

**Positive Youth Development (PYD):** focuses on meeting youth at their own developmental stage and supporting positive growth. A PYD approach ensures that young people have opportunities to contribute within the community and develop transferable skills and competencies through healthy interactions with adults and other youth. PYD is centered on strengths and personal goals, which guide youth to make healthy choices, build confidence and maintain self-control.<sup>5</sup>

**Trauma-Informed Care (TIC):** provides services appropriate for youth who have experienced abuse and/or trauma. Moreover, it places an emphasis on the creation of appropriate settings and relationships within which a young person can heal. Given that YYA experiencing homelessness are often exposed to significant trauma, it is essential that interventions are trauma-informed.<sup>6</sup> Early indicators suggest that TIC may have a positive effect on housing stability.<sup>7</sup>

**Cultural Competence:** refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly in the context of human resources, non-profit organizations and government agencies. Cultural competence includes four components: (1) awareness of one’s own cultural worldview, (2) attitude toward cultural differences, (3) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews and (4) cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures.<sup>8</sup>

**Client-Centered Care:** is an approach to service provision rooted in an understanding of each client’s needs and perspectives. Customized individual treatment “starts where the youth is at,” allowing the client to identify strengths, clarify goals and set a path toward achievement.<sup>9</sup>

**Strengths-Based Services:** describes an assessment and treatment model that identifies individual core strengths across life domains. Additionally, it builds upon those strengths to overcome issues that youth believe to require positive change. As a result, young people develop a greater understanding of the strengths, skills and resources that can be used in everyday life after service completion.<sup>10</sup>

You can download our full **Proposed System to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness** and accompanying publications at [www.nn4youth.org/learn/what-works](http://www.nn4youth.org/learn/what-works).

1 Transition-aged youth are commonly referred to as TAY, older youth or young adults. The term describes 18 to 24 year-olds.  
2 Criminal justice includes law enforcement, court, probation and detention professionals.  
3 Rapid Rehousing and Housing First are popular housing models that focus on quickly moving individuals and families into permanent housing, with supportive services if necessary. For youth, these approaches need to be adapted in order to provide housing in developmentally appropriate models. Additionally, youth-appropriate supportive services, case management and life-skills training must be provided, along with re-engagement with education and workforce development programs. For homeless minors, these approaches are greatly challenging because minors are not the age of majority to consent to a lease in many states and are often unprepared to live successfully on their own.  
4 Special consideration must be made for pregnant and parenting minors and TAY, many of whom have no adequate emergency crisis shelter options due to age restrictions codified in state youth shelter regulations. Vouchers, Congregate Transitional Housing, Community-Based Transitional Housing, Extended Rental Assistance, Permanent Supportive Housing, Transition in Place and Permanent Affordable Housing can all be appropriate for pregnant and parenting youth.  
5 National Resource Center for Youth Development. The University of Oklahoma OUTREACH. Retrieved from <http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/youth-engagement/positive-youth-development>.  
6 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.  
7 Hopper, E. K., Bassuk, E. L., & Olivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Services Settings. The Open Health Services and Policy Journal, 3, 80–100.  
8 Martin, M. & Vaughn, B. (2007). Cultural competence: the nuts & bolts of diversity & inclusion. Strategic Diversity & Inclusion Management magazine, pp. 31-36. San Francisco, CA: DTUI Publications Division.  
9 Center for Health Training. (2003). Fundamental skills for case managers, a self-study guide. Oakland, CA: Center for Health Training.  
10 MacArthur, J., Rawana, E. P., & Brownlee, K. (2011). Implementation of a strengths-based approach in the practice of child and youth care. Relational Child and Youth Practice, 24(3), 6–16.; Durrant, M. (1993). Residential treatment: A cooperative competency-based approach to therapy and program design. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.



## Proposed System to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

### Introduction

Youth and young adults (YYA) are defined by a complex and critical stage of personal growth. Unfortunately, YYA experiencing homelessness lack safety, stability and other basic life needs. Moreover, many of these individuals are unable to access systems, services and resources designed to support healthy development.

For these reasons, YYA experiencing homelessness require a combination of developmentally-appropriate housing and service options. At the systematic level, this approach depends on close collaboration between government agencies, philanthropists and community-based organizations.

### A youth-centric approach

Needs-based interventions are essential to providing all YYA with the support they need to avoid or quickly exit homelessness. Upon entering the system, each young person should receive a comprehensive needs assessment. These assessments should be repeated as necessary to connect youth with age-appropriate housing and services. In practice, this approach requires communities to identify and eliminate gaps in the availability of local resources. Through policy and funding, lawmakers can support the existence of these fully-resourced systems at the community level.

Research indicates that housing assistance for YYA is most effective in conjunction with social, health and educational services. However, each service or housing option must be well-timed and youth-centric to ensure success. For this reason, our system includes primary, secondary and tertiary interventions divided between different stages of delivery. Each component belongs to one or more stage, spanning from prevention to aftercare. We encourage communities to act before (primary and secondary interventions) and soon after (tertiary interventions) YYA experience homelessness. Once youth return home or find appropriate housing placements, services should remain available to prevent future episodes of homelessness.

To address both the causes and consequences of a national epidemic, our proposed system includes a full range of developmentally-appropriate service and housing options for youth and their families. It empowers YYA to lead fuller, healthier lives. Within this system, youth experiencing homelessness will spend less time worrying about basic needs and more time pursuing education and healthy interpersonal relationships. Collectively, our recommendations provide multiple opportunities for youth to undergo safe and healthy transitions to adulthood.

### Flexible implementation

Although necessarily comprehensive, the proposed system is still flexible in several ways.

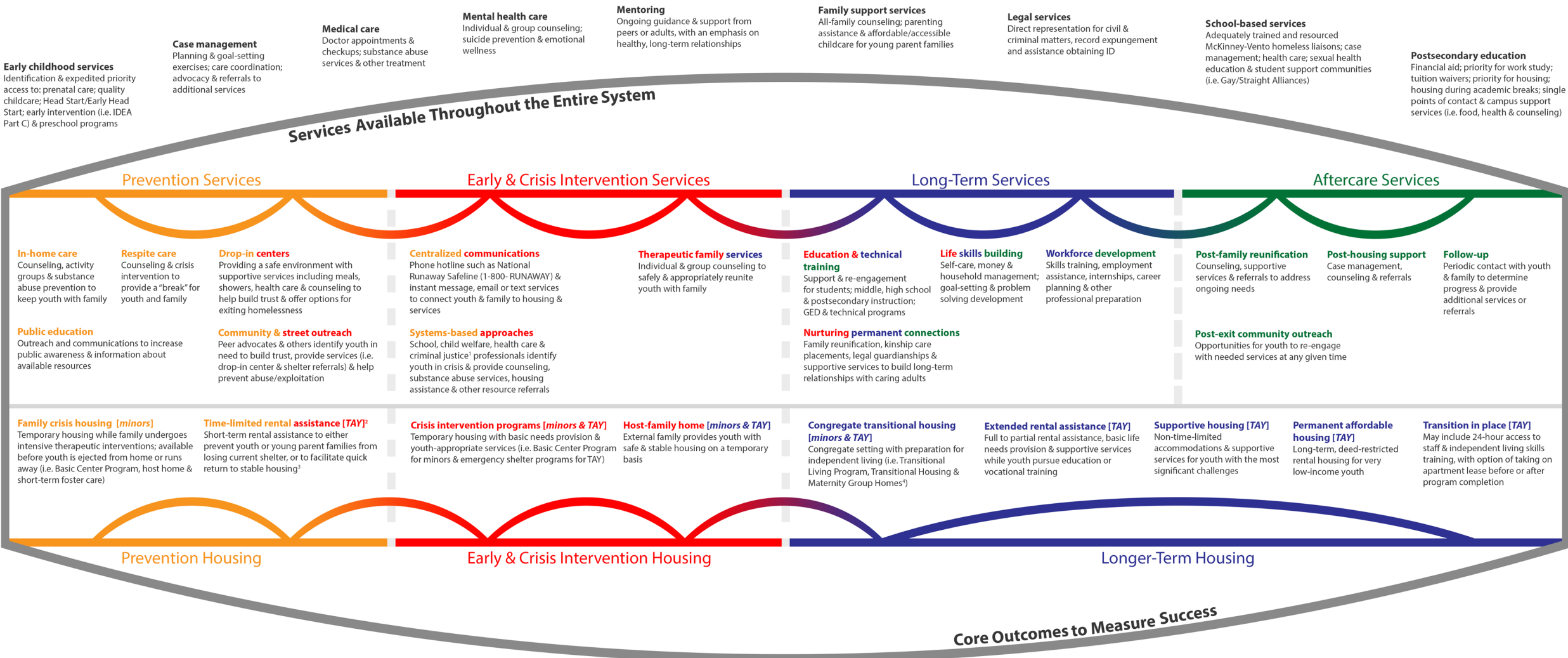
- It is designed to accommodate all YYA, regardless of how many times or where they enter or exit the system. Policies and outcome measures should be structured to welcome youth back whatever programs they need, whenever they seek assistance.
- It is envisioned only as a source of general guidance. Local leaders are encouraged to prioritize service and housing recommendations in whichever order befits their community. Likewise, communities should implement a system that responds to local needs and is compatible with population dynamics.
- It is intended and expected to evolve over time. Although the current version has been reviewed by providers and other experts, we welcome additional feedback. As new research and data becomes available, NN4Y will update our resource accordingly.

### Background

In 2013, the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) first released our Proposed System to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness. This effort was intended to document current knowledge and practices about preventing homelessness and caring for YYA who become homeless. We partnered with a diverse array of experts, who continue to provide guidance. This version of our Proposed System has been revised to more clearly depict the relationship between various housing and service options.

# Proposed System to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

All support services & housing models should be implemented according to the following principles, defined on page 4:  
Positive Youth Development, Trauma-Informed Care, Cultural Competence, Client Centered Care & Strengths-Based Family Services



## Key

Support services or housing models that belong to **one stage** are identified by **one color**.

Support services or housing models that belong to **two or more stages** are identified by **two or more colors**. Each color appears in sequential order, beginning with the stage of origination.

**Stable housing:** safe, stable & developmentally appropriate housing with access to supportive services as necessary

**Permanent connections:** healthy attachments to peers, mentors, family & other caring adults

**Education, training & employment:** employability through supported academic success, development of workplace skills & connections to employers

**Health & social/emotional well-being:** physical health; ability to create & maintain positive relationships with others, solve problems, experience empathy & manage emotions

**Self-sufficiency:** self management with regard to finance, cooking, shopping, laundry, transportation, parenting & household management