

## Ottawa

**Host agency:** Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services  
1365 Richmond Road, Ottawa, ON K2B 6R7  
Tel.: 613-820-4922

**Program manager:** Dawn Lyons

**Boundaries:** Foster Farm, Britannia Woods, Pinecrest Terrace, Morrison Gardens, Michelle Heights, Christie Place, Winthrop Court, Regina Lane and Eva Tayler Court. (Ottawa Housing communities located in the west end of Ottawa.)

**Area dropout rate:** 49%.

**First cohort size:** Eligible are 90 students currently in grade 9 (public, Catholic and French boards).

**Participation rate:** 87% are registered and outreach continues.

### Brief description

In the Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services catchment area, located in the west end of Ottawa, there are six social housing neighbourhoods. These communities include over 4,000 individuals, most of whom live in single-parent households. These neighbourhoods have larger than average child and youth populations (about two-thirds of residents are children and youth). Almost 30% of residents are newcomers to Canada, particularly from Somalia and Arabic-speaking countries. Almost all of the residents are living below the average income level and many are living below the poverty line. The initiative to develop a Pathways program in Ottawa is being led by Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services, a Community Health Centre working in partnership with individuals, families and communities to achieve their full potential. The centre particularly focuses on those who are most vulnerable and offers services in both official languages.

### Why West Ottawa has a Pathways program

Parents, youth and community leaders have been advocating for years for comprehensive supports for youth to break the cycle of poverty in west Ottawa neighbourhoods. High dropout rates in the largest ethno-specific community (Somali), limited access to homework programs for students beyond elementary school, and statistics indicating that local west end youth are not faring as well academically as their peers are all proof for the need of a Pathways program in west Ottawa. Almost 200 parents, youth and service providers have participated in focus groups, interviews and discussions about the possibility of bringing the Pathways program to the community.

Parents and youth, in particular, have identified a number of barriers to academic success which would be well served by the comprehensive approach of the program and are enthusiastic about bringing it to the community.

A consistent theme of breaking the cycle of poverty has been present in feedback from the community. Immigrant parents want their children to get post-secondary education but are not able to contribute because of language, cultural barriers and lack of time. Parents born in Canada are often not the first generation in their family living in poverty and many have not completed high school.

Youth talk about how helpful it would be to have someone to talk to about their struggles with high school, difficulties with course work, being embarrassed by having little money which often means not being able to get to school or being hungry. Further issues include the feeling of not being understood by teachers and negative peer pressure.

Pinecrest-Queensway HCS is a respected organization in the community with a history of providing relevant programming. It is seen as a leader in dealing with community issues. It has been able to identify and foster the right partners to make the program work, including the community centres in each area, the local service provider network and youth workers and the city councillor. In addition, constructive relationships are developed with the four school boards, public, Catholic and French, who have welcomed Pathways with enthusiasm. Parents have volunteered for the advisory committee. Carleton University has approached the program director to help with recruiting volunteer tutors and mentors.

For more information about the community and the Ottawa Pathways to Education Program, please contact:

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