

# Regional Poverty Assessment and Reduction Strategy

Board Presentation  
May 11, 2021

urban  
**matters**

# Project Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by people experiencing poverty
- Assess and identify any gaps in the available services and supports in the community to address poverty
- Develop a strategy to pursue actions in relation to the focus areas to reduce poverty in the Comox Valley by 25% over the next four years.



# Poverty Assessment & Reduction Focus Areas



housing



families, children and youth



liveable incomes



social supports



food security



affordable, accessible transportation



social inclusion

# Preliminary Findings- Engagement



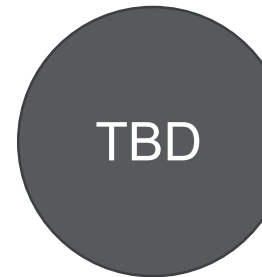
COMMUNITY SURVEY



SELF-GUIDED TOOL -KIT



INTERVIEWS



GAME CHANGER  
WORKSHOP

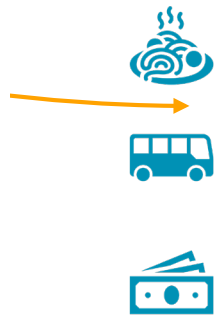


SHARING CIRCLES



High cost of living (43%) and housing affordability(21%) were top two barriers highlighted by people in meeting their basic needs.

For people experiencing poverty, it means that...

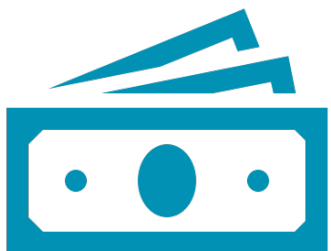


People are living in unsafe, unsuitable, and unhealthy housing

People are unable to afford and access healthy and nutritious foods consistently, transportation options constrained

People (40%) do not have enough money to cover one-time unexpected costs (car repair, dentist & medical etc.)

*“The newer developments are not family oriented or affordable. Many of the developments are out of the main areas and with lack of transportation puts people at risk of isolation. The housing out of town is often run down...”*



Income supports program design and lack of secure employment options contribute to keeping people in poverty cycle

We Heard...

*“Your income may lead you not qualify for income supports. When you are coming out of poverty you do not go into a linear income path where you have stable and secure.”*

People experiencing poverty face barriers in **accessing employment** and other opportunities to enhance their standard of living (transportation, child care, stigma)

**Living wages** can help close gap in cost of living



## Need for mental health services highlighted by most survey respondents (19%)

We Heard...



Constant trade-offs over monthly budgets leads to increased stress and anxiety

Mental health services for families, children and youth needed to support next generation achieving full potential (breaking poverty cycle)



**Cost of housing** pushes families to remote areas where they become more isolated and cut off from services



People experiencing poverty rely on public transit and active transportation, OR they experience barriers to meeting other basic needs due to the cost of maintaining and driving a car.

We Heard...



*“As a young woman with children, there are people who feel no hesitation to approach women and this makes me feel unsafe.” (Regarding safety of transit system)*

Sidewalks and pathways present mobility barriers... creates risk and isolation for people in vulnerable circumstances, seniors and mothers with young children

Increasing **connectivity, # of stops, and hours of service** between rural areas and service centres supports poverty reduction





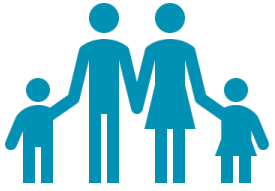
**For people experiencing poverty, it means that...**

**49% of survey respondents did not have access to nutritious food year round**

Access to food banks or social serving organizations delivering food is critical – people without private transportation and working individuals had trouble accessing the food bank (limited hours)

→ 46% indicated spending more than a quarter of their monthly income on food and almost 7% spend more than half their income on food

Food bank clients are changing... *“in the past [clients were] mainly those on fixed incomes, but now working people represent a greater and greater share of those needing help. Charity should be a stopgap measure, not a way of life.”*



## Childhood vulnerabilities are linked to poverty, housing challenges and food insecurity

### We Heard...

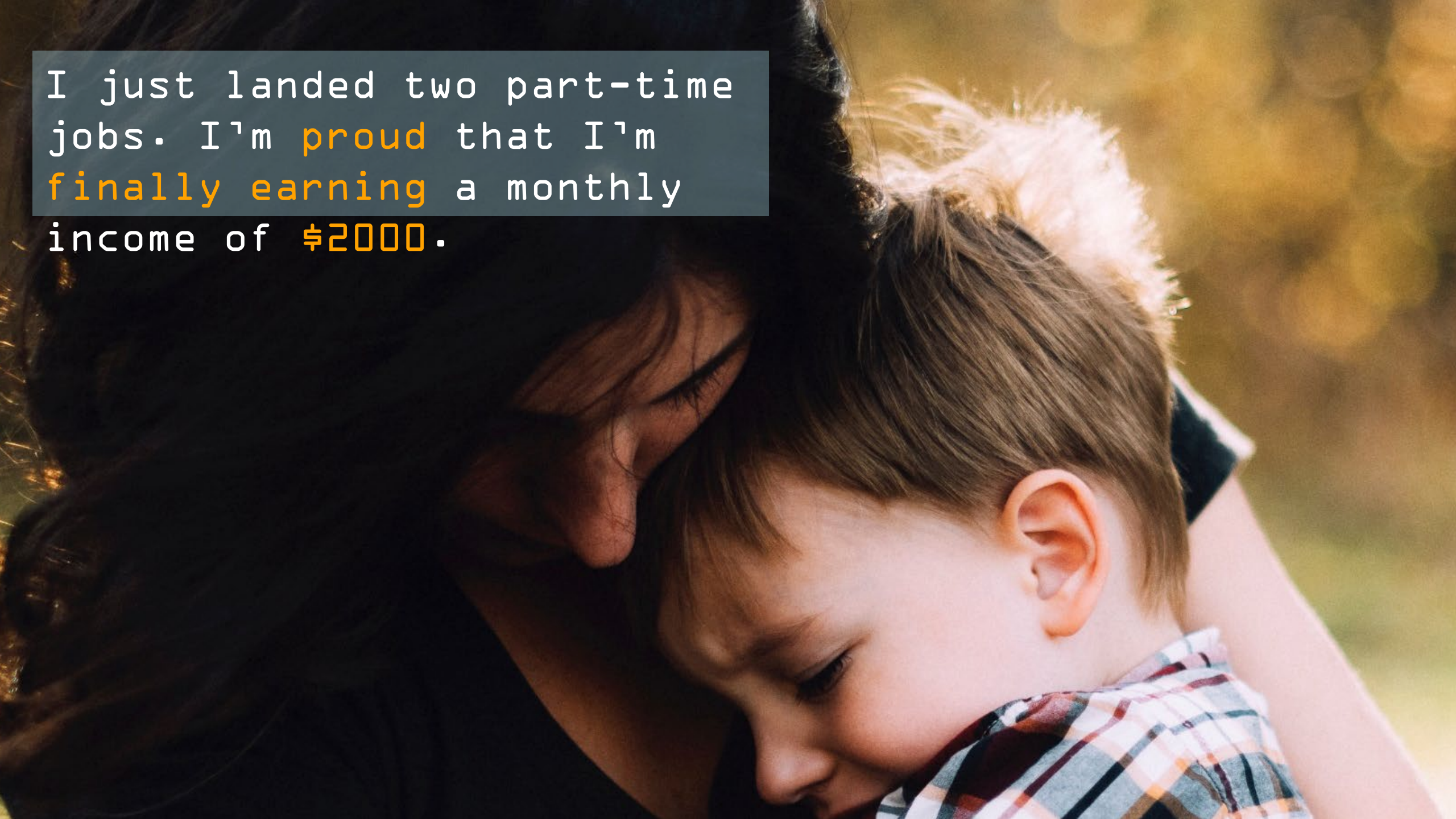
There is a complete lack of childcare, preschool and daycare services for families looking for support. Even if families can apply for subsidies, there are no facilities with available spaces




Women and families in rural areas are socially isolated and have no connection to services.

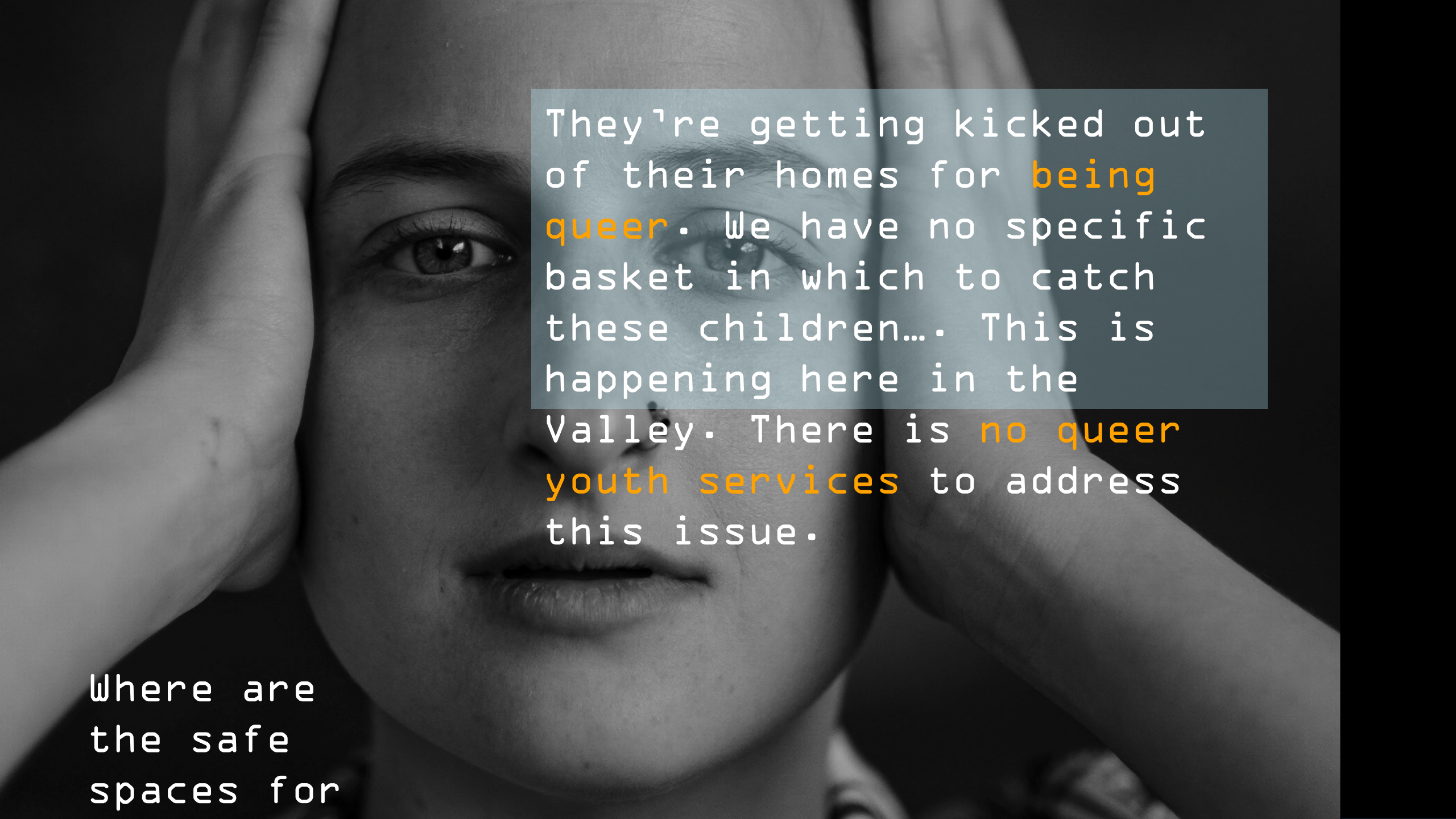
There is a coordination gap within the school system to bring together programming for families. They have access to families, resources and a desire to affect change, but there is lack of coordination...

I just landed two part-time jobs. I'm proud that I'm finally earning a monthly income of \$2000.



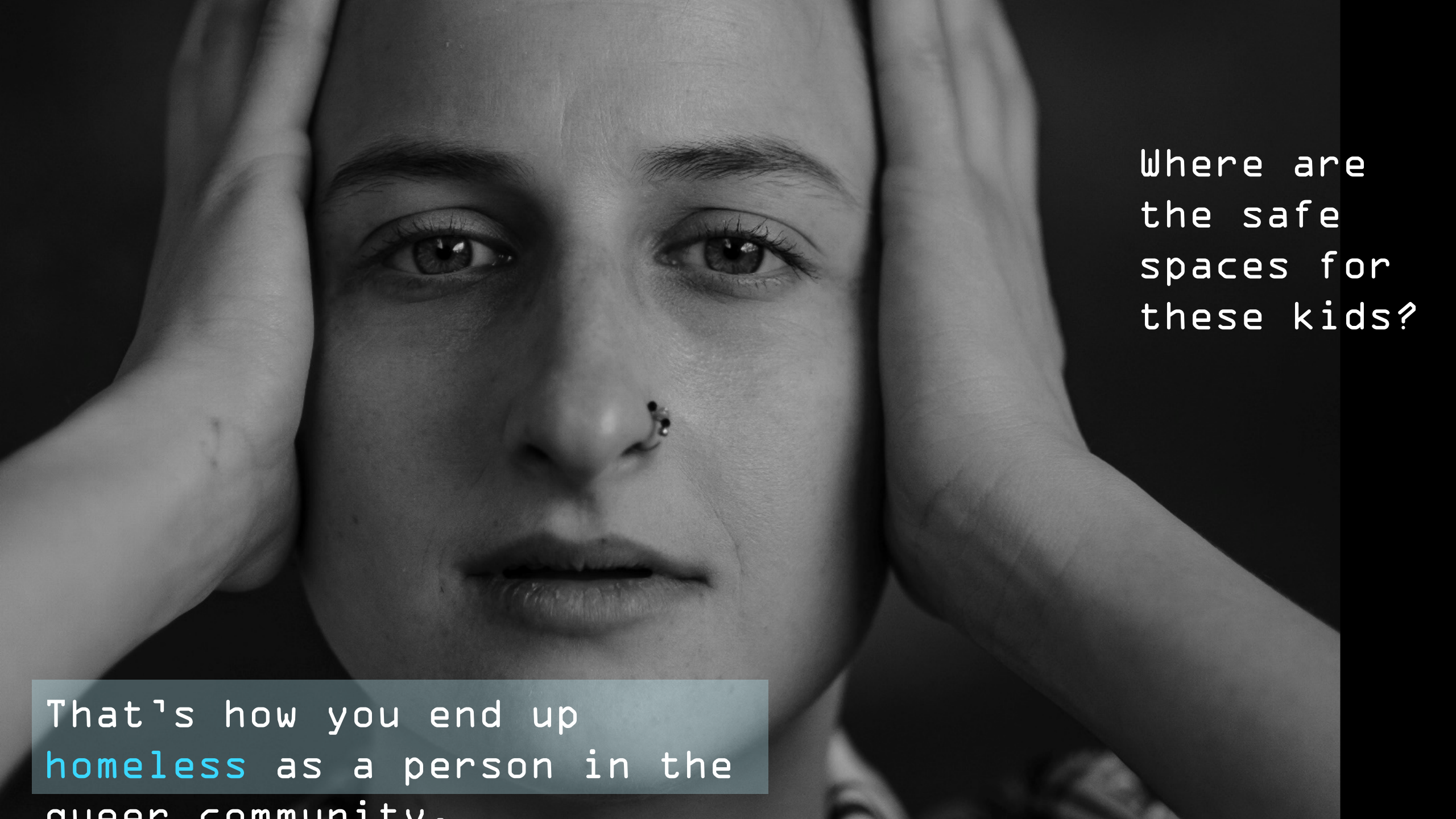


But, I'm in the grey area of eligibility. I don't get enough support to meet my family's needs -- to access opportunities and enhance my lifestyle.



They're getting kicked out of their homes for **being queer**. We have no specific basket in which to catch these children... This is happening here in the Valley. There is **no queer youth services** to address this issue.

Where are  
the safe  
spaces for



Where are  
the safe  
spaces for  
these kids?

That's how you end up  
homeless as a person in the  
queer community.

# What's Next? Game Changer Workshop

## OBJECTIVES

- Identify priority areas / **big ideas** for poverty reduction in the CVRD
- **Build relationships** to **generate change** and increase collaboration across organizations
- **Build awareness** of local poverty in the CVRD
- **Create understanding** of a systems-based approach to addressing poverty

# Questions & Discussion