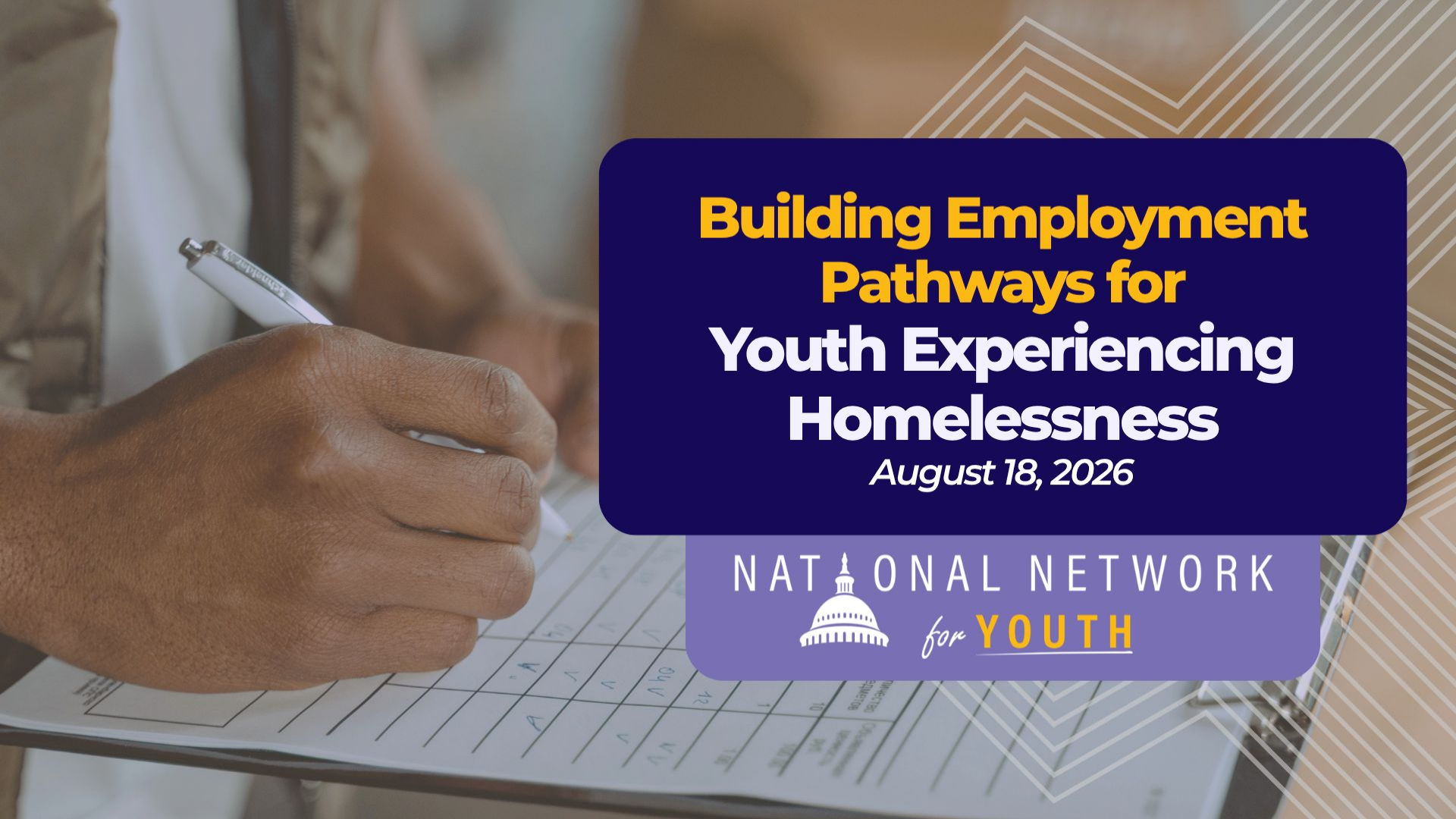




# Building Employment Pathways for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

*August 18, 2026*

NATIONAL NETWORK



for **YOUTH**

# Welcome!

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## Webinar Overview

- Introduce yourself in chat: Name, pronouns, organization, location, and an emoji of how your day is going so far. 🥹 😁 😭 😨 😡 🙌
- Ask questions in the Q&A throughout the presentation.
- The policy brief, webinar slides, and recording will be available on our website.
- Please complete the survey following the webinar so we can improve for next time.

# Agenda

1 Introductions + Brief Release

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2 Urgency of the Issue

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3 Challenges Faced by Youth

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4 Provider Spotlights

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5 Questions + Discussion

# About National Network for Youth

**NN4Y is on a mission to  
transform systems so that no  
young person in America  
experiences homelessness.**

NN4Y works with young leaders and youth service providers from across the country to prevent and end youth, young adult, and young parent family homelessness and human trafficking. Together, we envision a future in which all young people have a safe place to call home with endless opportunities to achieve their fullest potential.



**Visit our website:** [nn4youth.org](https://nn4youth.org)

**Join our newsletter:** [nn4youth.org/subscribe](https://nn4youth.org/subscribe)

# THE FIGHT TO **END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS** TAKES ALL OF US.

Become a member of the National Network for Youth and join the nation's foremost coalition on this issue.

Connect with peers, gain expert guidance, and stay updated on funding and policies affecting **youth homelessness**.

[nn4youth.org/membership](https://nn4youth.org/membership)



# Our Speakers

Overview



**Tori Ikeda**

NYAC Member  
National Network for Youth  
*Honolulu, HI*



**Ko Quaye**

Youth Services Director  
Youth Link  
*Minneapolis, MN*



**Courtney Smith**

Founder & CEO  
Detroit Phoenix Center  
*Detroit, MI*

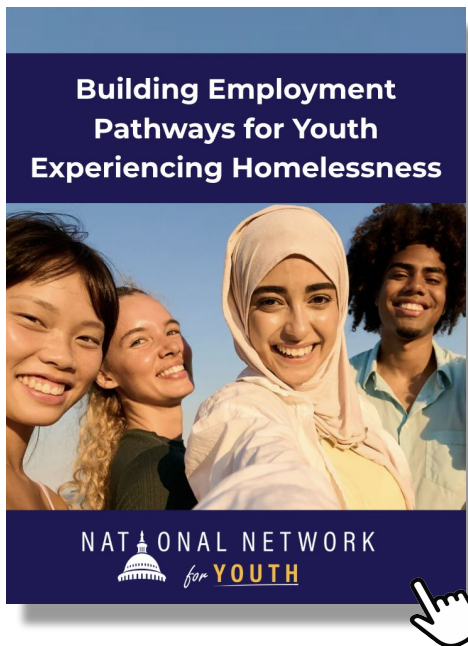


**Ryan McCarthy**

Vice President of Programs &  
Community Outreach  
Breaktime  
*Boston, MA*

# Policy Brief Release!

Brief Overview



Too many young people experiencing homelessness are **caught in a catch-22**: *Steady employment could help them exit a crisis situation, but being in crisis makes it incredibly difficult to find and maintain steady employment.*

Young people need opportunities that provide livable wages, meaningful work experience, education and training, and pathways to careers that can support **long-term economic and housing stability**.

## This policy brief:

- ★ Summarizes the latest research on employment for youth experiencing homelessness.
- ★ Highlights the unique challenges these young people face in seeking employment.
- ★ Offers concrete recommendations for public policy and practice.

# Urgency of the Issue

## Brief Overview

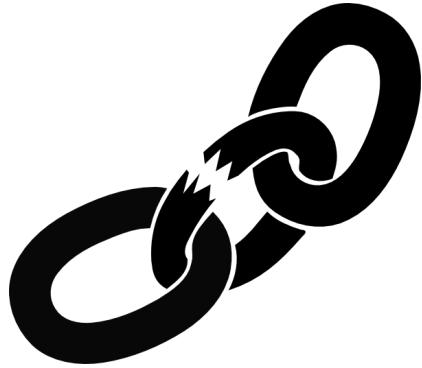


### Unemployment can perpetuate homelessness and poverty.

- ★ Without stable employment, young people may be unable to meet their **basic needs and maintain housing**.
  - They may also struggle to build savings or respond to unexpected expenses, increasing their risk of prolonged or recurring homelessness.
- ★ Lack of stable employment is **strongly associated with poverty**.
- ★ Prolonged unemployment can contribute to poor mental health outcomes, increased stress, and reduced overall well-being, making it difficult for young people to **transition successfully to adulthood**.

# Urgency of the Issue

## Brief Overview



### Stable employment promotes long-term stability.

- ★ Expanding access to employment opportunities can help **interrupt cycles of poverty and homelessness**, particularly when paired with fair wages, education, training, and jobs in underserved communities.
- ★ Employment is associated with **improved** mental well-being, independence, and long-term economic mobility.
- ★ Stable employment is a **key protective factor** against homelessness and can promote long-term housing stability.



## Unique Challenges

*What Do Youth Experiencing  
Homelessness Face When Accessing  
Employment?*



## Safety & Health

### Young people experiencing homelessness are often in survival mode

- Meeting basic needs take priority over employment

### Without safe alternatives, young people may rely on survival strategies

- Shoplifting to meet basic needs
- Criminal exploitation or gang involvement
- Staying in abusive relationships for housing or financial support
- Exchanging sex for shelter or necessities

These behaviors are often **responses to extreme economic hardship**, not a lack of motivation.

## Safety & Health

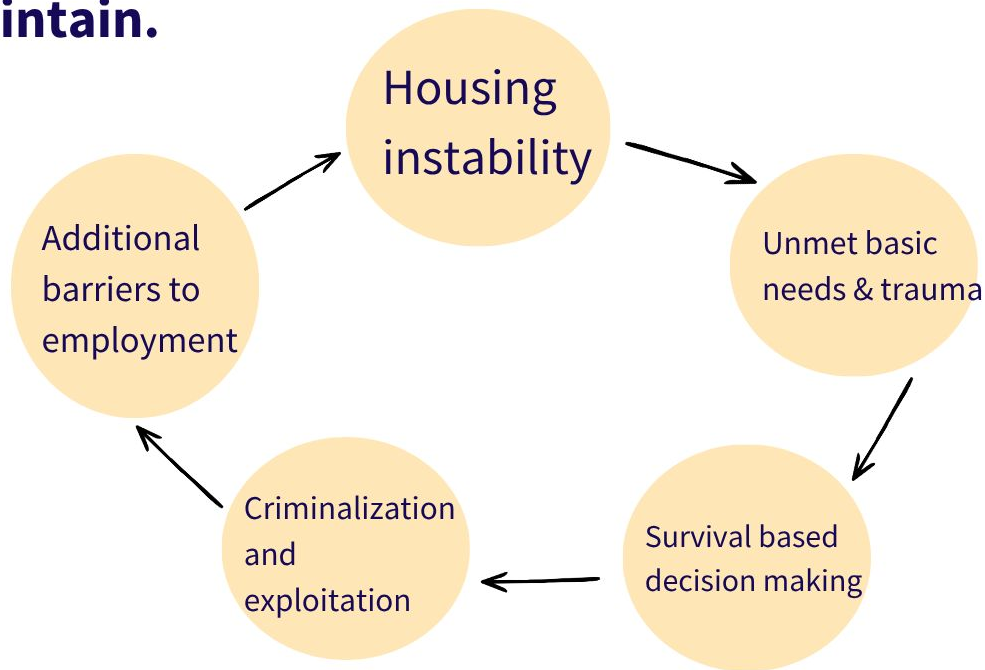
### Young people experiencing homelessness face higher risk of:

- Physical and mental health challenges
- Substance use disorders
- Trauma and violence

Young people need safety and basic needs met **before** they can fully engage in the workforce.

## Safety & Health

**Housing instability can create a cycle that makes employment harder to obtain and maintain.**



**You can't get a job without the documents needed to prove who you are.**

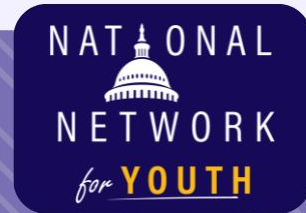
Many young people experiencing homelessness don't have access to vital documents such as birth certificate, government issued ID, or Social Security Card.

- Documents may have been lost, stolen, left behind, or held by someone else.

While a young person may be ready and willing to work, this completely stops them from being able to complete the hiring process.



# Policy and Program Improvement



# Case Management and Support

## Case Management

- Individualizing case management based on each young person's unique individual needs, strengths, and goals.
- Support with stabilization and meeting basic needs
- Continued support is necessary after employment is obtained.
- Flexible financial assistance

## Transportation

- Connection to reliable transportation through bus passes, transit vouchers, rideshare assistance, or other transportation support

## Workforce Partnerships

- Having strong relationships with workforce development organizations, apprenticeship programs, trade schools, colleges, community-based employment programs, and local employers are critical to connecting youth with employment opportunities

# Employment Sustainability

## Career Coaching

- Personalized support to help youth identify and explore career opportunities, make informed decisions about their future, and develop the skills to achieve career goals

## Professional Development

- More competitive in the workforce
  - Strengthens employment prospects and pathways to career advancement
- Foster economic independence
- Continuous development opportunities bridges gaps that some youth may not have learned/or experienced

## Barrier Navigation

- Workplace related conflict or challenges
- Barriers that threaten employment (e.g. housing, transportation)



# Community Models in Action



# Youthlin

# k

*Minneapolis, MN*



# YOUTHLINK

## DROP-IN ECO-SYSTEM

A SAFE PLACE. REAL SUPPORT. BETTER FUTURES.

YouthLink's Drop-In Center is the hub of a connected eco-system that meets youth where they are and walks alongside them toward stability, opportunity, and bright futures.

A PLACE TO BELONG



YOUTHLINK

SUPPORT TO GROW.

PATHWAYS to a BETTER FUTURE.

### BASIC NEEDS & DAILY SUPPORT

- Meals (Breakfast & Lunch)
- Showers & Laundry
- Clothing & Hygiene
- Mail & Computers
- Transportation Support (Bus tokens)
- Baby Supplies



### SUPPORT SERVICES

- Case Management
- Mental Health Support
- Housing Assistance
- Victim Support
- Health Services (On-site Clinic)
- Substance Use Support



### DAILY SCHEDULE & PROGRAMMING

#### MONDAY – FRIDAY

10 AM – 12 PM | Structured Activities  
1 PM – 4 PM | Open Lounge

- MUSIC – Music with Glo & Storm
- TED – Education & Career with Carl
- WED – Enrichment with Carl & Rich
- THU – Chess Club with Glo DTV 4–5 PM
- FRI – Case Manager Rotations (Weekly Schedule)

WEDNESDAY  
6 PM – 8 PM | TRUE Group



### SAFETY & WELL-BEING

- Youth Safety
- ACES Response
- Respectful Space
- Service Animals Only



### YOUTH OUTCOMES

- Stable Housing
- Employment & Education
- Improved Well-Being
- Stronger Connections
- Brighter Futures



### OUR APPROACH

- YOUTH VOICE**  
Youth lead, shape, and influence what we do.
- RELATIONSHIP-FIRST**  
Trusted relationships open doors to growth.
- EQUITABLE ACCESS**  
All youth are welcome. All youth are valued.
- WHOLE PERSON CARE**  
We address the whole youth – mind, body, and spirit.
- PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE**  
We walk together toward stability and success.

### OUR PARTNERS & COMMUNITY NETWORK

#### SERVICE PARTNERS



#### YOUTH OUTREACH COLLABORATIVE (YOC)



#### COMMUNITY & SYSTEM PARTNERS



#### FUNDING & SUPPORT



& Many More



A PLACE TO BELONG



SUPPORT TO GROW



PATHWAYS TO A BETTER FUTURE

# **Detroit Phoenix Center**

*Detroit, MI*



# ABOUT DPC

**Detroit Phoenix Center** is a nonprofit organization that responds to the needs of resilient and resourceful youth in Detroit.

DPC supports young people, **ages 12-24** providing critical resources, wraparound support, and a safe, nurturing environment to youth. We partner with young people to break the generational cycle of homelessness and poverty. We also work diligently for systemic change and contribute to the growing movement to end youth homelessness and poverty.

**WE IMPACT OVER 2,500 YOUTH ANNUALLY THROUGH OUR**

## **PILLARS:**



**HOUSING &  
BASIC NEEDS**



**MENTAL  
HEALTH &  
WELLNESS**



**EDUCATION &  
EMPLOYMENT**



**YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP &  
POWER BUILDING**



**OUTREACH &  
ADVOCACY**

# Workforce Development Snapshot

**60 young people** engaged in DPC's Workforce Development continuum this year

Our programs include:



**SUMMER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

**22** YOUTH SERVED

**6-week paid summer employment + leadership**  
\$15/hr • up to 20 hrs/week

## ROOTS RAPID RE-HOUSING

**RAPID REHOUSING WORKFORCE**

**14** YOUTH SUPPORTED

**Year-round workforce support**  
Employment placement • training • job readiness

## The Alumni Fellowship Program

**ALUMNI FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

**4** YOUNG ADULTS TRAINED

3 / 6 / 12 months • \$20/hr **Paid career fellowship**

**YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS FELLOWSHIP**

**20** YOUNG PEOPLE

**Two fellowship tracks**

Social enterprise • storytelling + media



**YOUTH ACTION BOARD**

**8** YOUTH SERVED

**10-month leadership + advocacy**

\$75/meeting • paid speaking opportunities

# Curriculum

## Structured Curriculum + Defined Learning Outcomes

- Summer Leadership Academy uses the required GDYT curriculum
- The Beyond the Ashes/Social Enterprise curriculum was developed by DPC in partnership with a consulting company
- The other programs use curriculum developed by DPC based on our specific learning goals and objectives
- all programs offer wraparound supportive services to remove, barriers to employment



The **Alumni**  
**Fellowship Program**

# Breaktime

*Boston, MA*





# Breaktime

Breaking the Cycle of Young Adult Homelessness



## OUR MISSION

Breaktime's mission is to break the cycle of homelessness by equipping young adults with the job and financial security they need to establish housing security.

By providing employment, wraparound services, and financial support, Breaktime works to ensure that every young person has the tools they need to achieve job, financial, and long-term housing security.





# PROGRAM MODEL

Breaktime's core program is a three-part supported transitional employment program that utilizes partnerships to empower young adults at risk/experiencing housing insecurity. This includes:

- 3 weeks of work readiness training and financial education
- 3 months of paid job placement at a local nonprofit or business
- 3 years of continued wraparound career, academic, housing, and financial support



# LAUNCHPAD

- 3-week classroom training that introduces Associates to Breaktime's 6 Essentials of Success (6ES):
  - **Attendance**
  - **Punctuality**
  - **Engagement**
  - **Communication**
  - **Professionalism**
  - **Equipped**
- Designed to provide work readiness skills and offer education around navigating the workforce.





## LIFTOFF

- 3 months of supported employment with a local nonprofit or small business.
- Earn a living wage of \$20+ per hour for 20-30 hours per week
- Gain valuable work experience with continued support from our Young Adult Services team



# EVERYBODY WINS WITH LIFTOFF

## Partner Benefits

- Reliable part-time staffing support (20–30 hrs/week for 13 weeks)
- Lower hiring risk with a supported placement model (structured check-ins + coaching)
- Reduced recruiting time: Breaktime screens and coordinates candidates + interviews
- Cost sharing on wages (\$20/hr; 50/50 split; Breaktime is employer)
- Stronger retention and performance through ongoing WFP support

## BT Benefits

- Paid, skill-building roles for young adults
- Employer feedback to strengthen training and readiness
- Work experience opportunities aligned to career goals

## STABLE ORBIT

- 3 years of ongoing case management and wraparound support
- Staff provide monthly check-ins, assistance with housing, resume development, job searches, interview preparation, mental health referrals, and other support as young people's needs evolve





# ASSOCIATE OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES



**444**

unique individuals  
served across all of  
Breaktime in 2025



**75%**

of active Associates are  
in stable or medium-  
term housing



**52,000**

minutes spent  
checking in with  
young adults



**9,537**

discrete services  
provided to  
Associates



**~\$19/hour**

average wage of  
working  
Associates



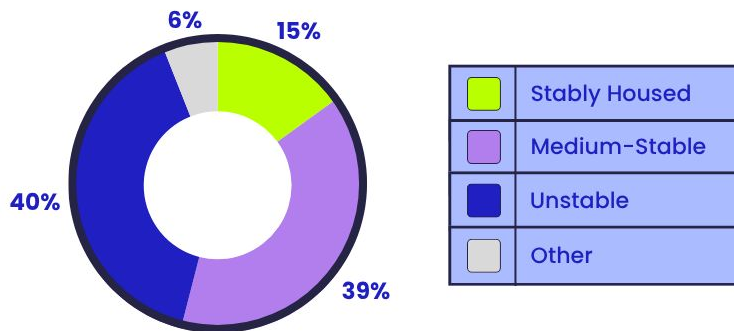
**2,850**

check-ins with  
young adults in  
Stable Orbit

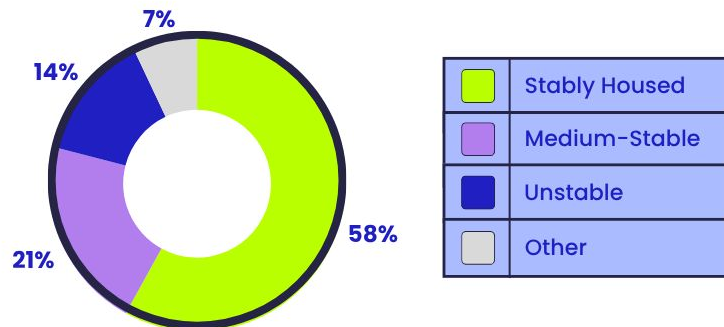


# THE BREAKTIME EFFECT: PROGRAM IMPACT ON ASSOCIATE HOUSING STATUS

## Associate Housing Status at Intake



## Active Associate Housing Status





# THE HUB FOR SOLVING YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS



In December 2024, Breaktime officially purchased 63 Franklin Street in Boston's Downtown Crossing, a five-floor building that will serve as the future home of the organization's Hub for Solving Young Adult Homelessness!



With more than 34,000 square feet, our new hub provides us with the space to both grow our core program and make new investments in other services that will have a more holistic impact on our young people.



Each floor of the hub will be dedicated to a different resource that young adults experiencing homelessness have told us they need, making this building a one-stop shop for Associates, and the first of its kind in the country!



**Thank you!**

# Questions?

# Get Connected to NN4Y



- **Join Our Network:** [Become a Member](#)
- **Mobilize Your Community:** [Training & Consulting Services](#)
- **Meet with Your Member of Congress:** [Policy & Advocacy](#)
- **Vital Document Legal Hotline for Youth:** [Join Our Referral Network](#)

Sign Up for Our  
Listserv!



NATIONAL NETWORK  
 for **YOUTH**



# I AM HERE: Vital Document Legal Hotline for Youth

A free, dedicated state-specific legal assistance hotline for **youth experiencing homelessness** to help obtain:

State ID cards and licenses

Social Security Cards

Birth certificates

Documents needed to obtain an ID and license

**Text or  
Call!**

**1-888-870-DOCS**

\*Voicemails and texts are welcome and will be returned.

**Wednesday Hours (Starting May 6, 2026)**

9 AM - 5 PM Eastern • 8 AM - 4 PM Central  
7 AM - 3 PM Mountain • 6 AM - 2 PM Pacific

**Baker  
McKenzie.**

NATIONAL  
  
NETWORK  
*for* **YOUTH**



# Know Your Rights Webinar: Immigrant Youth Experiencing Homelessness

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August 25, 2026 | 3:00 - 4:00 PM Eastern  
2:00 PM Central • 1:00 PM Mountain • 12:00 PM Pacific



**Register for Webinar**



**Access Toolkit**

NN4Y

# TAKE FLIGHT RAFFLE

Beginning  
June 1, 2026



**Win two roundtrip tickets** with Alaska Airlines worth up to \$1,250!

Every ticket purchased isn't just a chance to win, but an investment in our collective fight to **prevent and end youth homelessness.**

Proceeds go directly towards **National Network for Youth's work protecting core programs** that support youth experiencing homelessness.



**Together, we  
can end youth  
homelessness.**

**Contact Us:**

trinady.maddock@nn4youth.org

**Visit Our Website:**

[nn4youth.org](https://nn4youth.org)

**Join Our Listserv:**



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