

## What Works to End Youth Homelessness

A NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH RESOURCE



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## NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y) is a membership organization of service providers, state agencies, coalitions, advocates and individuals who work towards our vision of a world where vulnerable and homeless youth can escape the dangers of the streets and access safety, youth-appropriate services, hope, and healing.

As the nation's leading organization advocating at the federal level to educate the public and policymakers about the needs of homeless and disconnected youth, we build relationships with policymakers and government agencies in order to champion the diverse needs of homeless and disconnected youth.

For questions about this document or anything else related to the substance of the content, please contact Darla Bardine at [darla.bardine@nn4youth.org](mailto:darla.bardine@nn4youth.org).

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AHAR	Annual Homeless Assessment Report
BCP	Basic Center Programs
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CoC	Continuum of Care
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EHCY	Education for Homeless Children and Youth
FYSB	Family and Youth Services Bureau
FUP	Family Unification Program
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning
NISMART	National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children
NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability
PIT	Point-in-Time
RHY	Runaway and Homeless Youth
RHYA	Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
RHYMIS	The Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System
SOP	Street Outreach Program
TAY	Transition-Aged Youth
TLP	Transitional Living Program
USICH	United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
YRBS	Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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# INTRODUCTION

The definition of homeless youth can vary, but for the purposes of this paper “homeless youth” or “unaccompanied homeless youth” are used interchangeably and refer to an individual, 12–24 years of age, who is living on their own, without a parent or guardian, and lacks a stable or permanent address.<sup>1</sup> Transition-aged youth (TAY)<sup>2</sup>, 18 to 24 years old, are one of the fastest growing homeless populations and require unique housing and services because they are still developing as young adults and need support until they are able to support themselves, gain life experience, and transition to adulthood<sup>3</sup>. Runaway and homeless youth flee conflict, abuse, neglect, or, increasingly, poverty in their homes. They have become disconnected from educational systems and the workforce and do not have the skills and financial resources to live on their own. The factors impacting youth homelessness are complex and differ from those impacting other homeless populations. Youth homelessness is unique because young people<sup>4</sup>:

- Are physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially still developing — they are adults-in-progress with unique strengths and assets.
- Enter into homelessness with little or no work experience.

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1 This includes youth sleeping in shelters, on the street, in parks, and in cars and buildings, as well as “couch-surfers” who find temporary shelter with friends (or, less often, family members), but lack a permanent or stable home. Couch-surfing is a common doubled-up experience for homeless youth. A “doubled-up” homeless experience is when a youth has no legal right to stay where they are staying, and if the property owner/tenant demands that the youth leave, that youth would have no legal recourse to stay. “Doubled-up youth” includes, but is not limited to, those youth couch-surfing or sleeping in sheds, garages, attics, or basements, etc. Appendix A lists the current federal definitions of homeless youth.

2 Transition-aged youth (TAY) are older youth or young adults, 18- to 24-year-olds.

3 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. (2014). Homeless Populations: Youth. Retrieved from <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Channel/Youth-31.aspx>

4 Calgary Homeless Foundation. (2011). Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Calgary. Retrieved from <http://calgaryhomeless.com/assets/research/Youth-PlanFinalweb.pdf>

# INTRODUCTION

- Are often forced into leaving their education prior to completion (i.e., junior high and high school) as a result of their homelessness.
- Experience high levels of criminal victimization, including sexual exploitation and labor trafficking.
- Often enter into homelessness without life skills, such as cooking, money management, housekeeping, and job searching.

To move forward and scale up a youth-appropriate service delivery system, we must strategically invest resources so young people have access to the support they need to grow and develop as adolescents and transition to adulthood. There is a network of programs for these youth, but they are currently insufficient for the level of need. With a fully resourced service delivery system, we would have the ability to provide the readily accessible care, safety, and services necessary for youth in crisis, and truly prevent and end youth homelessness in America.

Although the group is diverse, there are common paths to homelessness. The majority of homeless youth have either run away, been kicked out of unstable home environments, abandoned by their families or caregivers, involved with public systems (foster care, juvenile justice, and mental health), or have a history of residential instability and disconnection.

# RESEARCH ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS YOUTH IN AMERICA

## A. Family Instability

For many youth, instability in their homes forces them out onto the streets before they are adults. Common family experiences include child abuse and/or neglect, domestic violence, parental substance use, and family conflict. Ninety percent of youth accessing youth shelters for minors through the federally funded Basic Center programs state that they experience difficulty at home, such as constant fighting or screaming.<sup>5</sup>

Parental issues and ensuing conflict related to a youth's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is another reason youth become homeless. Youth are kicked out of their home or leave home because it is too dangerous for them to stay. One study found that twenty-five percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth reported family rejection as the reason for their homelessness.<sup>6</sup> Another study found that over one-third of youth who were either in the care of social services or who were homeless had been physically assaulted in their homes upon coming out to their family.<sup>7</sup>

There is a disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth among the homeless youth population. Multiple studies have shown that up to 40% of homeless youth are LGBT.<sup>8</sup> Our society has changed dramatically in the acceptance of LGBT persons, but some families and community members have been unable to accept these realities. Family rejection for being who you are is enormously detrimental psychologically, and evidence suggests that these young people have increased depression and a sense of futility that leads to risk-taking and even self-destructive behaviors. At the same time, LGBT homeless youth are targeted for even more exploitation on the streets than their straight homeless peers.

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5 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

6 National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2009). Incidence and vulnerability of LGBTQ homeless youth. Washington DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

7 Ray, N. (2007). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute & National Coalition for the Homeless.

8 Quintana, N. S., Rosenthal, J., & Krehely, J. (2010). On the streets: The federal response to gay and transgender homeless youth. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

## B. Systems Involvement

For some youth, family instability leads to involvement with the child welfare system. There is a disproportionate representation of foster youth among the homeless youth population. In a recent data collection project of 656 homeless youth between the ages of 14 and 21, 51% reported having stayed in a foster home or group home.<sup>9</sup> Youth who emancipate (also known as “aging out”) from foster care are less likely than youth in general to graduate from high school or college.<sup>10</sup> Limited educational attainment results in limited employment opportunities, which in turn leads to unemployment and financial instability, which contributes to homelessness.

There is a two-way relationship between youth homelessness and the criminal justice system. Youth involved with the criminal justice system are more likely to report unstable housing.<sup>11</sup> And homeless youth report a high level of involvement with the criminal justice system. One study of four U.S. cities found that 20–30% of homeless young adults had been arrested.<sup>12</sup> Much of this is due to arrests that stem from activities associated with daily survival, such as panhandling, loitering, or sleeping outdoors.<sup>13</sup> In addition, homeless youth on the streets are often victims of commercial sexual exploitation and labor trafficking. Up to 77% of sex-trafficked youth had reported previously running away from home.<sup>14</sup> As communities strengthen their response to sex trafficking, they are discovering many of the minors ‘rescued’ are involved with Child Welfare. Despite the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (22 U.S.C. § 7102), which absolves trafficked youth from being legally responsible for crimes committed as a result of their being trafficked, youth are still often placed in the juvenile justice system rather than linked to service providers. A large number of youth who exit either juvenile detention or foster care later become homeless; the Midwest Evaluation reports that 31% of emancipated (mean age: 26) foster youth have experienced homelessness in the last year, and 12% of young men who emancipated were incarcerated.<sup>15</sup> This is due primarily to the fact that, while youth are expected to be independent, few have acquired the skills or ability to earn the income

9 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). Street Outreach Program: Data Collection Project Executive Summary

10 National Governor’s Association. (2010). The Transition to Adulthood: How States Can Support Older Youth in Foster Care. Page 3, Table 1.

11 Feldman, D., & Patterson, D. (2003). WIA Youth Offender Study: Characteristics and program experience of youthful offenders within Seattle-King County Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. Seattle, WA: Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County.

12 Ferguson, K.M., Bender, K., Thompson, S.J., Xie, B., & Pollio, D. (2012). Exploration of Arrest Activity Among Homeless Young Adults in Four U.S. Cities. *Social Work Research*. 36(3): 233-238.

13 Family & Youth Services Bureau. (2014). Research Roundup: What Leads Homeless Youth to Have Run-ins With the Law? Retrieved from <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2014/09/research-roundup-what-leads-homeless-youth-have-run-ins-law>.

14 Seng, M. (1989). Child sexual abuse and adolescent prostitution: A comparative analysis. *Adolescence*, 24(95), 665–675.

15 Courtney, M., et al. (2011). Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.



needed to live on their own post-emancipation. In addition, involvement with the criminal justice system increases a youth's chances of later homelessness. The odds of becoming homeless within a year of release from incarceration, including the juvenile justice system, are 1 in 11.<sup>16</sup>

## C. Residential Instability

Many homeless youth report a history of residential instability that may stretch back to when they were still with their family. One study found that 40% of homeless youth had parents who received public assistance or lived in public housing.<sup>17</sup> A family's poor economic situation can lead to family homelessness. Family homelessness may then lead to a youth being homeless on their own as they become older or are separated from their families. In fact, some family shelters do not take older youth, particularly males,<sup>18</sup> which may result in the youth being on their own and on the streets. In other instances, a lack of financial resources leads to older youth leaving the household to lessen the strain on the rest of the family. A youth may move from couch-surfing to the streets or other places, like abandoned buildings, etc., as the effectiveness of their survival strategies in keeping them off the streets wanes. Eighty percent of older youth who enter a federally funded Transitional Living Program report the inability to maintain housing

<sup>16</sup> Sermons, M. W., & Witte, P. (2011). State of homelessness in America: A research report on homelessness. Washington DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

<sup>17</sup> Moore, J. (2006). Unaccompanied and homeless youth: Review of literature (1995–2005). Greensboro, NC: National Center for Homeless Education.

<sup>18</sup> This still happens in communities across the United States, even though the HEARTH Act of 2009 prohibited this practice starting from 2 years after its enactment. See 42 USC § 11302 SEC. 404(a).



Photo: Diego Vito Cervo

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**Becoming  
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as a reason for their homelessness, and 35% report insufficient income to sustain housing.<sup>19</sup> Becoming pregnant or a young parent can also result in residential instability. Many youth are ejected from their homes due to their pregnancies, and even more homeless youth become pregnant once they are on the streets. Up to 50% of street youth will have a pregnancy experience, and most of those will give birth while still homeless.<sup>20</sup> Studies have found that one third of parenting teens have experienced homelessness, with 40% of these surviving on the streets while pregnant.<sup>21</sup>

## D. Extreme Disconnection

There has been a lot of discussion in recent years about “disconnected youth,” also known as “opportunity youth.”<sup>22</sup> Disconnected youth are characterized by their disconnection from education, the workforce, and networks of social support. They are off-track to reach a future that includes self-sufficiency, economic stability, and overall well-being. Homeless youth are the most extreme example of disconnection and face multiple hurdles to reconnection.

Most homeless youth are disconnected from educational systems and have been off-track educationally for an extended period of time. This includes long periods without school attendance or enrollment. This often culminates in dropping out prior to completion of a high school degree. Lack of high school completion is linked to unemployment and diminished earnings among those who are employed. Someone who has not completed high school is four times more likely to be unemployed than a college graduate.<sup>23</sup>

Some youth are homeless because they are on their own and unable to afford housing due primarily to unemployment or underemployment. The degree of youth disconnection from the workforce is at unprecedented levels. There are 2.7 million fewer jobs currently for youth 16–24 years old than there would have been if there had not been a recession.<sup>24</sup> Barely over half of young adults ages 18–24

19 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

20 Greene, J.M., & Ringwalt, C.L. (1998). Pregnancy among three national samples of runaway and homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 23,(6).

21 Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy. (2013). *Living on the Edge: The Conflict and Trauma that Lead to Teen Parent Homelessness*.

22 Opportunity Youth, sometimes referred to as “disconnected youth,” are defined as people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working. Retrieved from <http://www.corpsnetwork.org/advocacy/opportunity-youth>

23 American Human Development Project. (2009). *Goals for the common good: Exploring the impact of education*. Brooklyn, NY: American Human Development Project.

24 O’Sullivan, R., & Johnston, A. (2012). *No end in sight? The long-term jobs gap and what it means for America*. Washington DC: Young Invincibles.

**Barely over half of young adults ages 18–24 are currently employed, the lowest employment rate for this age group since the government began collecting data in 1948.**

are currently employed, the lowest employment rate for this age group since the government began collecting data in 1948.<sup>25</sup> The picture is starker for homeless youth who have little opportunity to develop the academic credentials, job skills, and work supports needed to gain employment.

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, P., Parker, K., Kochhar, R., Fry, R., Funk, C., Patten, E., & Motel, S. (2012). Young, underemployed and optimistic: Coming of age, slowly, in a tough economy. Washington DC: Pew Research Center.

# CURRENT RESEARCH ON THE EXISTING SERVICE STRUCTURE FOR AMERICA'S HOMELESS YOUTH

Local community-based nonprofit organizations are leading a national movement that focuses public funding toward innovative solutions to end youth homelessness. By recognizing the inability of the child welfare system to serve all youth facing homelessness, human trafficking,<sup>26</sup> and sexual exploitation, community-based organizations are focusing on evidence-informed interventions that achieve appropriate family reunification, housing stability, and improvements in youth health and functioning. Collaboration between public systems (child welfare<sup>27</sup>, juvenile justice, and public school systems) and community-based organizations is effective in leveraging the resources and strengths of what each has to offer. For example, youth homelessness can be prevented for a large number of young people if fewer youth run away from foster care placements and youth exiting the foster care system have support and resources to finish college, compete in the job market, and live independently. However, this paper focuses on the different “parts” of a system that we know are essential in preventing and ending youth homelessness.

The multiple systems homeless youth encounter can collaborate so that together, the “parts” discussed below are available to prevent and end youth homelessness.

There is considerable research and data on intervention methodologies, programmatic approaches, and service models that offer positive outcomes for homeless youth. Urban, rural, and suburban communities will implement the housing and service components detailed below in ways that work in their unique local communities. Also, homeless minors often need different interventions than homeless TAY due to their unique life stages and developmental needs. Homeless youth, including runaway and trafficked youth, need a safety net and system of care that is distinct from homeless adults. Providing appropriate, relevant, and readily accessible services is critical to addressing episodic or longer-term homelessness among youth. These services are essential components of any housing intervention, including family reunification. Successfully addressing youth homelessness enables safe transitions to adulthood and develops young adults who can contribute positively to their communities. Significantly, it also reduces the number of youth who get caught up in the criminal justice system, are sex or labor trafficked, or become chronically

<sup>26</sup> Opportunity Youth, sometimes referred to as “disconnected youth,” are defined as people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working. Retrieved from <http://www.corpsnetwork.org/advocacy/opportunity-youth>

<sup>27</sup> American Human Development Project. (2009). *Goals for the common good: Exploring the impact of education*. Brooklyn, NY: American Human Development Project.



Photo: Viktor Pravdica

homeless adults. The basic building blocks of an effective safety net for runaway and homeless youth include:

## **A. Prevention and Outreach to Connect Youth to Services**

Prevention is the critical first step toward an effective community response to youth homelessness. Not all incidents of youth homelessness can be prevented, but with appropriate, targeted services, some families and youth at-risk can avoid crisis. Some community programs reach youth through their schools, offering individual and family case management to prevent runaway behavior, or emergency rental assistance to families facing eviction to prevent family homelessness. Case management might also include connection to educational resources, addressing legal needs, and budgeting and financial management assistance for the youth's family. Being connected with McKinney-Vento

school liaisons is also a vital step in preventing homeless youth from disconnecting from school and not completing their high school education.

Outreach is an important component of early intervention. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Point-in-Time (PIT) count illuminated the fact that homeless youth are unsheltered to a greater extent than adults.<sup>28</sup> Homeless youth on the street often locate themselves away from the homeless adult population, which means that a targeted outreach approach must be taken in order to reach youth and bring them into services and off the streets. Many youth fail to approach shelter and housing programs due to concerns of personal safety, fear of entering the foster care system, lack of awareness that there are targeted programs for

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28 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2014). The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress: Part 1 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness. Washington, DC. This count conducted in 2013 found 59% of unaccompanied homeless minors were unsheltered and 45% of unaccompanied homeless 18- to 24-year olds were unsheltered.

# Many youth fail to approach shelter and housing programs due to concerns of personal safety, fear, of entering the foster system

homeless youth, or word-of-mouth that no beds are available. Many youth who fail to seek shelter and housing also do not identify themselves in the same category as the older adult homeless population, and as a result, they often do not access services from providers serving the older population. Outreach workers meet youth on the streets and provide crisis counseling, resources to meet basic needs, and referrals to services. Additionally, outreach workers locate potential victims of human trafficking, build relationships, and provide information so homeless youth know where they are able to access safety and services.

## **Bill Wilson Center - Family Advocacy Services**

- Santa Clara County, California
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 14–17
  - o 91% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Caucasian, 4% African-American
- Services and Resources: individual and family case management, education

resources, legal assistance connection, emergency rental assistance, parenting workshops, and budgeting/financial management assistance.

- Results:
  - o 69% of families stabilized their housing with support
  - o 81% of families deepened housing stability with utility, transportation, vouchers, or other financial support as a result of the program
  - o 75% of youth improved their GPA
  - o 77% of youth decreased truancy by 85%

## **Auburn Youth Resources, Friends of Youth, and YouthCare – Safe Place Program**

- King County, Washington
- Urban, suburban, and rural areas
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–17 (43% ages 12–15, 57% ages 16–17)
  - o 51% Male, 47% Female, 1%

### Transgender Female

- o 28% White, 14% Mixed Race, 12% Black, 10% Latino, 3% Asian, 3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- o 63% of clients report abuse and/or neglect
- Services and Resources: 24/7 support for youth in crisis via a network of designated safe place sites and a toll-free number. Staff provide immediate safety assessment, assistance in creating safety plans, referrals to shelter and safe housing, transportation services, crisis intervention services, and family reunification support.
- Results:
  - o 86% of clients who received an in-person response were placed in safe shelter or housing
  - o 87% of clients who received a phone-only response created a safety plan
  - o In a 48-hour follow-up period, 94% of clients said they would use Safe Place again
- Learning: Youth find out about the program in a variety of ways; the program is constantly expanding the number of businesses and nonprofit organizations that sign on as designated “safe place sites” where youth can ask for help and wait while a Safe Place coordinator arrives. It has taken time to build the trust of youth in the community, and over the last year, they have seen an increase in call volume as young people begin to trust the program and share their positive experiences with their peers.

### **The Center for Youth Services – Street Outreach Program**

- Rochester (Monroe County), New York
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages: 12–22 (30% 12–15, 70% 16–22)
  - o Gender: 45% Male, 44% Female, 10% Transgender Female, 1% Transgender Male
  - o Race: 71% Black, 17% White, 10% Multi-Racial, 2% Asian, and overall 7% Hispanic
- Services and Resources: evening and weekend street-based outreach to provide food, toiletries, and immediate access and referrals to shelter and other services to any youth-serving agencies in Monroe County. The Street Outreach team also seeks to locate, identify and build trust with trafficked youth, both from labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Longer-term intensive street-based case management services are provided to homeless youth and young adults who are the most disconnected from community and services. This includes support in obtaining an ID, stabilizing housing through family reunification or assistance in finding independent permanent housing, and advocacy for legal, educational, employment, and medical needs.
- Results:

- o 100% of youth engaged by Street Outreach who were seeking immediate shelter and/or services were able to access services
- o 90% of intensive street-based case management youth stabilized their housing
- o 60% of street-involved, homeless, or at-risk of homelessness youth accessed referrals for additional supports and services

## B. Drop-In Centers to Engage Youth and Link to Community Resources

Drop-in centers offer immediate services to unaccompanied homeless youth, such as food, clothing, showers, laundry, bus tokens, and personal hygiene supplies. The ‘low-barrier’ type of community-based services drop-in centers offer are seen as a first step toward engaging homeless youth into more intensive services and reintegration.<sup>29</sup> One study found that homeless youth are more likely to access a drop-in center (78%) than emergency shelter (40%)<sup>30</sup> Many of these drop-in centers are specifically aimed at transition-aged youth and are more friendly and accepting to this population. Drop-in centers also provide counseling and other support services that allow youth to begin to address the issues that lead to their homelessness or that impact their daily functioning. One research study of a drop-in facility tracked 180 homeless youth who accessed comprehensive intervention and individual therapy from a Drop-in Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The research showed the youths’ psychological distress and substance use significantly decreased, supporting a finding that substance abuse and mental health therapy models can be effectively integrated into Drop-in Centers.<sup>31</sup>

### YouthCare Street Outreach Program & Drop-in Centers

- Seattle, Washington
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 13–22
  - o 61% Male, 37% Female, 2% Transgender
  - o 49% White, 25% Multi-Racial, 5% Hispanic, 16% Black, 4% Native, 1% Asian
- Services and Resources: connection to youth living on the streets and unsafe

<sup>29</sup> Slesnick, N., Glassman, M., Garren, R., Toviessi, P., Bantchevska, D., & Dashora, P. (2007). How to open and sustain a drop-in center for homeless youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30: 727–734.

<sup>30</sup> De Rosa, C., Montgomery, S., Kipke, M., Iverson, E., Ma, J., & Unger, J. (1999). Services Utilization among Homeless and Runaway Youth in Los Angeles, California: Rates and Reasons. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 24: 190–200.

<sup>31</sup> Slesnick, N., Ju Kang, M., Bonomi, A., & Prestopnik, J. (2007). Treatment outcome for street-living, homeless youth. *Addictive Behaviors*, 32: 1237–1251.



locations, drop-in hours for youth with meals, clothing, hygiene supplies, access to showers and laundry, connections to case management, education, employment training, shelter, and housing programs.

- Results of street outreach and drop-in center services in one year:
  - o 401 youth and young adults contacted through street outreach
  - o 1,388 youth and young adults came to the drop-in center
  - o 158 youth entered case management
  - o 205 youth entered shelter
  - o 143 youth entered housing
  - o 64 youth returned home
  - o 93 youth received referrals to other resources in the community

### **Youth Continuum – Street Outreach Drop-in Program**

- New Haven, Connecticut
- Urban, suburban, and rural
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–24
  - o 75% Female, 25% Male
  - o 69% African-American, 10% Biracial, 10% Caucasian, 10% Latino, 1% Other/Multi
- o 50–60% Pregnant and/or Parenting youth
- Services and Resources: connection to youth living on the streets and unsafe locations, drop-in hours for youth with meals, clothing, hygiene supplies, access to showers and laundry, connections to case management, mental health screening, employment programs, shelter, and housing programs.
- Results: 1,300–1,400 visits annually (duplicated)
  - o Distribute 16,000 diapers
  - o Provide 2,500 meals and 1,110 hygiene supplies
  - o 200 clients return for clinical services
  - o 50 clients enter transitional housing programs

### **TAY ACADEMY – Street Outreach Drop-in Program**

- San Diego, California
- Urban and suburban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–24

- o 53% Male, 47% Female,
- o 37% Hispanic, 23% African-American, 17% Bi-racial, 15% Caucasian, 8% Other/Multi
- Services and Resources: connection to youth living on the streets and unsafe locations, drop-in hours for youth, connections to case management, education, employment training, shelter, and housing programs.
- Results:
  - o 74% of youth demonstrate sustained or increased productivity
  - o 92% of youth demonstrate progress toward one or more life-plan goals in the area of safety, health and wellness, education, employment, self-sufficiency, and stability
  - o 75% of youth who engage in intensive services access coaching services and/or stabilization housing services
  - o 96% of youth who engage in intensive services show improvement in areas that support reduced engagement in the children or adult mental health systems of care

## C. Shelter to Provide an Important First Step Off the Street

Emergency homeless shelters for youth (such as Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) Basic Center Programs) have been widely used since the early 1970s. Designed to meet the basic needs of youth, these facilities provide crisis intervention services, short-term assistance, and custodial services, which focus on family connection with the goal of reunification.<sup>32</sup> In 2014, of the 30,774 youth served in RHYA funded Basic Center Programs, which provides emergency shelter and crisis intervention services for homeless minors, ninety-four percent exited to a safe and appropriate placement.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, over two-thirds returned to the home of a parent or guardian as a result of effective and intensive family reconnection and intervention services.<sup>34</sup> Safe and appropriate family reconnection and reunification not only offers housing stability to end youth homelessness, but results in further positive outcomes. Youth who are successfully reunited with their families have longer-term positive

32 Nebbitt, V., House, L., Thompson, S., & Pollio, D. (2007). Successful Transitions of Runaway/Homeless Youth from Shelter Care. *Journal of Children and Family Studies*, 16: 545–555. For more information about family reconnection or family reunification, refer to “Family Engagement and Interventions When Safe and Appropriation” on page 15 of this document.

33 Data from October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014. A safe and appropriate exit is a placement from shelter that is neither “the streets” nor unknown. Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/research/RHYMIS.htm>

34 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Report to Congress on Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal years 2010–2011, p. 12. Retrieved from: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/rhy\\_congress\\_2010\\_11.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/rhy_congress_2010_11.pdf)

outcomes of less hopelessness, depression, and suicidal ideation than youth discharged from shelter to other locations.<sup>35</sup> Even if a young person cannot safely live with a parent or guardian, repairing the relationship to the extent that is safe also has positive outcomes on the development of the young person and increases their capacity to develop healthy relationships.<sup>36</sup>

Although emergency shelter is not a long-term solution to youth homelessness, it is often the first step for youth on their path to stability. Providing youth developmentally appropriate assessment and case management services while they are in a safe place also allows for more successful service referrals and housing placements. Research has shown that stabilizing housing results in a positive impact on reducing drug abuse,<sup>37</sup> vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation,<sup>38</sup> and other health risks.

For homeless transition-aged youth (TAY), emergency shelter gets them off the street and provides initial stabilization, assessment, and case management. TAY often do not feel safe in adult shelters and therefore avoid them. There are also long waitlists for adult shelters, which create additional barriers to entry for TAY. For this reason, it is important to have separate TAY-specific emergency shelters where they can feel safe and receive developmentally appropriate services. When basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing are met, youth are able to shift their attention from surviving to building the skills they need to transition to adulthood and achieve lifelong self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, there is no federal funding stream dedicated to supporting these services for 18 to 24-year-olds, so they are not provided consistently throughout the country.

### **Project Oz: Basic Center Host Home Program And Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services**

- Livingston County and McLean County, Illinois
- Rural and urban

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35 Teare, J., Furst, D., Peterson, R., & Authier, K. (1992). Family reunification following shelter placement: Child, family, and program correlates. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 62: 142–146; Thompson, S.J., Pollio, D.E., & Bitner, L. (2000). Outcomes for adolescents using runaway and homeless youth services. *Journal of Human Behavior and the Social Environment*, 3(1): 79–97.

36 Winland, D., Gaetz, S., & Patton, T. (2011) Family Matters, Homeless Youth & Eva's Initiative's Family Reconnect Program. The Homeless Hub, page 10.

37 Cheng, T., Wood, E., Nguyen, P., Kerr, T., & DeBeck, K. (2014). Increases and decreases in drug use attributed to housing status among street-involved youth in a Canadian setting. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 11. Retrieved from <http://www.harmreductionjournal.com/content/11/1/12>

38 Curtis, R., Terry, K., Dank, M., Dombrowski, K., & Khan, B. (2008). Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in NY City, Volume One: The CSEC Population in New York City: Size, Characteristics, and Needs. U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/225083.pdf>

- Demographics:
  - o Ages 10–18: (49% ages 10–14, 51% ages 15–18)
  - o 52% Female, 48% Male
  - o 35% African-American, 47% Caucasian, 8% Latino, 10% Mixed ethnicity
- Services: include 24-hour crisis intervention, emergency placement through Host Homes, individual and family counseling using Reality Therapy, transportation, court advocacy, scattered Safe Place locations, and links to additional services. The goal is to reunite youth with their families or find safe, long-term alternatives, such as with relatives or close family friends.
  - o Procedures are to meet with youth, usually through a call from the police department. The police pick up runaway and homeless youth, then call us to begin services. Youth and counselor complete a Safety Assessment, and we transport youth to a Host Home if returning to their home is not a safe option. During the following days, the counselor maintains communication with the youth and the family, and does family counseling. The youth and family present the issues that led to their separation, and the counselor teaches skills or provides a new perspective so that all parties can work toward a positive solution.
- Results:
  - o 100% youth safety at intake and through duration of services
  - o Livingston County, 2014: 94% family reunification, 1% in family-generated placements, 3% in other private placements, and 2% became wards of the state or judicial systems.
  - o McLean County, 2014: 84% family reunification, 8% in family-generated placements, 3% went to other private placements, and 5% became wards of the state or judicial systems.

### **Lighthouse Youth Services – Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth**

- Cincinnati, Ohio and Hamilton County, Ohio
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–24
  - o 72% African-American, 23% Caucasian, 5% Multiple Races, 2% Hispanic/Latino
  - o 50% Male, 48% Female, 1% Transgender
- Services and Resources: housing, self-sufficiency skill building, employment readiness training, financial literacy, education connections, resource and referral linkages, and case management.
- Results:
  - o 30 day average stay period

- o 67% of young people moved on to permanent or transitional housing
- o 78% of clients maintained the same or increased income
- o 84% did not return to homelessness
- Learning: Partnerships with law enforcement are critical. No barrier/no expectation to engage keeps youth engaged. Youth who engaged in Job Readiness Groups were more likely to gain employment once accepted into shelter.

### **Larkin Street Youth Services – The Lark Inn**

- San Francisco, California
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–24
  - o 68% Male, 24% Female, 3% Transgender female, 3% Transgender male, 1% Unreported
  - o 30% African-American, 30% White/Caucasian, 15% Latino, 9% Multiracial, 6% Other, 5% Asian/Pacific
- Islander, 3% American Indian, and 3% Missing/Unknown.
- o 65% Heterosexual, 13% Gay, 3% Lesbian, 10% Bisexual, and 4% Questioning/Other
- Services and Resources: emergency housing, food, clothing, case management services, counseling for vocations and education, employment readiness training, life-skill building, support groups, medical services, behavioral health services. Youth may stay at the shelter for up to 120 nights per year. All residents who stay in the shelter more than 20 total nights are required to participate in meetings with a case manager and complete an individualized service plan.
- Results:
  - o Of youth who stayed a minimum of 20 days, 60% reported a positive transition into housing
  - o 90% of youth accessed Larkin Street’s education and employment program Hire Up

### **Catholic Charities of Herkimer County – Runaway and Homeless Youth Program**

- Herkimer County, New York
- Rural
- Demographics:
  - o 21 years old and younger
  - o Female: 57%, Male: 43%
  - o 86% Caucasian, 4% African-American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 8% Multiple Races

## D. Family Engagement and Interventions When Safe and Appropriate

Family reconnection and reunification for homeless youth is an intervention that offers individual and family support for young people who become, or are at risk of becoming, homeless. Strengths-based family reconnection is most often used with homeless youth under the age of 18 when it is safe, appropriate, and possible. This approach focuses on counseling youth and their caretakers to address the problems that caused the youth to leave home. Strengths-based family services uses assessment processes that identify the family's core strengths and find ways to incorporate those strengths in resolving the problems the family is experiencing.<sup>39</sup> Families are recognized as resources to other family members, and the focus is on enhancing families' capacities to support the growth and development of all family members: adults, youths, and children.<sup>40</sup> The goal is to improve the youths' home-life situation so they can return to a supportive environment.<sup>41</sup> The majority of homeless youth under the age of 18 will return home to family (however they define family), and this intervention lessens the likelihood that the youth will become homeless again.<sup>42</sup> However, this is not always safe, appropriate, or possible, as demonstrated by the extensive research that shows the majority of homeless youth come from homes with high levels of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, interpersonal violence and assault, parental neglect, and exposure to domestic violence.

For homeless youth who are 18- to 24-years-old, family reconnection resulting in a young person going to live with a parent or family member may not be an option. However, in some cases, this is a successful intervention for TAY. Even if living with family is not possible, research has shown that there are long-term positive effects to repairing familial relationships to the extent that it is safe and appropriate.<sup>43</sup>

### Cocoon House – Project SAFE Program

- Everett, WA
- Urban, suburban, and rural
- Demographics:

39 Sexton, T.L., & Alexander, J.F. (2000). Functional family therapy. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington, DC.

40 Liddle, B.A., & Hogue, A. (2000). A family-based, developmental-ecological preventive intervention for high-risk adolescents. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 26(3): 265–279.

41 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). Promising Strategies to End Youth Homelessness. Report to Congress. Page 35. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/end-youth-homelessness>

42 Norweeta G., et. al. (2007). Newly Homeless Youth Typically Return Home. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(6): 574–576.

43 Winland, D., Gaetz, S., & Patton, T. (2011). Family Matters, Homeless Youth & Eva's Initiative's Family Reconnect Program. *The Homeless Hub*, page 10.

- o Ages 12–17
- o 74% Caucasian, 10% Latino/Hispanic, 16% Other Services and Resources including: preventative counseling/ outreach, emergency housing, and family counseling, with the goal of family reunification through all services
- Results:
  - o 81% of parents decrease their frustration about the situation with their teen
  - o 96% express high self-sufficiency in categories of human relations, support systems, and access to services, all of which sustain these feelings of hope and decreased frustration
  - o 90% of callers at the follow-up call reported their teen was still living at home
  - o If youth had no history of living at home, they were 9 times more likely to be living at home at the two-week follow-up call.
  - o If parents mostly adhered to the action plan, youth were 4.4 times more likely to be living at home at the follow-up call.

### **Walker's Point Youth & Family Center – Teen Crisis Intervention**

- Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 11–17
  - o 59% African-American, 31%

Caucasian, 26% Hispanic, 10% Other or Mixed Race.

o 17% LGBTQ

- Services and Resources: emergency housing, family counseling (for youth both in and out of shelter), emergency shelter for pregnant/parenting teens and their children, goal of family reunification through all services.
- Results:
  - o 86% of teens increase scores after Nurturing Program,<sup>44</sup> reflecting gains in nurturing concepts and skills

o 97% of youth return home or to a safe alternative at time of discharge

## **E. Youth-Appropriate Housing Programs to Build Independent Living Skills**

Transitional housing and permanent supportive housing are included in a youth model for those instances where family reunification is not appropriate due to age or family environment (high risks of repeat abuse, neglect, or exploitation; parents no longer around due to either death or incarceration; parents homeless themselves; etc.,). Service-rich transitional and permanent supportive housing programs should provide a comprehensive range of support services that build independent living skills and

<sup>44</sup> The Nurturing Program helps both parents/parent figures and teens to better understand their own needs as well as the feelings and needs of others. Learn more at <http://walkerspoint.org/services/family-support-empowerment-program>



support overall well-being. Homeless youth are in a developmental stage where they are still learning skills; experiencing positive physical, psychological, and cognitive development; and forming their individual identities as emerging adults. In order to remain safe and stable in housing, most homeless youth will require some level of supportive services.

The Transitional Living Program (TLP) is a federally funded program established through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act that offers affordable housing coupled with supportive services for 18 to 21 months to homeless youth ages 16 to 22. In 2014, 2,782 youth exited TLP programs across the country.<sup>45</sup> Of these youth, eighty-eight percent exited to a safe and stable housing location.<sup>46</sup> Finally, a small program evaluation study of 23 homeless youth accessing transitional housing services after exiting foster care found that one hundred percent of the youth who stayed with the program for two or more years were discharged to stable housing, and youth who participated in the program's employment services had significantly higher hourly wages, were employed for longer periods of time, and remained in the program longer at discharge.<sup>47</sup>

## Home Start – Maternity Shelter Program

- San Diego, California
- Suburban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–24
  - o Women pregnant or parenting up to 2 children
  - o 56% African-American, 26% Hispanic/Latino, 15% Caucasian, 3% Other/Unknown
- Services and Resources: housing, self-sufficiency skill building, employment readiness training, counseling for mental health, child development specialists, connections to education for children, support groups, case management, financial literacy, linkages to resources, and referrals.
- Results:
  - o 60% of residents found permanent, affordable, and safe housing when exiting the program
  - o 80% of residents who previously received no benefits received benefits within 4 months of entry
  - o 50% of residents found employment before leaving the program
  - o 100% of children were developmentally assessed by staff and referred to local schools or high-performing early childhood programs and behavioral health programs
- Learning: Meeting program requirements with young, single mothers who are also working, going to school, or in an

<sup>45</sup> Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://extranet.acf.hhs.gov/rhymis/>. RHYMIS is a national reporting system for programs receiving Federal runaway and homeless youth fund

<sup>46</sup> Id.

<sup>47</sup> Rashid, S. (2004). Evaluating a transitional living program for homeless, formerly foster care youth. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 14(4): 240–248.

outpatient program can be a daunting task. We work hard to meet each mother where they are at and provide a program for them, while still meeting grant specifications.

### **Center for Human Services – Pathways Program**

- Modesto, California
- Suburban and rural
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–21
  - o 57% Female, 43% Male
  - o 77% White, 13% Black/African-American, 7% Multiracial, 3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 35% also identified as Hispanic
- Services and Resources: transitional housing, self-sufficiency skill building, case management, counseling for substance abuse and mental health, mentorship, house meetings, life skills classes, employment readiness training, recreational activities, and aftercare services.
- Results:
  - o 90% of youth found a place to live and a job
  - o 90% of youth received needed referrals from case managers
  - o 80% of youth reported making progress in counseling

### **Youth Services of Tulsa – Transitional Living Program**

- Tulsa, Oklahoma
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 17–22
  - o 40% Caucasian, 30% African-American, 15% Hispanic/Latino, and 15% Native American
- Services and Resources: A fully furnished apartment with program services focused on case management, job readiness, employment services and life skills instruction for 12 months. Following program completion, case managers continue to meet monthly with the youth to ensure a smooth transition into the community.
- Results:
  - o 83% Youth completes the job readiness curriculum
  - o 100% Youth gains employment
  - o 83% Youth shows improvement at 6 months on the life skills assessment and Self Sufficiency Matrix
  - o 67% Youth maintains employment for 6 months

- o 78% Youth transitions into permanent housing in the community
- o 78% Youth maintains permanent housing in the community for at least 6 months
- Learning: YST has observed an increase in employment rates and youth obtaining higher-paying positions since adding an employment specialist position to the program. Although the rate of obtaining employment has increased, youth have continued to struggle maintaining employment and now receive regular case management throughout their program participation focused on maintaining employment. We have also recognized that the majority of issues youth face in the program are around social and emotional skills. The program has recently implemented a new curriculum with a goal of building those skills and abilities and improving retention rates in the program.

### **Bill Wilson Center Transitional Housing Program**

- Santa Clara County, California
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–24
  - o 56% Female, 43% Male, 1% Unreported
  - o 66% White, 56% Hispanic, 18% Black, 4% Asian, 1% Indian/Alaskan, 7% Unknown/Other<sup>48</sup>
- Services and Resources: transitional housing, case management, counseling, independent life skills training, parenting classes, and employment services.
- Results:
  - o 62% of youth are employed and earning wages
  - o 80% of youth transitioned into stable housing

## **F. Case Management to Improve Wellness and Decision-Making**

Case managers are commonly employed and considered essential among community-based programs serving homeless youth.<sup>49</sup> The one-to-one relationship building is essential to earn the trust of youth and to help offer meaningful communication and guidance. Case management pairs a youth with a professional case worker who builds a trusting relationship with the youth, identifies barriers, advocates for the youth, and helps the youth secure resources to achieve youth-identified goals.<sup>50</sup> An evaluation of intensive case management services (lower case-worker-to-youth ratio and

<sup>48</sup> These percentages add up to more than 100% because the clients can choose more than one racial/ethnic group.

<sup>49</sup> Slesnick, N., Dashora, P., Letcher, A., Erdem, G., & Serovich, J. (2009). A Review of Services and Interventions for Runaway and Homeless Youth: Moving Forward. *Child & Youth Services Review*, 31(7): 732–742.

<sup>50</sup> California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership. (2011). 360o Whole Youth. Whole Life. Retrieved from <http://>

# Youth who participated in the program's employment services had significantly higher hourly wages, were employed for longer periods of time

longer duration of services) to “regular” case management services offered in a drop-in center found that both groups experienced improved psychological well-being and a reduction in problem behaviors after the first three months of each intervention model.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, youth who accessed intensive case management services exhibited less aggression, fewer externalized behaviors, and more satisfaction with their quality of life than youth under the regular case management model.<sup>52</sup> Case

[www.co-invest.org/resources/360-ILP-Report-REV11-11-FINAL.pdf](http://www.co-invest.org/resources/360-ILP-Report-REV11-11-FINAL.pdf); Collaborative Community Health Research Centre at the University of Victoria. (2002). Research Review of Best Practices for Provision of Youth Services. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth/pdf/best\\_practices\\_provision\\_of\\_youth\\_services.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth/pdf/best_practices_provision_of_youth_services.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, two studies using homeless adult samples showed similar outcomes when intensive case management services were compared to less intensive case management services. Hurlburt, M., Hough, R., & Wood, P. (1996). Effects of substance abuse on housing stability of homeless mentally ill persons in supported housing. *Psychiatric Services*, 47:731–736; Toro, P., Passero, R., Bellavia, C., Daeschler, C., & Wall, D. (1997). Evaluating an intervention for homeless persons: Results of a field experiment. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, 65(3): 476–484.

<sup>52</sup> Cauce, M., Morgan, C., Lohr, Y., Wagner, V., Moore, E., & Sy, J. (1994). Effectiveness of intensive case management for homeless adolescents. Results of a 3-month follow-up. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 2:

management is also an essential component of housing programs and serves as the mechanism for youth to develop both short- and long-term goals related to education, employment, financial stability, and well-being and create individualized case plans to achieve these goals. Note: These program examples highlight how case management is effective when paired with housing and other essential services.

## YMCA Youth & Family Services – Turning Point Transitional Living Program

- City Heights, California
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–21 (23% ages 12–18, 77% ages 19–21)
  - o 73% Female, 27% Male
  - o 61% African-American, 19% Multiracial, 17% White, 3% Native American, 42% also identified Hispanic
- Services and Resources: transitional housing, case management,

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219–227.

independent-living skills building, life and interpersonal skill building, goal planning, academic support, workforce readiness and employment support, mental and physical health services, parent education and childcare access for parenting youth.

- Results:
  - o 84% of youth exited to permanent housing situations
  - o 81% of youth maintained or increased their total income by exit
  - o 100% of youth enhanced positive relationships with caring adults, family members, and peers by exit
- Learning: Establishing and maintaining connections with supportive individuals in a participant's life is integral to youth success. Youth entering Transitional Living directly from the streets or other "literally homeless" situations have significant challenges transitioning into housing and are more likely to return to their previous living situations upon exit. Therefore, it is important to provide services and support at the participant's emotional and life-skill level and to be very individualized with program tasks in order to build relationships and facilitate successful experiences for the youth. This will encourage continued participation and emotional risk-taking.

#### **LUK, Inc. – The Compass Project**

- Worcester, Massachusetts



- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 17–21
  - o 56% Female, 44% Male
  - o 38% Hispanic, 33% African-American, 29% Caucasian, 7% Multiracial
  - o 78% Heterosexual, 12% Bisexual, 4% Gay and Lesbian, 6% did not answer
- Resource and referral linkages to social, academic, physical/mental health services, connection to family mediation, life-skill building, and transportation services.
- Results of intensive case management:
  - o 68% of all youth move from unstable to stable housing
  - o Basic needs such as safety, food access, and health coverage improved
  - o Youth showed a significant improvement in their locus of control
  - o Youth noticed improvement in their daily living, self care, relationships & communication, housing & money

management, work & study life, career & education planning, and their goal orientation after 12 months

- Learning: The intensive case management services were successful in achieving significant improvements in housing stability, expanded life skills, improved family relations, and decreases in mental health challenges due to high frequency of contact. On average, successful outcomes were reported when youth received 6 successful contacts with 3 attempted but unsuccessful contacts every month. Additionally, ongoing staff training with instruments and technology is critical.

### **North East Unaccompanied Children and Youth (NEUCY)**

- Northeast Tennessee
- Rural
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 16–25
- Services and Resources: case management with therapeutic services, with the goal of increasing the individual youth's safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency. Staff provide individual assessments, counseling and referrals, and follow-up support. Staff also provides mental health services, resource and referral linkages, life-skill building, transportation, and supplies once permanent housing is secured. The services are focused on gaining access to resources to meet immediate needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Follow-up services are provided to address self-sufficiency and sustained well-being. The ultimate goal is for youth to have permanent housing and the means to retain that housing over time.
- Results:
  - o Case management provided to 23 homeless unaccompanied youth
  - o 6 youth received clinical mental health counseling
  - o 6 youth were placed into permanent housing
- Learning: Without funding or a formal structure, keeping the program going from academic year to year has been the biggest challenge, as interns graduate and new interns come on board. However, the constant support of one particular social work professor and the director of the program have been key. The Housing Authority's support also has been critical. Also, many young people do not follow through with case management, primarily due to the overall instability in their lives. Those who are connected with a service provider, whether school or shelter, are the easiest to serve over time.



## G. Connection to Education to Increase Future Income Earning Capability

Homeless youth programs work to connect youth who are experiencing homelessness back to educational systems. Young people disconnected from educational institutions face barriers now and in their future. In order to be self-supporting and afford stable housing, people need employment. Employment opportunities increase as educational attainment increases. According to Georgetown University Center on the Workforce, by 2018 – just two years shy of the federal goal of ending youth homelessness – only 10% of jobs created will be open to those without a high school degree.<sup>53</sup> Twenty-eight percent of jobs will be open to those with a high school degree.<sup>54</sup> The rest will require some college education. Youth desperately need access to education if they are to avoid homelessness as adults.

Access to education helps end youth homelessness in the short-term, as well. Educational institutions provide students with meals, counseling, adult and peer mentorship, leadership opportunities, extracurricular activities, social work services, and other services beyond education. These services are multiplied when educational institutions and local runaway and homeless service providers act collaboratively. As such, access to education is ending homelessness today and preventing homelessness for future generations.

The first step for homeless youth programs is to reconnect youth to school; for those in temporary shelter, immediate access to local school systems, regardless of location, is a priority. The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that gives homeless youth the right to enroll in school immediately, even if they lack documents typically required for enrollment (like a parent/guardian signature, school records, or health records). The Act also allows students to continue attending the same school (their “school of origin”), even if they are staying in a shelter, transitional living program, or other temporary accommodations in a different school district. Students are entitled to transportation to attend the school of origin, as long as attending that school is in their best interest. To implement the McKinney-Vento Act, every school district in the country has to designate a homeless liaison. It is a best practice for homeless youth programs to establish relationships with local homeless liaisons.<sup>55</sup>

For those youth who have dropped out of school, programs first attempt to reengage them in high

53 Carnevale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2010). Help Wanted, Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2008. Retrieved from <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/fullreport.pdf>

54 Id.

55 The best way to find local contact information is to contact the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator at [http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state\\_resources.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php)



school or alternative schools as appropriate. When this is not possible, youth programs support youth in obtaining a GED or other high school equivalency. Homeless youth programs support youth in accessing colleges and universities and act as referral agents for certification and vocational programming that meet the youth's interest and respond to sector-based priorities.

### **The Alternative House – Homeless Youth Initiative**

- Fairfax, Virginia
- Suburban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–22
  - o 57% Female, 43% Male
  - o 49% Hispanic, 34% African-American, 7% White, 7% Multiracial, 3% Asian
  - o 20% are parenting.
- Services and Resources: host-family housing, group housing, or subsidized housing; case management, independent-living-skills building, and educational resources.
- Results:
  - o 100% of youth that have stayed with the program and graduate high school have moved on to higher education, vocational training, or employment.
  - o In 5 years of program operation, only 2 youth did not finish high school
  - o Fewer than 2% of unaccompanied homeless students ended up in Adult Homeless shelters

### **Kids in Crisis – Adolescent Emergency Shelter & Crisis Nursery**

- Southwestern Connecticut
- Rural and suburban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 13–18
  - o 39 % Hispanic, 34% African-American/Black, 19% Caucasian/White, 8% Biracial or Multiracial
- Services and Resources: education connections, educational program, job support, transportation services, emergency housing, and outreach counseling (TeenTalk).
- Results:
  - o 100% of residents improve or maintain academic performance (47% improve, 53% maintain, 0% decrease in academic performance)
  - o 100% improve or maintain attendance (58% of residents improve, 42% maintain, 0% decrease in attendance)
  - o 96% of residents improve or maintain behavior, based on decreased incidents requiring

disciplinary action (46% improve, 50% maintain, 4% decrease in behavior)

o Based on resident survey results at the time of discharge:

- 88% of youth reported that they were better at handling daily life
- 81% of youth reported that they were doing better in school and/or work
- 87% of youth reported that they were better able to cope when things go wrong

### **Sasha Bruce Youthwork - Youth Build**

- Washington, DC
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–24
  - o 72% Male, 28% Female
  - o 98% African-American, 1% Hispanic/Latino
- Services and Resources: clients work full-time for 9 to 12 months toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. In addition to the GED credential, students are provided with the skill set to test for and earn certifications in high-growth job sectors such as Construction, Green Jobs, Customer Service, and Computer Technology. Emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to each other's success. At exit, youth are placed in college, jobs, or both.
- Results:
  - o 68% of clients placed in education or employment
  - o 55% attain degree or certificate
  - o 58% attain literacy and numeracy
  - o 70% retention
- Learning:
  - o Case management staff are critical in keeping youth connected to the programming. Our program was initially designed to cover all elements of the GED in a span of 3 to 4 months, but, especially with the new GED, and based on best practices/research, we have extended this period to 9 to 12 months. Also, we have found that youth are more successful in studying/ concentrating on one GED subject at a time versus tackling portions of each subject at one time.
  - o Helping youth succeed throughout the training period requires focusing on substance abuse reduction, creating leadership experiences, and providing supports for stable housing when youth become homeless during the program.

## H. Workforce Development to Enable Youth to Compete in the Job Market

Finding self-supporting employment is difficult for homeless youth who have had limited educational attainment and employment experiences. Also, it is very difficult for a young person to obtain and maintain employment without housing. For this reason, in addition to educational services, the development of workforce skills is also important for ensuring long-term economic viability for homeless youth. Often, youth who have experienced homelessness need additional supports as they acclimate to work. To meet the needs of homeless youth, workforce development programs should connect with homeless youth service providers to coordinate services, remove barriers to access for homeless youth, and ensure longer-term employment success.

Workforce development includes both soft skills development, such as knowledge of expectations in the workplace, as well as other basic skills necessary to obtain employment. This includes résumé writing, job search techniques, and interview skills. In addition, building transferable hard skills that help homeless youth compete in the job market is critical. This can be accomplished through supported employment and internship opportunities. At a minimum, youth workforce development services for homeless youth should include job readiness services, workforce placement, and career development services.<sup>56</sup> Studies have shown that programs that combine training and education, employment and job placement, and housing support can have significant social return on investment.<sup>57</sup>

### **Daybreak – Employment Program including Lindy’s Gourmet Pet Treat Bakery**

- Dayton, Ohio
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 18–24
  - o 45% Male, 55% Female
  - o 68% African-American, 21% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic/Latino
- Services and Resources: include classroom teaching, simulation classes, experiential learning, and on-the-job training (Lindy’s Gourmet Pet Treat Bakery) to teach youth why they should work (self-respect) and how they should work (work ethic). Every youth that comes to Daybreak receives an employment assessment to determine how they can be

<sup>56</sup> Larkin Street Youth Services. (2011). *Creating Pathways to Employment for Homeless Youth*. San Francisco: Larkin Street Youth Services.

<sup>57</sup> Social Impact Research. (2011). *Workforce Development Special Issues Report*. Cambridge, MA: Social Impact Research.

best served. They learn how to search for jobs, fill out applications, prepare for interviews, dress and appear for the interviews, and what to do once they get a job. They go through extensive assessments to determine their skills and strengths. From testing in the classroom to experiential learning assessment at Lindy's (our social enterprise created as a work-readiness program), staff work with each youth to figure out what type of job will best suit them.

- Results:
  - o 85% gained competitive employment
  - o 42% opened bank accounts
- Learning:
  - o Given that the majority of youth are coming from crisis situations and/or have mental health issues, their Independent Employment Plan is about more than just employment. Therefore, each youth has an interdisciplinary team working with them, which includes not only an employment specialist, but also a case manager, a therapist, and an intervention specialist.
  - o Hands-on learning in Lindy & Company has significantly increased the success of the employment program. Prior to starting Lindy's, only 67% of the youth in Daybreak's housing program were securing employment, and they had a hard time keeping their jobs. After two full years of Lindy & Company, 85% of our clients are securing employment, and the majority of them are maintaining it. This is attributed to the hands-on learning lab where youth learn the basics of arriving to work on time, communication, and teamwork – which is pertinent for those with no work histories. The ability to assess the youth and help place them in appropriate job settings has also been a great asset to the entire employment program and the success of our youth.

### **Covenant House Missouri – Employment Program**

- St. Louis, Missouri
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 16–21
  - o 55% Male, 45% Female
  - o 94% African-American, 4% Caucasian, 2% Other
- Services and Resources: employment services, initial assessment conducted by an employment counselor to determine employability status, employment course for job readiness, career counseling, job placement, and linkages to businesses that partner with the employment counselor, and internship opportunities with the goal of the youth

becoming employed with the company they intern for.

- Results:

- o In 2014, 181 youth received employment services:

- 46% successfully completed the job readiness program
- 47% obtained employment

- Learning:

Our youths' educational and employment needs will continue to grow with the changing workforce. Our Mental Health Program, which was significantly expanded in 2010, has positively impacted our youths' ability to obtain and maintain stable employment.

## I. Culturally Competent Services

African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Native,<sup>58</sup> and LGBT youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population.<sup>59</sup> Whether offering shelter, housing, drop-in services, case-management services, or street outreach, it is important that inclusive and culturally competent services are offered to enable LGBT, African-American, Latino, American Indian, and all homeless youth to stabilize their lives.<sup>60</sup> Cultural responsiveness or competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly in the context of human resources, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with persons from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds.<sup>61</sup> Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) attitude toward cultural differences, (c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.<sup>62</sup>

All community-based organizations serving adolescents should assume that some of the youth they serve are LGBT, even if they do not publicly disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. Organizations should take steps to ensure that all programs deliver high-quality welcoming and affirming services and recognize where there may be a need for LGBT-specific programs for particular young people. In addition, support for families dealing with youth who are coming out is important to

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58 Taylor, P., Parker, K., Kochhar, R., Fry, R., Funk, C., Patten, E., & Motel, S. (2012). Young, underemployed and optimistic: Coming of age, slowly, in a tough economy. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

59 Cunningham, M., Pergamit, M., Astone, N., & Luna, J. (August 2014). Urban Institute. Homeless LGBTQ Youth. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/413209-Homeless-LGBTQ-Youth.pdf>

60 National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth (2009). Retrieved from <http://www.nn4youth.org/system/files/Recommended%20Best%20Practices%20for%20LGBT%20Homeless%20Youth.pdf>

61 Martin, M. & Vaughn, B. (2007). Cultural competence: the nuts & bolts of diversity & inclusion. Strategic Diversity & Inclusion Management magazine, pp. 31-36. DTUI Publications Division: San Francisco, CA.

62 Id.

keep families intact. There is an underlying assumption, only recently beginning to change among service providers, that family hostility and rejection towards sexual orientation or gender identity are final and unchangeable. This assumption has shifted and programs should implement best practices in helping families from diverse communities to accept, support, and better understand their LGBT children and youth. The failure to see families as potential allies has a particularly negative impact in communities of color, where families play an important role.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Bridge for Youth**

- Culturally Competent Services
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 10–17
  - o 77% Non-white
  - o 19% identify as LGBT
- Services and Resources: emergency stay shelter, extended stay shelter program, counseling, 24-hour crisis hotline, weekly support group for LGBTQ teens, outreach efforts to LGBTQ youth in the streets
- Results:
  - o With a committed outreach effort, The Bridge for Youth has seen an increase in the number of youth who self-identify as LGBTQ

### **Preble Street**

- Portland, Maine
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–20
  - o 25% Non-white, most of whom are central African asylum seekers
  - o 33% identify as LGBTQ
- Services and Resources: emergency stay shelter, transitional supportive housing, counseling, outreach efforts to LGBTQ youth, collaboration with the Trans Healthcare Collaborative and Trans Youth Equality Foundation, use of comprehensive resource guide for LGBTQ services, resource and referral linkages, case management

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<sup>63</sup> Minter, S. & Krehely, J. (2011). Families Matter: New Research Calls for a Revolution in Public Policy for LGBT Children and Youth. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

- Results:
  - o 48% of youth participating in housing programs have found safe, permanent, and affordable housing
  - o 100% of youth develop positive, supportive relationships with caring adults

## J. Services That Respond to Survivors of Human Trafficking

Runaway and homeless youth are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation than their peers and 28% of youth living on the street trade sex for basic needs such as food or shelter.<sup>64</sup> One 2013 survey by a New York City service provider found that one in four homeless youth had been a victim of sex trafficking or had engaged in survival sex. Of those, 48% had done so because they did not have a safe place to stay.<sup>65</sup> A survey of youth in a homeless shelter in Salt Lake City found that 50 percent reported having been solicited for sex by an adult.<sup>66</sup> Like female and minority populations, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are at heightened risk for exploitation, in part because of the disproportionate number of LGBT young people experiencing homelessness.<sup>67</sup>

Homeless youth are also targeted by labor traffickers because they lack access to resources they need to live, such as shelter, food, and personal connections—yet the promises of paid employment are not realized.

Youth who have been trafficked and are homeless have unique issues that homeless youth service providers can address with added resources and staff expertise. The continuum of services identified to serve trafficked youth is very similar to the continuum of services runaway and homeless youth need. In fact, the history of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is rooted in preventing the sexual abuse and exploitation of street youth — what we now call sex trafficking. A runaway and homeless youth service provider can add specialized trauma-informed wrap-around services to existing services that are appropriate to serve survivors of human trafficking.<sup>68</sup> One nationally used model to

64 Greene, J., Ennett, S. & Ringwalt, C. (1999). Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth, 89 Am. J. Pub. Health 1406, 1408. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1508758/pdf/amjph00009-0102.pdf>

65 Bigelsen, J., & Vuotto, S., (May 2013) Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York: Covenant House. Retrieved from <http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf>

66 Smith, L., Vardaman, S., & Snow, M. (2009) The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. p. 64. Arlington, VA: Shared Hope International. Retrieved from [http://sharedhope.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/SHI\\_National\\_Report\\_on\\_DMST\\_2009.pdf](http://sharedhope.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/SHI_National_Report_on_DMST_2009.pdf)

67 Parsons, C., Cray, A., Saada Saar, M. & Vafa, Y., (2014) 3 Key Challenges in Combating the Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States. Retrieved from <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/HumanTrafficking-brief.pdf>

68 Testimony of Melinda Giovengo, PhD, Executive Director, YouthCare. (2013, October 23). U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources. Hearing on Protecting Vulnerable Children: Preventing and





Photo: Scott Griessel

serve survivors of both sex and labor trafficking is: 1) identification and engagement to build rapport; 2) community case management to build trust; 3) emergency shelter to build relationships; and 4) long-term residential recovery to build a lasting support system.<sup>69</sup> (Appendix B depicts continuums of care models used by two different runaway and homeless youth programs to serve sex-trafficked youth).

### **Bill Wilson Center Runaway Human Trafficking**

- Santa Clara County, California
- Urban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 11–17 (33% ages 12–14, 67% ages 15–17)
  - o 92% Female, 8% Male
  - o 50% Hispanic/Latino, 42% African-American, 8% Caucasian
- Services and Resources: health examinations, Sexual Assault Advocate linkages, reunification services, counseling, local rape crisis center linkages, residential counselors who focus on building positive relationships and maintaining safety, host family housing, shelter housing, medical services (the continuum of services shown in Appendix B)
- Results:
  - o 92% discharged to a safe place
  - o 75% returned home
  - o 11% went to a specialized CSEC group
  - o 11% went to foster care

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Addressing Sex Trafficking of Youth in Foster Care. Retrieved from [http://waysandmeans.house.gov/uploadedfiles/melinda\\_giovengo\\_testimony\\_hr102313.pdf](http://waysandmeans.house.gov/uploadedfiles/melinda_giovengo_testimony_hr102313.pdf)

69 YouthCare. The Bridge Continuum. Retrieved from <http://www.youthcare.org/our-programs/services-sexually-exploited-youth#.UyM86YWaefA>

- Learning: While some of the youth who arrive at the shelter may return home within 48 hours, others may have a wide range of personal or family issues that take much longer to resolve, often requiring intervention and investigation by the county Social Services Agency. The majority of the victims of sex trafficking are runaways from other counties (approx. 80%) and are returned home within 48 hours. These youth are linked up with services in their resident counties.

### **The Safe Harbour Emergency Shelter**

- Park Ridge, Illinois
- Suburban
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–21
  - o 100% Female
- Services and Resources: crisis intervention, family reunification, referral to long-term community resources, access to transitional housing, educational support
- Results:
  - o 93% did not miss more than one day of school due to placement
  - o 100% of girls with a planned discharge reported feeling safe while at the Shelter
  - o 81% of stays resulted in a planned discharge
  - o 85% of minor girls discharged to a home setting
  - o 87% of girls with a planned discharge remained in their discharge placement at three month follow-up
- Learning: We have increased the role of family and support network involvement in each youth's case planning and discharge plan to provide additional adult support. We have also provided a more structured environment within the Emergency Shelter and increased accountability measures in response to youth struggling to manage leisure time constructively.



## **YouthCare's Bridge Continuum of Care – Community Advocates King County, Washington**

- Urban, suburban, and rural
- Demographics:
  - o Ages 12–24 eligible for referral
  - o 39% African-American; 27% Multi-racial; 18% White; 3% Asian; 3% Alaska Native/US Indian; 3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 6% Hispanic-only
  - o 100% Female
- Services and Resources: immediate safety planning and supportive services, case management, dedicated beds in shelter and housing programs, education and employment opportunities, referral linkages (the continuum of services are listed in Appendix B)
- Results:
  - o advocates were able to establish meaningful follow up contact with 78% of referred youth, and 64%
    - enrolled in case management services with a community advocate
  - o 79% obtained employment
  - o 23% maintained employment for at least 3 months

## OPPORTUNITY FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

When compared to other homeless populations in America, such as veterans and the chronically homeless, the response to youth homelessness overall is an understudied area, despite the extensive research and data provided throughout this document. Additionally, while research in a variety of related fields (mental health, substance abuse, and trauma) has shown that exposure to violence and trauma and episodes of alcohol and drug abuse can be decreased by increasing housing stability, the homeless youth population specifically needs similarly robust longitudinal studies on what types of interventions are most effective for generating long-term positive outcomes.

In needs assessments of homeless youth conducted in five communities around the country, fear of being reported to law enforcement or child welfare was the number one barrier to services cited for homeless youth under 18.<sup>70</sup> The chilling effect of child welfare and law enforcement reporting keeps young people in hiding, creating a barrier to identifying homeless youth for research purposes (i.e., HUD Point-in-Time counts) and hinders our recognition of the true extent of youth homelessness.

Because homeless youth are often indiscernible and unwilling to disclose their housing status, a multi-tiered research and data collection plan is needed. To scale-up the most effective housing interventions and services needed by homeless youth, existing programs need to be studied. To know how much housing and services are needed, regular large-scale research is needed to gather data and information on the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in America. Therefore, the data and research conducted should prioritize:

### **A. Periodic In-Depth National Studies on the Prevalence, Needs, and Characteristics of Runaway and Homeless Youth**

There has yet to be a comprehensive national study to more accurately determine the number of runaway and homeless youth in America and understand their needs and characteristics. The Runaway

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70 Julianelle, P. & Duffield, B. (2013) Making State Laws Work for Unaccompanied Youth: A How-To Manual and Tools for Creating State Laws and Policies to Support Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Under Age 18. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. page 4. Retrieved from <http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/uhy-law/uhy-state-laws.doc>

and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5601 note) first authorized these comprehensive periodic estimates in 2008 and calls for this research to be conducted every five years. This study has never been conducted because U.S. Congress has never appropriated any money toward this research.

U.S. Congress should appropriate \$2 to \$3 million dollars to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Studies (HHS) at least every five years so that this periodic study can be conducted to determine the scale of the need and the most effective interventions, housing models, and services to direct to America's homeless youth population. Because unaccompanied homeless youth are often hard to find, periodic in-depth research is the only way to comprehensively assess trends and progress in ending youth homelessness in a comprehensive way.

## **B. Compilation of Annual Numbers Collected from Multiple Sources**

Because homeless youth touch or fall through the cracks of so many different public systems and programs, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness or another federal agency should prepare an annual report that includes the following data points. This compilation of data will aid policymakers in identifying what systems are improving their outcomes and where more resources need to be targeted.

### **1 U.S. Department of Education (ED)**

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education requires all State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to submit information about children and youth experiencing homelessness. This information enables ED, under the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act (EHCY) Program, to determine the extent to which States ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to a free and appropriate public education. The purpose of the EHCY Program, authorized under Title VII, Subtitle B, of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.), is to improve educational outcomes for children and youth in homeless situations. The data reported to ED from SEAs and LEAs parses out the children and youth who are homeless in families and unaccompanied homeless youth (youth who are homeless and on their own). The number of unaccompanied homeless youth recorded by LEAs is extremely helpful in informing where minor-appropriate housing and services should be targeted for unaccompanied homeless youth.

## Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

In addition to a periodic national study of the incidence, prevalence, and characteristics of homeless youth in America, additional mandatory questions on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)<sup>71</sup> would capture more data about the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness every year who are still attending school. The YRBS specifically targets youth in grades 9–12 enrolled in high school. It was developed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assess categories of health risk behaviors among youth. We recommend that the CDC adds at least two mandatory questions to the YRBS to gather more comprehensive information than ED currently captures from unaccompanied homeless youth attending public schools.

## U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-in-Time (PIT)

2013 was the first year that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) endeavored to count homeless youth. The homeless youth counted in HUD's Point-in-Time (PIT) count and those eligible for HUD homelessness assistance are different. This is problematic because the purpose of the

count is to determine what resources each community needs to serve their homeless population. If a population is eligible for HUD homelessness assistance and are not included in the PIT count, it sends a message that the homeless population excluded from the count is:

1) not a priority; and/or 2) not eligible for HUD homelessness assistance. Additionally, neither the criteria for who is counted in the PIT count nor the criteria for who is eligible for HUD homelessness assistance is the same as the definition of homeless youth in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and other federal programs. The HUD definition is narrower and largely excludes youth who are “couch surfing.” Also, if a homeless youth is staying in a motel that isn't being paid for by a government or public agency, that young person is not eligible for HUD homelessness assistance, nor is the young person counted as homeless.

HUD's PIT count has yielded an under-count for homeless youth populations. Implementing the promising practices identified in the Youth Count! Process Study conducted by the Urban Institute is likely to expand the number of youth who are surveyed to go beyond just youth found

71 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/>

on the street.<sup>72</sup> Some of the promising practices include engaging youth service providers and LGBT partners, involving youth in counts, conducting magnet events, conducting counts during warm weather, and using social media to raise awareness. Also, including homeless youth who are not living on the streets or in shelters in the numbers reported to and by HUD would allow for increased accuracy in counting the number of homeless youth in America.

#### 4 **Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)**

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) grantees are required to collect and report certain information and data about both the clients (youth and families) that contact their program and the clients that the program serves. This information is important national data about the currently available youth-appropriate services in comparison to the need. Of course, this data is limited based on the amount of funding the program receives, which determines the number of RHYA-funded programs that exist in communities across America.<sup>73</sup> In

spite of this limitation, the program-level data collected is informative and can tell us:

- How many youth and/or parents contact the RHYA program for housing, services, referrals, etc.
- The number and demographics of the clients served in each program
- The length of stay of each client in the program
- Where the client lives upon exiting the program
- The number of clients placed on the waitlist and length of time on this list
- How many RHYA grant applications FYSB receives versus the number of awards granted

#### 5 **Foster Care System: Child Welfare Agency Runaway, Missing and Exit Data**

Because of the well-documented link between the foster care system and runaway and homeless youth in America, data from the foster care system is relevant to indicating need and location for interventions, services, and housing. In particular, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) collects case-level information on all children in foster care and those who have been adopted with Title IV-E agency

<sup>72</sup> Pergamit, M., Cunningham, M., But, M., Lee, P., Howell, B., & Bertumen, K. (2013). Youth Count! Process Report. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412872-youth-count-process-study.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Since 2009, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) (P.L.110-378) programs have been flat-funded at \$114 to \$115 million per fiscal year. This funding is far from meeting the urgent needs of all runaway and homeless

youth in America. See Fernandes-Alcantara, A. (October 23, 2014). Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: Current Issues for Reauthorization. Page 20.



involvement. The annual data that is the most relevant to homeless includes: the number of youth who run away from foster care placements, the number of youth that exit or emancipate from the foster care system, and the number of youth ages 13 to 17 that enter the foster care system.

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### **Juvenile Justice System**

The Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP), administered by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), is conducted biennially and provides the nation with the most detailed picture of juveniles in custody ever produced. The CJRP asks juvenile residential custody facilities in the U.S. to describe each youth assigned a bed in the facility on the last Wednesday in October. This census should add questions to capture the following information:

- Where did the youth live prior to entry in juvenile detention?
- Where does the youth plan to reside upon leaving detention?
- Where does the youth live while on probation?

## **C. More Cross-Agency Evaluations of Different Services and Housing Interventions for Runaway and Homeless Youth**

Crucial to a comprehensive strategy for ending youth homelessness is ongoing evaluation of existing programs to expand on the effectiveness of existing housing models, interventions, and services that help homeless youth reach long-term stability. Among homeless youth service providers there are several commonly accepted best practices for moving youth from homelessness to long-term self-sufficiency. This combination of practice-informed knowledge and evidence-based approaches needs to be bolstered with cross-agency evaluations. The USICH Framework to End Youth Homelessness calls for a capacity strategy that scales up effective interventions at the national level through the development of shared outcomes, evaluation, and capacity building.<sup>74</sup> Flexible federal investment is needed to fund collaborative efforts to evaluate, refine, and scale up effective intervention models. U.S. Congress should appropriate money to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) to administer, conduct, and oversee the development of shared outcomes and evaluation of existing programs serving homeless youth across multiple federal agencies.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). *Opening Doors - Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*.

## D. National Household Survey

This survey would be similar to NISMART-1 and NISMART-2, which captured household data estimating the number of: non-family abduction; family abduction; runaway/throwaway; missing involuntary, lost, or injured; and missing benign explanation. The methodology was household surveys. A similar household survey could be conducted to get a national estimate of the number of youth who experience homelessness each year. One limitation that would likely exist is how willing survey participants will be to honestly admit to allowing a stranger or known young person sleep at their home. They may be dishonest because they violated their lease agreement by allowing the young person stay at their home or are fearful of law enforcement. Also, in some instances, parents in households are not always aware that youth are temporarily staying at their home at night. However, the methodology can likely improve over time and would be helpful to conduct periodically to assess our progress on preventing and ending youth homelessness in America.

## **COLLABORATION: A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS REQUIRES A COORDINATED SPECTRUM OF HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

**In July 2013, NN4Y proposed a comprehensive service delivery system to end youth homelessness.**

Many communities and service providers struggle to find practical applications and implementation of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' Comprehensive Framework to End Youth Homelessness. A part of our mission is to provide communities with useful tools and resources to help them increase their capacity to prevent and end youth homelessness. Therefore, the proposed service system was created to offer communities a roadmap of the variety and spectrum of services and programmatic models that support unaccompanied homeless youth. Social, health, and educational supportive services must be linked with housing assistance to achieve core positive outcomes for youth: stable housing, connection to permanent caring adults, advancement in education or employment, and improvements in health and social well-being. This proposed service delivery system will enable the different collaborators and stakeholders to understand their role and who else they should work with to prevent youth homelessness and provide appropriate services and housing to homeless youth in crisis.

The Proposed Service Delivery System to End Youth Homelessness (March 2015) below has been reviewed by service providers, researchers, and federal agencies. This proposed service delivery system will continue to be refined and updated as further research and data is analyzed from the field. This proposed service delivery system allows communities to quickly identify what pieces of the system the community already has and what pieces are missing. Also, it indicates what existing pieces need to become engaged in the local community planning and collaboration to end youth homelessness.

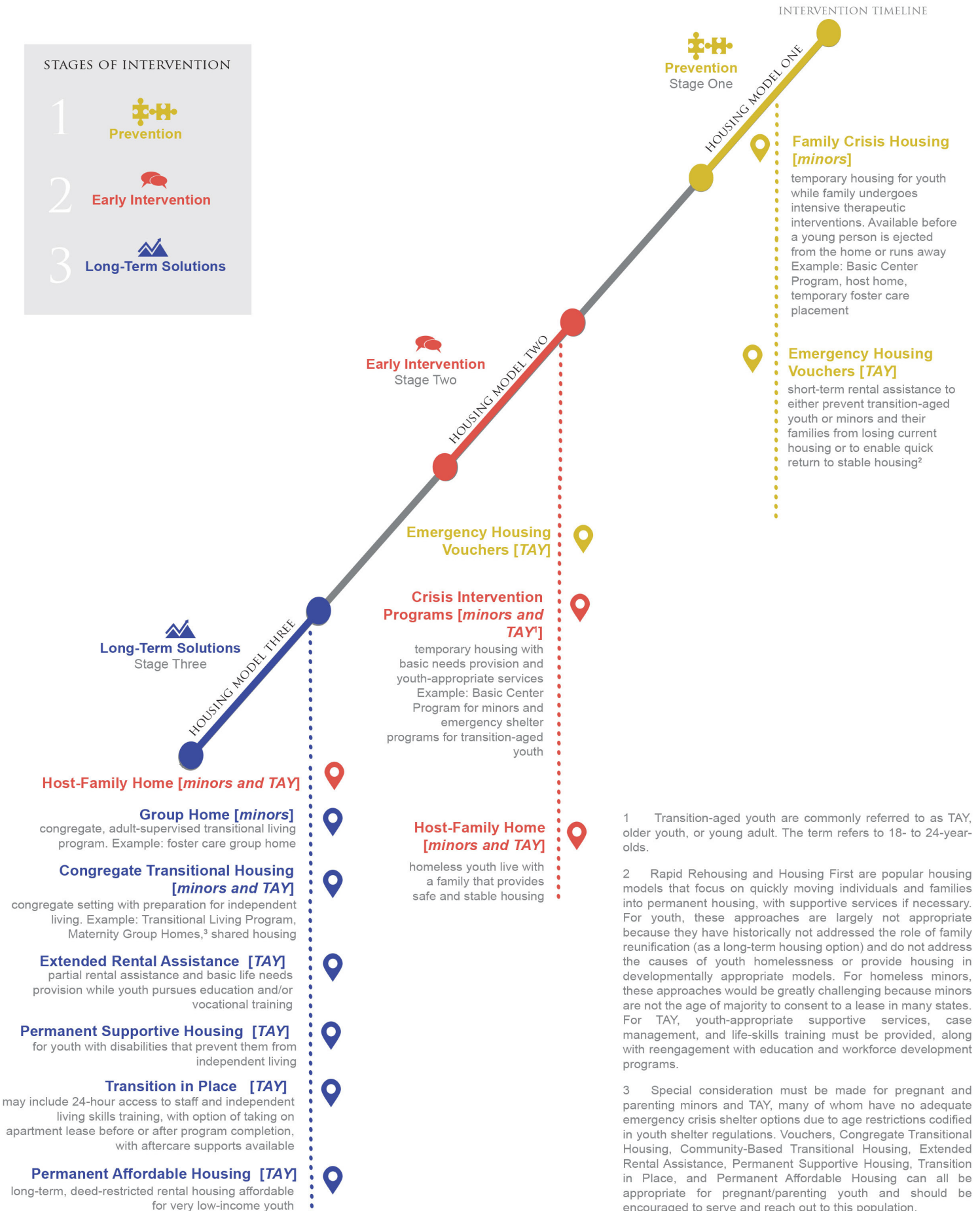
This proposed service delivery system is not meant to imply or state that every community needs to have every piece of this proposed system. Instead, communities should use this proposed system as a guide to both see what pieces already exist in your community and what pieces you may need to add based on the unique needs and location (urban, rural, suburban, tourist, etc.) of your community. The four stages of intervention (prevention, early intervention, longer-term solutions, and aftercare) are not meant to depict a linear consumption of services, but instead seek to lay out the services and housing models and goals that may need to be created or brought into a closer collaborative relationship to have a fully functioning safety net for runaway and homeless youth, as well as those at risk.

# NN4Y'S PROPOSES SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

These supportive services and housing models should be guided by the principles of: Positive Youth Development, Trauma-Informed Care, Cultural Competence, Client Centered Care, and Strengths-Based Family

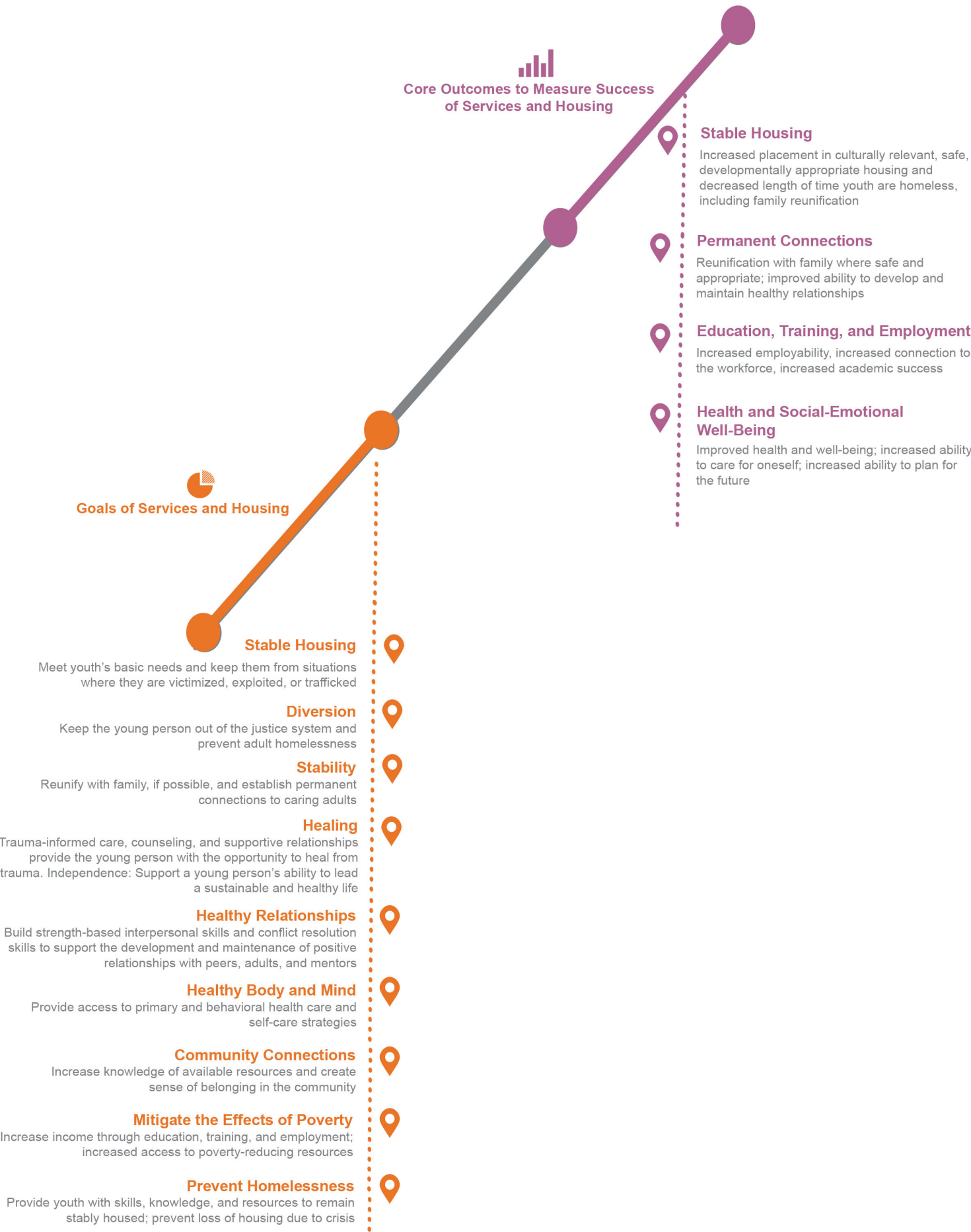


# NN4Y'S PROPOSES SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS





NN4Y'S PROPOSES SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



# STEPS COMMUNITIES SHOULD TAKE TO CREATE A PLAN TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND TRACK THEIR SUCCESS

## **Create a Measurable Community Plan**

### **1. Convene a Community-Wide Working Group:**

- Engage a variety of stakeholders. Youth should be included throughout the entire development of the Community Plan. Their ideas and recommendations should be valued and integrated into the plan.
- The planning group determines the priorities, specific goals, and strategies to accomplish goals based on a community needs assessment.

### **2. Conduct a Community Needs Assessment that includes:**

- An inventory of the existing housing, services, and systems that are already or could be leveraged to prevent and end youth homelessness;
- An estimate of the number of homeless youth (12-24 years old) that need either services, housing, or connection to a system for support and/or resources; and
- A survey of youth experiencing homelessness to determine what they need and want.

### **3. Create a Measurable Plan**

#### Key Components of Community Plan May Include:

- Defined goals for the community to address youth homelessness.
- Outcomes at multiple levels: individual, sector and program level, community level, and societal level.
- Time-limited benchmarks to track progress toward goals.
- Recommendations and strategies to increase federal, state, local, philanthropic, and corporate investment and partnership in order to implement the plan over time.

#### Example Goals of Community Plan:

- Preventing/diverting from shelter through family preservation, finding other family members to care for the youth when safe and possible, or connection to the foster care system.
- Decreasing the length of time youth are homeless, thereby preventing and/or reducing instances of assault, alcohol and substance abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, and other traumatic experiences.



- Decreasing the number of youth on waitlists for housing.
- All services for youth experiencing homelessness will be culturally competent, welcoming for LGBT youth, provide trauma-informed care, and include services for labor- and sex-trafficked youth.

Examples of Time-Limited Benchmarks:

- Fewer youth experience homelessness (homelessness is prevented and no youth are sleeping outdoors, doubled-up, or in places not meant for human habitation).
- Length of time youth are homeless (sleeping outdoors, in places not meant for human habitation, doubled- up, or in shelter) is shorter.
- Fewer youth return to homelessness (either as a youth or an adult).
- Disproportionate over-representation of homeless LGBT youth and homeless youth of color is decreased.

***4. Update Plan, Making Adjustments Based on Progress Made and Lessons Learned***

We will know we have ended youth homelessness in America when every young person who is ejected

# HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE “ENDED” YOUTH HOMELESSNESS?

from their home, runs away, or is homeless for any reason has immediate access to youth-appropriate interventions, housing, and services that enable them to grow and develop as an adolescent or young adult and transition to adulthood safely and with support.

Our goal is a systematic end to homelessness for youth, both unaccompanied minors and transition-aged youth 18 to 24 years old, which means there are no youth sleeping on our streets or in unsafe, temporary, and unstable doubled-up locations and every youth has access to the age-appropriate services and housing that they need. Ending youth homelessness means having the capacity to serve the number of youth and young adults in need of support to help them regain, immediately access, or maintain stable housing. When youth become or are at-risk of becoming homeless, a system of coordinated federal, state, and community partners will quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve safety and housing stability and the support needed to successfully transition to adulthood. The ultimate goal is that all youth have safe, developmentally appropriate, and sustainable housing with access to high-quality health care, including primary care, specialty care, and mental health services; job training and employment; and other supportive services to help youth grow and develop as adolescents and transition to adulthood.

Meeting the goal of ending youth homelessness means that through early detection and access to preventative services, at-risk youth are able to remain stably housed. If a youth does



Photo: Martin Allinger

become homeless, they are immediately able to access housing and age-appropriate supportive services necessary to provide protection and stability. Some youth will be able to return home after family reconnection work. Other young people will need youth-appropriate housing and services that enable them to grow and develop as adolescents or young adults and transition to adulthood and independent housing. Like the work to end domestic violence, it is essential for communities to provide safe, easily accessible housing for youth who are rejected or abandoned by their families or fleeing abuse in their homes.

The necessary components for achieving this vision are: federal investment allocated, based on need, to the resources that have been shown to help youth remain or become stably housed; access to federal programs that young people need, which may involve removing existing barriers that keep youth from accessing them; local leadership and strategic planning to use these resources to end youth homelessness in each community; and collaboration across agencies to address the distinct needs of youth and young adults.

## CONCLUSION

We must recognize that the causes of youth homelessness are different from adult homelessness, and the circumstances that lead young people to be ejected from or leave their homes are complex. The goal is to expand effective prevention strategies to deter youth homelessness in tandem with increasing readily available crisis responses and longer-term solutions for young people who are experiencing homelessness.

Preventing homelessness and housing youth who experience homelessness is key to preventing these young people from becoming chronically homeless adults. Expanding youth-appropriate housing and services over time for homeless youth will save lives and decrease criminal justice costs and the costs associated with long-term homelessness.

With 40 years of practice knowledge, experience, a solid research base, and input and insights from homeless youth, we recommend prioritizing, aligning, and increasing federal, state, and local investments in:

1. Prevention and early intervention to reach youth at risk of homelessness and families in crisis
2. Housing and services to help homeless youth stabilize, grow and develop, and transition to adulthood
3. Reconnection to education and workforce development to increase future earning capability
4. Continued research, development of assessment tools, analysis of existing data, and improved data collection

# APPENDIX A

## FEDERAL DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESS YOUTH

### Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

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#### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

##### ***The Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Act (42 USC 5701 § 387)***

defines “homeless youth” as individuals who are not more than 18 years of age if seeking shelter in a Basic Center Program, or not more than 21 years of age or less than 16 years of age if seeking services in a Transitional Living Program, and for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement.

#### **U.S. Department of Education**

##### ***The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC 11302)***

defines children and youth as homeless if they “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” including sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; and living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places.

# APPENDIX A

## **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

### ***The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009***

homeless: (1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; is living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or is exiting an institution where they temporarily resided. The primary change from existing practice is that people will be considered homeless if they are exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days (previously 30 days), and were homeless immediately prior to entering that institution; (2) An individual or family who is losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled-up situation, in 14 days (previously seven days) and lacks resources or support networks to remain in housing; (3) Unaccompanied youth and families who are homeless under other federal statutes (such as the education definition or the RHY Act definition) who have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing, have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of childhood abuse, the presence of a disability, multiple barriers to employment, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against an individual or a family member; (4) Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.

# APPENDIX B

## CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – A FORM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The following is from: YouthCare’s The Bridge Program in Seattle, WA, [www.youthcare.org/our-programs/services-sexually-exploited-youth#.UyM86YWaefA](http://www.youthcare.org/our-programs/services-sexually-exploited-youth#.UyM86YWaefA).

<b>COMMUNITY CASE MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>Identification   Rapport Building   Basic Needs   Safety Planning   Assessment</b>
<b>SHELTER</b>	<b>Case Planning   Stabilization   Emergency Services   Respite   Re-entry</b>
<b>RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM RECOVERY</b>	<b>Paid Employment/Service   Learning   Mental Health &amp; Substance Abuse   Trauma Focused Therapy   Subculture Deprogram   Specialized School</b>

The following is from *The Bill Wilson Center in Santa Clara, CA*, [www.billwilsoncenter.org](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org).



# APPENDIX B

**Positive Youth Development (PYD):** focuses on meeting youth at their own developmental stage and supporting positive growth, to ensure that young people have opportunities to contribute

CRISIS INTERVENTION	STABILIZATION	LONGER-TERM PLAN FOLLOW UP PHASE
<p>Safe Housing at Kathy's Place, a house across from basic center</p> <p>Engagement by Staff: one-on-one</p> <p>Sexual Assault (SA) Advocate Assigned</p> <p>Basic Needs Provided</p> <p>Medical Exam</p> <p>Explore Options for Housing</p> <p>Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Meeting Held</p>	<p>Safe Housing at Kathy's Place, a house across from basic center</p> <p>Engagement by Staff: one-on-one</p> <p>Sexual Assault (SA) Advocate Assigned</p> <p>Basic Needs Provided</p> <p>Medical Exam</p> <p>Explore Options for Housing</p> <p>Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Meeting Held</p>	<p>Explore Family Reunification</p> <p>TLP Placement</p> <p>Sexual Assault (SA) Advocate is actively working with youth</p> <p>Alternative Placements, Behavioral Treatment</p> <p>Weekly MDT Meetings</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Peer Support</p>

within the community and develop transferable skills and competencies through healthy interactions with adults and other youth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Resource Center for Youth Development. The University of Oklahoma OUTREACH. Retrieved from <http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/youth-engagement/positive-youth-development>.

# APPENDIX C

## DEFINITIONS USED IN NN4Y'S PROPOSED SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA (MARCH 2015)

**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.<sup>2</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.<sup>3</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

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<sup>2</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

<sup>3</sup> 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.



## POLICY BRIEF

### **What Works to End Youth Homelessness**

MARCH 2015

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