Outcomes</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Leadership, Project Team, Participating Agencies, Client &amp; Family Satisfaction</i></b></p> <p>20. Capture and share the positive impacts of FOCUS Rexdale through a spectrum of communications strategies.</p> <p>21. Develop and implement a standard approach for gathering information about the experiences of clients and their families with the initiative.</p> <p><b><i>Medium-Term Outcomes</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Sustainable Collaborations</i></b></p>

	<p>22. Define and clarify the full set of stakeholders that FOCUS Rexdale desires to include.</p> <p>23. Develop and utilize a focused client and community outreach strategy.</p> <p><b>Long-Term Outcomes</b></p> <p>24. Gather longitudinal data on the correlation between FOCUS Rexdale interventions and measures of process and outcomes.</p>
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**Table 3. Proposed High-level Implementation Plan for FOCUS Rexdale**

Over the Next 12 Months	1 – 2 Years	3+ Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and solidify participating agency accountability.</li> <li>• Continue to provide education and training within participating agencies.</li> <li>• Develop an approach to assess client and family impact.</li> <li>• Develop a theory of change and logic model.</li> <li>• Recruit additional agencies to join FOCUS Rexdale.</li> <li>• Define resources required to sustain FOCUS Rexdale including the functions, skill sets, and levels of resourcing.</li> <li>• Identify an IMIT system to track data over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define target populations, set baselines and targets.</li> <li>• Develop and launch a focused community outreach and engagement strategy.</li> <li>• Develop a detailed plan for transitioning the current FOCUS Rexdale structure to a local structure.</li> <li>• Evolve FOCUS Rexdale to a governance model that includes a local Steering Committee and local Co-Chairs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission an independent evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale.</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Future Considerations

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Enthusiasm and support are high for expanding FOCUS Rexdale to other populations and geographies. The FOCUS Rexdale Steering Committee and Project Team are already considering how this model could be replicated or expanded. Participating agencies share this enthusiasm, as seen by their rating of the survey statement *“The FOCUS Rexdale model should be replicated/expanded to other communities/populations”* at 9.33/10.

FOCUS Rexdale leaders indicate that the experience with the FOCUS Rexdale model has already influenced the development of several other collaborative initiatives including:

- a human trafficking pilot project
- SPIDER, an inter-divisional collaborating initiative to address complex and unresolved health and safety risks such as problematic hoarding
- the Downtown East Redevelopment Strategy
- the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy
- the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy.

The FOCUS Rexdale Co-Chairs, primarily the Co-Chair from the Toronto Police Service, catalyzed the formation of the Ontario Working Group on Collaborative, Risk-Driven Community Safety. In its first year, the working group was co-chaired by the City of Toronto.

The scope of this evaluation does not extend to providing specific recommendations or a strategy for the expansion of FOCUS Rexdale. However, the evaluators offer here a number of strategic questions for consideration as the Steering Committee contemplates the replication or expansion of FOCUS Rexdale.

- What populations or geographies in the City of Toronto have the greatest need for this type of community mobilization model?
- How can the FOCUS Rexdale model be expanded to other communities and populations but inspire local community engagement, development, and ownership?
- How can a balance be struck between deliberate and organic approaches to partnership development? What are the current partnerships that can be leveraged? What new partnerships need to be struck?
- What other community mobilization, collaborative initiatives already exist in the community that could be leveraged?
- What is the governance and accountability structure required to scale the FOCUS Rexdale model?
- Who and what resources are required to engage with stakeholders, operationalize the model, and manage it in the long term?
- What human resources and information management system are required to ensure robust data tracking, reporting, and performance measurement?
- What are possible local strategies, given systemic issues?
- What is the ultimate vision for residents and the community that can be demonstrated?

## 6.0 Conclusion

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The FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Project has demonstrated that multi-sector, multi-agency community mobilization towards a common aim of improving community safety works. Long-standing institutional silos have been broken down and strong relationships developed among agencies. Most importantly, clients and families in high-risk situations have been connected to services that they might not have reached otherwise and potential harm has been reduced. The evaluation findings show that FOCUS Rexdale's success can be attributed to a number of factors including:

- a shared passion for improving the lives of individuals at risk, neighbourhood safety, and community well-being
- a leap of faith in operationalizing the model and using a *learning by doing* approach versus *planning and perfecting, then doing*
- significant attention to developing trusting, transparent, and effective partnerships among agencies
- leveraging of each agency's unique expertise
- adoption and adherence to effective protocols and processes
- an ongoing mindset of continuous quality improvement.

Moving forward, the critical success factors necessary to sustain the successes of FOCUS Rexdale and to develop it to full maturity include:

- securing the commitment to FOCUS Rexdale of senior leadership at all participating agencies
- a local structure for managing and operating FOCUS Rexdale
- a proactive focus on identifying and assisting priority populations and areas in the community
- a theory of change and logic model that is used to define and measure specific, intended outcomes
- an accountability mechanism and framework that stakeholders will use to self-evaluate, continuously improve, and innovate.

The impact of FOCUS Rexdale is illustrated by the following fictitious client story, developed based on a compilation of the true client stories in Appendix C.

**Client Story**

**18 months ago:** “Kate” is a 17-year old female, living at home with her parents. She experiences negative peer pressure and bullying and her attendance at school is sporadic. Kate often engages in inappropriate or aggressive behaviours with her peers at school and her neighbours. She experiences severe anxiety and suicidal thoughts, and has a history of self-harm. Kate’s aggressive behaviour has resulted in numerous calls to the police. The family is considering moving, but fear that they will not be able to find another affordable housing unit.

Reconnect contacted the client, with back-up from Rexdale Community Health Centre and the school social worker. Kate had regular access to case management and counselling services.

**Today:** With the support of the agencies and her parents, Kate transitioned to a new school where she is not experiencing bullying and her attendance has regularized. She has learned coping techniques and has strategies for managing stress and anxiety, which are no longer a daily part of her life. Kate feels liberated and, for the first time, she feels that her life has focus and direction. Relationships with the neighbours have also improved and there has not been a call to the police in more than 8 months. Kate and her parents are happy with, and grateful for, the support and resources that they have received.

## Appendix A: Documents Reviewed

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Terms of Reference for FOCUS Rexdale

FOCUS Rexdale – Furthering Our Communities, Uniting Services (Fact Sheet)

FOCUS Rexdale Committee Meeting Information Sharing Protocol, updated April 1, 2013

FOCUS Rexdale FAQs – Community Participants, September 2012

FOCUS Rexdale Difference (Process Map of Traditional versus FOCUS Rexdale Approach)

Russell, H.C., 2013. *FOCUS Rexdale – The Participants Voice!*

FOCUS III: What's Next? (Discussion Document)

The Ontario Centre for Excellence in Collaborative, Risk-Driven Community Safety (Centre): Plan for 2014–15 work

FOCUS Rexdale Analysis – Business Intelligence & Analytics, December 18, 2014

FOCUS Rexdale – A common sense approach to Community Safety (Training Presentation to 23 Division)

Ontario Working Group for Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety and Well-Being (OWG) – Advisory Council Terms of Reference

Ontario Working Group for Collaborative, Risk-Driven Community Safety and Well-Being (OWG) – Newsletter, December 8, 2014

Toronto Police Service – Divisional Policing Command Mission: “To Keep Our Neighbourhoods Safe”

City of Toronto, Social Development Finance & Administration – Briefing note on SPIDER program

## Appendix B: Stakeholders Consulted

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### ***Toronto Police Service***

- Peter Sloly, Deputy Chief
- Dave Saunders, Acting Superintendent, Divisional Policing Support Unit
- Donovan Locke, Sergeant, Divisional Policing Support Unit
- Greg Watts, Staff Sergeant
- Adam Halagien, Detective Constable, 23 Division
- Ron Taverner, Superintendent, 23 Division
- Michael Ervick, Inspector, 23 Division
- Steve Pipe, Staff Sergeant, Community Mobilization Unit

### ***United Way***

- JoAnn Doyle, Chief Operating Officer
- Jamie Robinson, formerly Team Lead, Neighbourhoods

### ***City of Toronto***

- Chris Brillinger, Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration
- Scott McKean, Manager, Community Development

### ***FOCUS Rexdale***

- Linney Lau, Former Administrative Coordinator
- Minhaz Rahman, Administrative Coordinator

### ***Participating Agencies***<sup>15</sup>

- Deanna Berry, Rexdale Community Health Centre
- Dan Breault, City of Toronto
- Kacie Cartmill, Ministry of Child and Youth Services, Toronto West Youth Justice Services
- Ralph Cruz, Toronto Community Housing
- Linda Dias, Toronto Community Housing
- Adam Halagian, Toronto Police Service
- Lisa Kostakis, Executive Director, Albion Neighbourhood Services
- Courtney Lewis – Toronto District School Board
- Marija Pereyra, Albion Neighbourhood Services
- Sheila Singh, Toronto Public Health

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<sup>15</sup> Andrea Renwick of Toronto Employment and Social Services retired just as the evaluation began, therefore a representative from TESS was not available at the time of the evaluation interviews.



## Appendix C: Client Stories

Socio-Demographic Profile	Before FOCUS Rexdale	Agencies Assigned and Interventions	Type of Impact on Client or Community	How Client Would Describe Impact	Without FOCUS Rexdale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult 19+</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• College education</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Homeless</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim of domestic violence</li> <li>• Alcohol &amp; substance abuse (addiction)</li> <li>• Mental health problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnect introduced her to services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time employment</li> <li>• Finding own place to live</li> <li>• Stopped drinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideal with a sense of focus and direction in her life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would have been stuck in circle of violence &amp; addiction which has plagued her life for years</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth 12–18</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• High school education</li> <li>• Lives with parents</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber bullying</li> <li>• Potential self-harm</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnect introduced her to services</li> <li>• Toronto Police Service worked with boys who were bullying at school</li> <li>• Ultimately relocated to another school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate positive impact</li> <li>• Client now productive member of school and on track to future success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liberating with the stress in her life greatly reduced</li> <li>• Client's family is very happy that she has overcome this hurdle and feels a great sense of relief</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued bullying, conflict and anxious feelings would have continued</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two elders 60+</li> <li>• Female and male</li> <li>• Retired</li> <li>• Living together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male with mental health issues</li> <li>• Using multiple medications</li> <li>• Potential suicide</li> <li>• Wife distressed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnect contacted client</li> <li>• Toronto Public Health supported wife</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client doing much better</li> <li>• Stress alleviated</li> <li>• Clients have positive outlook and are productive members of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life is much less stressful and easier to deal with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients would not have been able to stay in their home due to mental health and associated stress</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult 20+</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Living in subsidized housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At risk of losing housing</li> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• Suicidal</li> <li>• Seven arrests, history of resisting arrest resulting in injuries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnect contacted client and provided access to 24-hour crisis phone support; secured alternate housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since being connected to services (six months ago), no police contact; no neighbour or tenant issues</li> <li>• No longer suicidal, living in a better place, no longer in high-risk relationship, good relations with family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Changed pretty much everything in my life...I can cope 85% better, I am engaged in less harmful behaviour. I was taken in 7 times by police... because I wanted to die..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not known</li> </ul>

Socio-Demographic Profile	Before FOCUS Rexdale	Agencies Assigned and Interventions	Type of Impact on Client or Community	How Client Would Describe Impact	Without FOCUS Rexdale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult 20–35</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• High school</li> <li>• Has a disability</li> <li>• Lives with family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family made more than 40 calls to police regarding son</li> <li>• Son aggressive; hospitalized but declined medication and treatment at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnect contacted client</li> <li>• Service declined several times, eventually connected to services while hospitalized</li> <li>• Now receiving care from visiting home care nurse and home Community Psychiatrist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client has services in home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not known</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not known</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult 60–65 years</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Some college education</li> <li>• Social Services involvement</li> <li>• Owns home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety and constant fear</li> <li>• Felt bullied by neighbours</li> <li>• Risk of violence (to whom?)</li> <li>• Frequent calls to police (by whom?)</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnect lead agency</li> <li>• Rexdale Community Health Centre support agency</li> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• St. Stephen's engaged to provide mediation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client can stay in home</li> <li>• Reduced calls to police</li> <li>• Learned coping techniques</li> <li>• De-escalation of potential additional violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client feels supported and is thankful</li> <li>• Client is now aware of resources available for advocacy, conflict resolution, mediation</li> <li>• Community is also aware of resources available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued calls to police</li> <li>• Potential harm between residents in neighbourhood</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth 4–12 years</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Kindergarten</li> <li>• Lives with family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Acting-out behaviour</li> <li>• Voiding in clothes</li> <li>• Expressing fear</li> <li>• School suspected abuse or neglect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rexdale Community Health Centre worker met with school and family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family grateful for resources; eased stress</li> <li>• Partnership between RCHC and school formed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family thankful for immediate support, education regarding client and family rights and resources provided free of charge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child welfare agency could have been involved</li> <li>• Family would have felt isolated and culturally misunderstood</li> </ul>

Socio-Demographic Profile	Before FOCUS Rexdale	Agencies Assigned and Interventions	Type of Impact on Client or Community	How Client Would Describe Impact	Without FOCUS Rexdale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth 16–18 years</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• High school</li> <li>• Lives with parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not attending school</li> <li>• Isolated, alienated, peer pressure</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Goes to shelter often</li> <li>• Inappropriate behaviours with peers</li> <li>• Physical assault by peers</li> <li>• Suicidal thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rexdale Community Health Centre contacted client</li> <li>• Court system also assisting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client and family feel that they know their rights and have resources to cope with trauma</li> <li>• Happy to have access to services for longer-term case engagement</li> <li>• School workers are bringing other situations to table</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client and family feel supported</li> <li>• Family grateful for resources and access to ongoing case management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for retaliation by peers, potentially another assault or incident from other residents in apartment</li> <li>• Community would have been negative place for family</li> <li>• Family might have been forced to move away</li> </ul>

## Appendix D: Major Crime Indicator Data

Table A1 shows the seven Major Crime Indicators (MCIs) used by Toronto Police Service Business Intelligence & Analytics. Overall, the percentages of crimes in each MCI category is similar for the FOCUS Rexdale catchment and the entire 23 Division catchment area. Offences in the FOCUS Rexdale catchment comprise approximately 8.4% of the total offences within the 23 Division boundaries.

**Table A1. Number of Offences in MCI Categories (January 2013–December 1, 2014)**

<b>MCI Category</b>	<b>FOCUS Rexdale: Number of Offences (percent of total MCI offences)</b>	<b>23 Division: Number of Offences (percent of total MCI offences)</b>	<b>Number of Offences in FOCUS Rexdale as a Percentage of Number of Offences in 23 Division</b>
<b>Assault</b>	143 (43.6%)	1580 (40.3%)	9.0%
<b>Auto Theft</b>	56 (17.0%)	918 (23.5%)	6.1%
<b>Break and Enter</b>	54 (16.5%)	564 (14.4%)	9.6%
<b>Murder</b>	1 (0.3%)	11 (0.28%)	9.1%
<b>Robbery</b>	45 (13.7%)	526 (13.2%)	8.6%
<b>Sexual Violation</b>	13 (4.0%)	188 (4.8%)	6.9%
<b>Theft Over</b>	16 (4.9%)	125 (3.2%)	12.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>3912</b>	<b>8.4%</b>