



# **Allegheny County Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program**

**Coordinated Community Plan to  
Prevent and End Youth Homelessness**

**April 2020**



**Office of  
Community  
Services**

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Isis Cox, Member	Leonardo Johnson, Facilitator
Crystal Gee, Member	Rachel Parker, Youth Coach
Darrel Pullie, Member	Julia Roberson, Youth Coach
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Carol Byers, UPMC Adolescent Medicine	Kristen Ornato, KidsVoice
Karina Chavez, PCHE	Aimee Plowman, Auberle
José Diaz, YMCA	Susie Puskar, Partner4Work
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Becky Haberstroh, Familylinks	Jessica Ruffin, Allegheny County DHS
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Joseph Lagana, Homeless Children's Education Fund

John Lovelace, UPMC Health Plan, chair  
Jennifer McCurry, First English Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
Michael Murray, Pittsburgh Bureau of Police  
Christy Pietryga, Veterans Leadership Program  
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Susie Puskar, Partner4Work

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Over the last decade many other local stakeholders – among them youth, service providers, educators, researchers, advocates and others – have worked to bring greater awareness of the often-invisible issue of youth homelessness within Allegheny County. It is thanks to the continued commitment of these community partners that our region is today positioned to launch and implement comprehensive, coordinated plan to prevent and end youth homelessness.

# Executive Summary

In 2019, Allegheny County was competitively selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to become a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) community. Through this national initiative, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) was provisionally awarded \$3.49 million in grant funding to deliver new and innovative programs aimed at dramatically reducing youth homelessness in Allegheny County.

Between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019, Allegheny County identified 343 youth ages 18 to 24 years who were living on the streets, in a shelter or in a place not meant for human habitation. During the same time period, another 573 youth were identified as being at imminent risk of homelessness. A significant number were pregnant or parenting, including 23% of youth experiencing homelessness and 46% of youth identified as being at risk of homelessness.<sup>1</sup> More than 400 unaccompanied homeless youth were identified by Allegheny County Local Education Agencies during the 2017-18 school year,<sup>2</sup> and 12% of Pittsburgh-area college students surveyed in 2018 reported experiencing housing instability during their post-secondary experience.<sup>3</sup>

There are many reasons why a young person may become homeless, including but not limited to family conflict, lack of income due to unemployment or underemployment, barriers to accessing affordable housing or finding landlords willing to rent to them, and fleeing from intimate partner violence or being trafficked. Many youth experience a combination of multiple factors that lead to housing instability. Black youth experience disproportionately high rates of homelessness in Allegheny County, and local surveys conducted within the last five years suggest that LGBTQIA+ youth are also at greater risk of becoming homeless. Local cross-system data analysis also indicates that a significant portion of young adults who experience homelessness have a history of involvement in the child welfare system, either as minors or as parents.

Allegheny County has ramped up its youth homelessness response system in recent years and currently offers a variety of youth-centered resources including an emergency shelter, dedicated Rapid Re-housing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, the 412 Youth Zone drop-in center, and housing voucher programs designed to prevent homelessness in youth with child welfare involvement. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years may also access Continuum of Care programs designed for the general adult population, as well as privately funded housing resources in the community.

While these resources help many youth successfully find and maintain permanent housing each year, the current supply and configuration of homeless services in Allegheny County is not yet able to meet the local demand. And research shows that the longer a young person is without safe and stable housing, the greater the risk that they will experience injury, exploitation or other traumatic events associated with homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> Allegheny County Department of Human Services, HMIS and Allegheny Link

<sup>2</sup> Pennsylvania Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Annual Report, 2017-18.

<sup>3</sup> "Examining Housing Insecurity Among Pittsburgh Area College Students," Point Park University, 2018.

Through an intensive, youth-led planning process made possible by HUD YHDP funding and in collaboration with many local stakeholders, DHS identified a variety of new projects, initiatives and system-change work designed to achieve progress on community-identified goals. These new elements will work congruently with existing service components to create a complete homelessness response system centered around young people.

**Part I: Creating the Vision** outlines the vision, core values, and overarching goals for the Allegheny County Coordinated Community Plan.

**Part II: Identifying the Need** presents key data and observations regarding the prevalence of youth homelessness in Allegheny County, characteristics and experiences of specific youth subpopulations, and a summary of key housing, social-emotional, educational and employment-related needs of transition-age youth experiencing homelessness.

**Part III: Taking Action** outlines the *who, what, where, when and how* of the Coordinated Community Plan, including key action steps to accomplish community goals and objectives and strategies to support specific youth subpopulations.

Allegheny County is a region that continues to experience rapid growth and change, thus our approach to addressing poverty and homelessness in young adults must be dynamic and nimble. It is our hope that this Coordinated Community Plan will serve as a living document, inspiring new ideas, investments and partnerships. It will take all of us working together to bring an end to youth homelessness.



# Definitions and Commonly Used Acronyms

**CoC:** Continuum of Care, a community-based homeless assistance program planning network.

**Coordinated Entry:** A standardized method for connecting individuals and families experiencing homelessness to the resources available in a geographic area.

**DHS:** [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services

**LGBTQIA+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual.

**HAB:** [Allegheny County] Homeless Advisory Board, a public/private partnership formed to assist Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills in efforts to eliminate homelessness and improve the well-being of homeless individuals and families.

**HMIS:** Homeless Management Information System, an information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and people at risk of homelessness.

**Homelessness:** Allegheny County's Coordinated Community Plan uses the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, which includes anyone who is lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. Specific subpopulations are targeted for specific YHDP-funded projects, which are references throughout this document (see "HUD Homelessness Categories" below).

**Host Home:** A private home associated with a host home program that volunteers to host youth in need of temporary housing. Host homes offer youth a safe alternative to shelters on either a short- or long-term basis and are paired with supportive services provided by a service agency.

**Housing First:** A homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues. Additionally, Housing First is based on the theory that client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising that choice is likely to make a person more successful in remaining housed and improving their life.

**HUD:** [United States Department of] Housing and Urban Development.

## **HUD Homelessness Categories:**

**Category 1, Literal Homelessness:** Individuals and families who live in a place not meant for human habitation (including the streets or in their car), emergency shelter, transitional housing, and hotels paid for by a government or charitable organization.

**Category 2, Imminent Risk of Homelessness:** Individuals or families who will lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and have no other resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

**Category 3, Homeless Under Other Statutes:** Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not meet any of the other categories but are homeless under other federal statutes, have not had a lease and have moved two or more times in the past 60 days and can be expected to remain unstable due to special needs or barriers.

**Category 4, Fleeing Domestic Violence:** Individuals or families who are fleeing or attempting to flee their housing or the place they are staying because of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence that has taken place in the house or has made them afraid to return to the house, including trading sex for housing, trafficking, physical abuse, violence (or perceived threat of violence) because of the youth's sexual orientation, and who lack resources or support networks to maintain or obtain permanent housing.

**Mobile Prevention and Diversion Program:** Mobile, flexible and individualized services that result in youth obtaining safe, stable housing before entering an episode of homelessness.

**Motivational Interviewing:** A clinical approach that helps people with mental health and substance use disorders and other chronic conditions make positive behavioral changes to support better health.

**PYD:** Positive Youth Development, An intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

**Pregnant or Parenting Youth:** Individuals who are age 24 years or younger who are pregnant or who are the parents or legal guardians of one or more children who are present with or sleeping in the same place as that youth parent, and where there is no person over age 24 years in the household.

**PSH:** Permanent Supportive Housing, long-term housing with supportive services for homeless individuals with disabilities.

**RRH:** Rapid Re-housing, A program model that assists individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and to achieve stability in that housing through a combination of rental assistance, housing search and supportive services.

**Shared Housing:** Long-term living arrangement between two unrelated people who choose to live together as a way of sharing costs and building a community of support.

**SOGIE:** Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

**Transition-age Youth:** Individuals between age 18 and 24 years.

**TIC:** Trauma-Informed Care, an approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others; responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

**Unaccompanied Youth:** Persons who are age 24 years or younger, who are not part of a family with children and who are not accompanied by their parent or guardian during their episode of homelessness. This also includes two or more youth age 24 years or younger who are presenting together as a family without children.

**YAB:** Youth Action Board, a group of youth included in CoC decisions, particularly on policies that relate to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Each YAB member is age 24 years or younger and at least two-thirds of the YAB members are homeless or formerly homeless. Locally this group is known as Allegheny County DHS System Improvement Through Youth (SITY).

**YHDP:** Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, a HUD initiative to help communities drastically reduce youth homelessness through innovative strategies.

**Youth:** A person who is under the age of 25 years.



## Part I: Community Vision, Core Values and Goals

The vision, core values and goals of this Coordinated Community Plan originated with planning work undertaken by the Allegheny County Youth Action Board (YAB). As a committee of the DHS youth advisory council, System Improvement Through Youth (SITY), the YAB is made up of youth under the age of 24 years who have current or past human service system involvement, including lived experiences with homelessness. SITY has been a part of the DHS youth voice strategy for over a decade and provides the structure and expertise to meaningfully and continuously engage youth. At the YAB's monthly meetings, youth lead a candid, culturally competent and efficient exchange of ideas with DHS senior management and direct services staff.

Prior to Allegheny County becoming recognized as a YHDP community, the YAB played a key role in the CoC's youth homelessness needs assessment and subsequent YHDP grant application. Through face-to-face meetings with CoC leadership, the youth provided honest feedback on their experiences with the homelessness system, what they felt was missing from it, how services could be improved, and how they would like to see the county address their needs. Many youth shared stories of how they became homeless, recounted life events to find one that may have triggered their homelessness and gave ideas about what may have been done to prevent it.

Upon being selected as a YHDP community, the YAB continued its extensive engagement in the planning process. The youth worked closely with the YHDP Core Planning Team, co-facilitating additional planning workshops, reviewing data and presenting their ideas for system improvement. Their responses to the key questions "What does the homeless system need to know?" and "What could help bring about an end to youth homelessness in Allegheny County?" were critical in determining local values and helping define the vision for a systemic response to youth homelessness.

Allegheny County's YHDP Leadership Council formally kicked off on November 25, 2019. At its initial meeting, the YAB co-chairs, Amonae and Leslie, led visioning activities designed to generate additional input from community stakeholders. The first activity was a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis in which participants were asked to respond individually to the following questions:

- **What recent changes have you seen in our community's response to youth homelessness?**
- **What's working and what's not working about our community's approach?**
- **What changes do you want to see? What or who can help make them happen?**
- **What barriers will we need to overcome?**

The YAB co-chairs facilitated further discussion about how the community could create a system that better aligns with the priorities identified by youth. The vision statement, core values, goals and action items presented in our Coordinated Community Plan are based on common themes that emerged in these youth-led conversations.

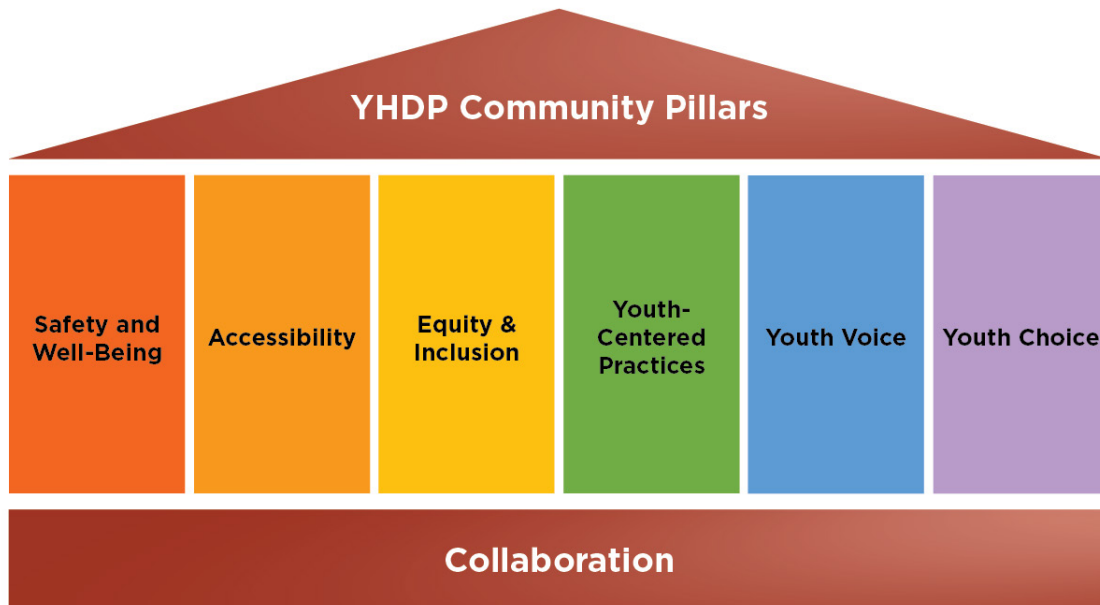
## Vision

Our vision is a community in which all young adults are stably housed and have access to the supports they need to thrive in their transition to adulthood. We aim to dramatically reduce youth homelessness by implementing prevention strategies that consider the root causes of housing instability, as well as proactively addressing early warning signs to avert or quickly resolve a housing crisis. We are committed to partnering with youth to design strengths-based services that prioritize youth’s safety and well-being, honor youth voice and choice, respect youth’s individuality, and foster positive relationships with adults and peers. No single organization or entity can end youth homelessness on its own, therefore we are committed to collaborating across diverse systems and communities to build the capacity and resources needed to create holistic, effective and sustainable solutions.

## Mission

Through the YHDP funding opportunity, HUD has outlined a set of values and principles which are identified as best practices for developing a youth-led system of care, defined in Appendix A. HUD’s YHDP Values and Principles set the framework of discussion for a set of locally defined guiding principles that will drive our work.

These local guiding principles, known as our “Community Pillars” were developed through visioning workshops with the Youth Action Board and the YHDP Leadership Council. These Community Pillars are woven into the work described throughout this plan and more information, as well as specific strategies for each pillar, are included in the *Spotlight: Advancing YHDP Community Pillars* section of the plan found on page 61.



**Safety and Well-Being** – Our community will prioritize the safety of young adults experiencing homelessness. We will hold one another accountable for serving youth in ways that foster their physical, emotional, psychological and social well-being, including adherence to the principles of Trauma-Informed Care.

**Accessibility** – As a Housing First community, we view housing as a basic need and right of all youth. When a youth experiences a housing crisis, we will quickly mobilize to connect youth to permanent housing with no preconditions and to offer low-barrier, individualized and client-driven supports to help them remain stably housed.

**Equity and Inclusion** – Recognizing that social and structural differences are deeply embedded in the fabric of our society, we will act with intention to identify and understand the disparities that exist for youth who are part of different social groups and to co-design culturally competent services and interventions to eliminate those disparities.

**Youth-Centered Practices** – Our community will ensure that all systems and programs supporting unstably housed youth adopt the principals of Positive Youth Development, with an emphasis on nurturing young people’s strengths and communicating our high expectations for what they can accomplish in life. We will promote protective factors that are known to help youth overcome adversity, including access to caring adults and peers, a strong sense of self, and engagement in school and community activities.

**Youth Voice** – Our community is committed to amplifying the voices of youth. Youth leadership will be an integral part of community decision-making, with adults and youth working in partnership to design programs, services and systems that prevent and end youth homelessness.

## **Commitment to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Framework**

During initial planning sessions, YHDP stakeholders collectively reviewed and accepted USICH’s criteria and benchmarks for achieving an end to youth homelessness, including:

1. Identifying all unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.
2. Using prevention and diversion strategies whenever possible, and otherwise providing immediate access to low-barrier crisis housing and services to any youth who needs and wants it.
3. Using coordinated entry processes to effectively link all youth experiencing homelessness to housing and service solutions that are tailored to their needs.
4. Acting with urgency to swiftly assist youth to move into permanent or non-time-limited housing options with appropriate services and supports.
5. Securing and maintaining the resources, plans, and system capacity to continue to prevent and quickly end future experiences of homelessness among youth.

## **Community Goals**

The following goals have been adopted by the community and are described in more detail in the *Taking Action: Goals and Next Steps* section of the plan, beginning on page 45.

1. We will identify all youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County.
2. We will work upstream and across systems to prevent youth homelessness.
3. We will build a robust network of services that is designed by and for youth experiencing homelessness.
4. We will help youth identify, participate and persist in learning and employment opportunities aligned with their individual goals.
5. We will support youth in establishing permanent connections to caring adults, peers and community members.

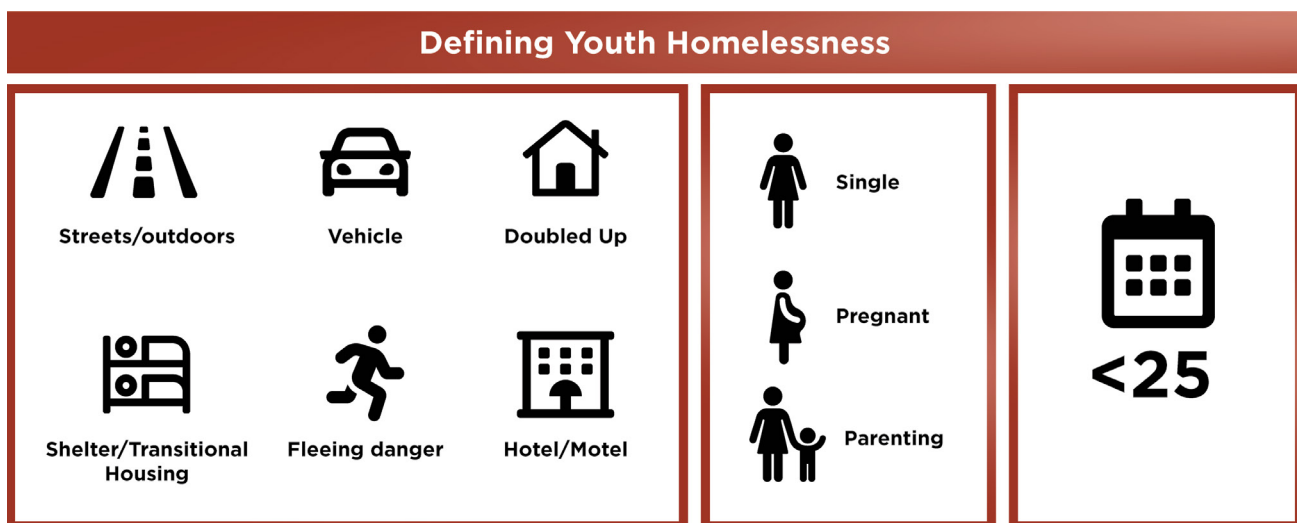
## Part II: Identifying the Need

The Allegheny County Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness is built on qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources. These include information pulled from the homeless system, local education agencies, and the DHS Data Warehouse; insights gathered from national and local research briefs; and many conversations with community stakeholders including youth who have lived experience with homelessness.

Through this needs-assessment process, we aimed to better understand the extent of youth homelessness in Allegheny County, the impact of housing instability on specific youth subpopulations, and how we can strengthen systems and programs to better meet youth’s needs. The needs assessment includes specific recommendations to address youths’ housing, social-emotional well-being, education, and employment needs – factors that are critical for ensuring their continued stability and successful transition to adulthood.

The illustration below represents the breadth of experiences reflected in the needs assessment. Youth experiencing homelessness encompass a vast range of ages, living situations and family structures. Additionally, the needs assessment includes information specific to several youth subpopulations, including pregnant and parenting youth, youth of color, LGBTQIA+ youth, minors, youth with past foster care involvement, youth with past justice system involvement, and survivors of sexual trafficking and exploitation.

It is important to note several limitations to the needs assessment. Further analysis is needed regarding the prevalence and needs of immigrant and refugee youth as well as youth with disabilities who are unstably housed. Information on LGBTQIA+ youth is incomplete due to limitations in the way SOGIE data is currently collected by the homeless system. Finally, intersectionality – the overlap among social categorizations such as race, gender, parenting status and involvement in various systems – is not fully captured in this analysis and is an important consideration for future analysis.





## Scope of Youth Homelessness in Allegheny County

Data on the overall prevalence of youth homelessness in Allegheny County was pulled for the 12 months immediately preceding the YHDP planning phase, which formally began in November 2019. Between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019, Allegheny County identified a cohort of 1,163 youth who were either currently homeless, at imminent risk of homelessness, or receiving homeless services. Of those:

343 youth were identified as homeless as defined by living on the streets, in a shelter, or in a place not meant for human habitation. Of those youth, 79 (23%) were identified as pregnant or parenting.

573 youth were identified as at risk of homelessness as defined by being assessed for prevention services or participating in a prevention program. Of those youth, 265 (46%) were identified as pregnant or parenting.

220 youth were identified as being formerly homeless as defined by enrollment in a rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, or transitional housing program.

An additional 27 youth were identified as having a critical housing need, but not enough information was available to determine if they were at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

These numbers reflect data collected through the Allegheny County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the Allegheny Link (the local Coordinated Entry System for individuals and families experiencing homelessness), and DHS Transition-age Youth initiatives including the 412 Youth Zone. In addition to the data reported by these human service systems, the following recent statistics on youth homelessness were reported by local K-12 and post-secondary education systems:

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) identified at least 412 unaccompanied youth in Allegheny County during the 2017-18 school year. Of those youth, 74% were doubled up, 20% sheltered, 4% unsheltered, and 2% staying in hotels/motels.

A 2018 survey of students enrolled at seven Pittsburgh-area post-secondary institutions indicated that 12.2% of respondents (221 students out of 1,815 total respondents) had experienced housing instability at some point since starting college.

## Youth Identified as Homeless by Allegheny County DHS

The chart below shows the full cohort of youth aged 18 to 24 years who were identified as experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness or involved in homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019. It also provides key demographic data for youth identified. Information on the data sources and their limitations is detailed in Appendix D. Data has been deduplicated for youth who were involved in more than one of the above systems; for example, if youth were involved at all in HMIS, they are only counted in the corresponding column below.

**Figure 2: Demographics of youth ages 18-24 years who were identified as experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness or involved in homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019.**

Subpopulation		Clients who had involvement in HMIS. Source: HMIS	Clients who had interaction with the Allegheny Link, but no interaction with HMIS Source: Allegheny Link.	Clients with the 412 Youth Zone, but no interaction with HMIS or Allegheny Link. Source: Synergy IL	Total Number of unduplicated records
<b>Total:</b>		<b>558</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1163</b>
Race:	Black	363	349	53	765
	White	155	109	10	274
	Multiple	24	1	9	34
	Other	9	4	2	15
	Data Not Collected	7	62	6	75
Ethnicity:	Non-Hispanic	532	455	12	999
	Hispanic	20	1	1	22
	Data Not Collected	6	69	67	142
Gender:	Female	326	418	45	789
	Male	222	100	35	357
	Trans Male/ Trans Female	10	7	0	17
	Gender Non-conforming	0	0	0	0
	Data Not Collected	0	0	0	0
Sexual Orientation*	LGBQ	10	0	2	12
	Heterosexual or Straight	59	0	4	63
	Data Not Collected	489	525	74	1088
Pregnant and Parenting	Parenting	143	245	No data is collected for this from Synergy IL	388
	Pregnant	9	9		18
	Single	406	271		677

\*Sexual-orientation data is currently only collected for Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) funded programs. During the timeframe of this data pull, there was only one program that was required to fill it out. For this reason, it is likely to be a large gap in our analysis of youth experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. All future YHDP-funded projects will collect sexual-orientation data for participants.

Of the 558-youth identified from their HMIS involvement:

- 261 were identified as homeless as defined by living on the streets, in shelter, or in a place not meant for human habitation.
- 220 youth were identified as being formerly homeless as defined by an enrollment in a rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, or transitional housing program
- 77 youth were identified as being at risk of homelessness as defined by participation in a prevention program.

Of the 525-youth identified from their Allegheny Link involvement:

- 419 youth were identified as being at risk of homelessness as defined by being assessed for prevention services.
- 75 were assessed as homeless as defined by living on the streets, in shelter, or in a place not meant for human habitation.
- 31 youth have no homeless or housing need identified but have contacted the Allegheny Link for services. Further analysis is being conducted on this population.

### **Youth Identified as Homeless by Local Education Agencies**

At least 412 unaccompanied youth were identified by individual Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in Allegheny County during the 2017-18 school year. This number includes any child or youth between the ages of 0 and 21 years who experienced homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. For the purposes of this Coordinated Community Plan, it is assumed that most of the unaccompanied youth identified by schools are middle or high school-aged. This count includes data from 35 of the 43 school districts in Allegheny County; data was not publicly available for the other districts. Additional data limitations and assumptions are described in Appendix D.

As noted above, most of these youth reported doubling up as their primary nighttime status. Additional data is needed to differentiate between youth who are considered homeless under HUD's definition vs. at-risk of homelessness. For example, under HUD's definition of homeless, youth staying in hotels or motels may be considered homeless if the hotel or motel is paid for by a government or charitable organization. Likewise, HUD considers doubled-up youth as homeless if they meet certain conditions, such as being at risk of physical or sexual harm. In contrast, schools use the broader McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, under which youth in all of these categories are considered homeless.

A possible estimated breakdown of school-identified youth who are homeless vs. those who are at risk of homelessness designation is shown in Figure 2; this estimate assumes that all doubled-up youth and youth staying in hotels or motels are "at-risk" rather than homeless. The purpose of this estimate is solely to provide an approximate indication of the number of school-identified youth who may fall outside of HUD's eligibility criteria for receiving homeless services but who could nonetheless benefit from prevention programs and other homeless services.

**Figure 3: Possible Breakdown of School-Identified Youth by HUD Categories**

412 # unaccompanied youth identified by Allegheny County LEAs	x	20% youth with sheltered as primary nighttime status	=	83 Sheltered unaccompanied youth	99 unaccompanied youth who are homeless under HUD definition
	x	4% youth with unsheltered as primary nighttime status	=	16 Unsheltered unaccompanied youth	
	x	74% youth with doubled-up as primary nighttime status	=	305 Doubled-up unaccompanied youth	313 unaccompanied youth who are at risk of homelessness under HUD definition
	x	2% youth with hotel/motel as primary nighttime status	=	8 Unaccompanied youth in hotels/motels	

**Homelessness on Campus**

Unlike in the K-12 education system, there is no mandate that post-secondary institutions identify and report incidences of homelessness among their students. However, researchers have attempted to better quantify this population both at the national and local level.

The 2018 study “Examining Housing Insecurity Among Pittsburgh Area College Students” conducted by Point Park University in partnership with the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE), provides a snapshot of housing and other basic needs among students enrolled in two- and four-year colleges in the Pittsburgh region. The researchers reviewed survey responses from 1,815 students at seven participating institutions, of which 74% were between the ages of 18 and 26 years.

The results indicated that 12.2% of students who responded to the survey reported to have lacked a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence since starting college. When asked to describe their living arrangements in the last 12 months, 10% of respondents reported having couch-surfed, 5.2% reported having slept either outdoors (parks, street, sidewalk, alley), in a camper, or in structures not intended for human habitation (abandoned building, cars, unconverted garage), and 1.8% reported having slept in a hotel or motel (not travel-related). A small number of respondents reported having lived in shelters (0.7%), transitional independent living (0.4%), or a group home (0.4%). The study did not ask whether respondents were pregnant or parenting. These results corroborate the findings of the #RealCollege survey, a study that compiled survey results of 86,000 students enrolled in 123 two- and four-year institutions across the United States (including four institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania). The report found that homelessness affected 18% of survey respondents at two-year institutions and 14% at four-year institutions. Most students reported couch-surfing with a friend or relative.

### **Annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count:**

Each year, Allegheny County participates in a national effort required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to count the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The Point-in-Time (PIT) homeless count enumerates the sheltered (residing in emergency homeless shelters or transitional housing programs) and unsheltered (residing in places not meant for human habitation) homeless population within the county.

The winter PIT count, as mandated by HUD, occurs during the last 10 days in January and occurred in 2018 on Jan. 31. Although not required by HUD, Allegheny County also conducted a summer PIT count on July 31, 2018, to better understand warm weather trends. Data was collected from the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) — which gathers client-level data input by homeless system providers — and by outreach teams that interviewed people in unsheltered locations.

The number of youth experiencing homelessness (defined as people age 24 years or younger not residing with family members older than age 24) can be more difficult to identify than older homeless people because youth tend to stay in places like friends' houses or motels, locations not included in HUD's PIT count. As a result, the size of this population fluctuates from day to day and year to year and is difficult to capture in a point-in-time analysis. In 2018, there were 57 youth counted, 66 fewer than in 2017. Some of this decrease may be attributed to an increase in permanent housing programs dedicated to homeless youth. Most youth households (88%) were staying in emergency shelters. No unaccompanied homeless youth under age 18 years were identified. This is consistent with the DHS child welfare practice to provide housing for all unaccompanied homeless children under 18 years of age.

The PIT count has many limitations. Certain populations that are in unstable housing situations, but not considered homeless by HUD's definition, are not included in the PIT count. For example, the PIT count does not include those who are in danger of becoming homeless in the near future, living in doubled-up situations, or enrolled in permanent housing programs for the formerly homeless.

## **Prevalence and Characteristics of Specific Populations**

A brief overview of estimated prevalence and key characteristics of specific youth populations is provided below; additional needs are discussed in the Housing, Social-Emotional, Education, and Employment sections of the Statement of Need.

### **Pregnant and Parenting Youth**

Pregnant and parenting youth account for a significant number of youth ages 18 to 24 years identified as homeless in Allegheny County. Among youth identified between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019:

- Nearly one quarter of youth identified as homeless under HUD’s definition were pregnant or parenting (79 out of 343 youth identified, or 23%). This included those living on the streets, in a shelter, or in a place not meant for human habitation.
- Nearly half of the youth identified as being at risk of homelessness were pregnant or parenting (265 out of 573 youth identified, or 46%). This included those who had contact with coordinated entry and were assessed as eligible for prevention services.

In Allegheny County, families headed by single mothers are more likely than other types of households to live in poverty. According to U.S. Census data, just 28% of households in Allegheny County are headed by a single mother, yet they account for 72% of all families with children in poverty. In 2019, The Pittsburgh Foundation released a report entitled “A Qualitative Study of Single Mothers in Allegheny County,” that included focus groups with more than 40 single mothers. The study does not deal with the experiences of parenting youth experiencing homelessness specifically. However, given the study’s focus on single mothers living in poverty, its findings can be assumed to apply to this population.

The report revealed several common challenges faced by single mothers in Allegheny County. They include systemic barriers to accessing needed resources, including a lack of transportation; difficulty accessing affordable childcare; and “program requirements and service hours that do not align with the reality of single parenthood.” The mothers also reported dealing with social stigma associated with being a single parent, emotional and physical fatigue, and societal pressure to stay strong for one’s children.

### **Youth of Color**

Black youth experience disproportionately high rates of homelessness in Allegheny County. Demographics of the County’s residents, as reported by the US Census in July 2016 show that 79% of the population is white and 13% black. Analysis of the youth cohort DHS identified as currently homeless, at risk of homelessness, or receiving homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019 showed that 66% of youth identified as black and 24% identified as white. Four percent of youth identified as another race or multiple races. Data on race was not reported for another 6% of youth. Data reported by school districts corroborates these racial disparities: 44% of children and youth identified as homeless by schools in southwest Pennsylvania in 2017-2018 were black; 33% were white. This regional data included Allegheny County and nine surrounding counties that are predominantly white.

Racial inequality is a persistent challenge in the Greater Pittsburgh area, resulting in disparate outcomes for individuals of color across multiple domains including health, education, economic opportunity, access to resources, and overall quality of life. Recent research published by the City of Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission found that Pittsburgh's black women are five times more likely to live in poverty than Pittsburgh's white men, and that on average, white women and white men live several years longer than black women and black men, respectively. The 2019 study, "Pittsburgh's Inequality Across Gender and Race," traced these disparities across the lifespan, with people of color experiencing significantly higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, homicide, and unemployment, and significantly lower levels of educational attainment and income, than white residents. Comparing Pittsburgh's inequality indicators with those of 12 other comparable cities, the study concluded that Pittsburgh is considerably less livable for black men than other similar cities. It found that Pittsburgh is the least livable city for black women.

The impact of these disparities on youth of color is profound. Racial equity will therefore be an ongoing focus of YHDP planning, program design, and evaluation. YHDP stakeholders have identified numerous partners to engage in this work, including the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, OnePGH, and the Black Girls Equity Alliance (led by YHDP partner Gwen's Girls).

### **LGBTQIA+ Youth**

HUD estimates that nationally, 20 to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQIA+. While sexual orientation data is not regularly collected by homeless providers, Allegheny County's YOUTH Count surveys, conducted most recently in 2016, have shown similar findings, with 35% of respondents identifying as LGBTQIA+. Nine percent identified as transgender or gender-queer.

Sexual orientation data is currently only collected for Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) funded programs and during the timeframe of this need assessment, there was only one program in HMIS that was required to collect sexual orientation data. For this reason, there is a large gap in our knowledge of how many youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County identify as LGBTQIA+, and of those, how many are currently being served within the CoC. Additional data is needed to determine if sexual orientation is a barrier to receiving homeless services. Some national studies suggest that youth who are LGBTQIA+ are less likely to go to shelters due to perceived lack of safety and experience longer durations of homelessness.

All future YHDP-funded projects will collect sexual-orientation data for participants. Youth who participated in the Allegheny County YOUTH count identified sexual orientation as a reason why some of them had become homeless, and both sexual orientation and gender identity were identified as housing barriers. Again, these findings mirror trends seen at the national level. According to national survey data reviewed by Chapin Hall, family conflict was the most common cause of homelessness among LGBTQIA+ youth. The study noted that "family instability and frayed relationships over time" were more frequent causes of homelessness than "the immediate aftermath of coming out."

Once they become homeless, according to national survey data reviewed by Chapin Hall, LGBTQIA+ youth are greater risk for experiencing high levels of hardship than their heterosexual and cisgender peers, including higher rates of assault, trauma, and exchanging sex for basic needs. They are also at greater risk for early death. The statement of need provides numerous recommendations for local CoC and providers of homeless services to better identify and support the needs of LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness.

## **Minors**

Allegheny County's policy is to serve all unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 18 years through the child welfare system. In YHDP planning discussions, youth and stakeholders recognized that some minors who experience homelessness may avoid system involvement for a variety of reasons. Local data on this subpopulation and its prevalence is naturally limited. To inform local YHDP planning efforts, a work group consisting of service providers and DHS CoC, child welfare, and Youth Support Partner Unit staff convened to discuss the needs of unaccompanied and parenting minors experiencing homelessness. The work group identified the following key observations from both field work and lived experience:

- Unaccompanied minors frequently double-up with friends, family, or the family of a significant other. Because the housing often appears to be safe and stable, minors – especially older teens – who are doubled up may be much less likely to be prioritized for services through either the CoC or the child welfare system. However, the situation is often tenuous. Stakeholders noted that family dynamics, financial strain and other factors can gradually or very quickly change the situation, resulting in youth experiencing violence or other forms of abuse, or suddenly finding themselves kicked out of the house with no back-up plan.
- Service providers felt that minors who experienced homelessness while pregnant or parenting were less likely to volunteer complete information about their age or living situation due to fears about being separated from their child.
- Service providers observed that unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness were often involved in unhealthy or coercive relationships which exacerbated their housing instability, especially when sharing housing with an intimate partner and/or the partner's family.

The stakeholder group identified a need for enhanced identification, outreach, and services to help this youth subpopulation access safe, stable housing. When a minor is safely housed with a caring family, additional resources may be needed to help the household manage additional living expenses. To prevent unstable housing situations, it was recommended that youth have access to proactive, individualized counseling services to identify stable housing options and access supports needed to achieve their housing goals, such as family reunification, employment assistance, and support to stay in or reconnect to school.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of using trauma-informed approaches that addresses fears youth may have about being “found out,” while still ensuring adherence to mandated reporting and other child welfare policies to keep minors safe. This requires close coordination between the CoC and child welfare agencies to design cross-system policies and guidelines for service providers.



## **Youth with Foster Care Involvement**

Twenty-nine percent of 18- to 24-year-old youth that DHS identified as currently homeless, at risk of homelessness, or receiving homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019, had a history of involvement in the child welfare system as minors. Additionally, 14% had been involved in the child welfare system as parents, including 9% during the last year.

Recognizing that there is a strong correlation between child welfare involvement and homelessness, DHS has established a growing array of resources designed to prevent homelessness for youth with child welfare involvement, including:

- **Resumption-Eligible Youth:** DHS contracts with Familylinks to reserve three beds in its Downtown Outreach Center and Shelter (DOCS) to provide emergency housing assistance and stabilization services to transition-age youth who may want to request that the courts resume jurisdiction or who are awaiting a court motion to place them in the care of child welfare.
- **College Youth:** DHS assists college-age youth in securing safe, affordable housing during college breaks or summer vacations. The program is unique in providing youth the opportunity to sign a lease, which begins the all-important process of establishing credit.
- **Older youth making a planned exit from child welfare care:** DHS has established a new pilot program that provides unsupervised independent living in an apartment building dedicated to housing for transition-age youth—with the frequent support and involvement of their caseworkers. Any former foster youth that becomes homeless has access to the CoC homeless system and can receive services through the DHS Independent Living program, including the comprehensive drop-in center, the 412 Youth Zone.

These services reflect Allegheny County’s intentional efforts to ensure a positive transition to adulthood for youth involved in foster care. The Coordinated Community Plan includes several objectives and action items designed to expand upon this work, including leveraging child welfare system best practices to support youth involved in the homeless system as well as potential cross-system program models.

## **Justice Involved Youth**

“Collaborating for Change,” a project of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, the National Network for Youth, and the National League of Cities, frames the relationship between homelessness and justice-involvement as bidirectional. This means that youth experiencing homelessness are frequently arrested or incarcerated for reasons related to their lack of housing (such as violating municipal ordinances by sleeping in public spaces or being arrested for trespassing after sleeping in an abandoned building), and youth’s involvement in the justice system can increase their likelihood of homelessness.

The Allegheny County Jail held an average of 2,547 individuals daily in 2019. On average, 16% of the Allegheny County Jail population has been between 18 and 24 years old. Among the cohort of 18- to 24-year-old youth that DHS identified as currently homeless, at risk of homelessness, or receiving homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019, nearly one-fourth (23%) had past involvement in the jail system, including 12% in the last year.

Adults who are sentenced or detained in the Allegheny County Jail and who are at medium to high risk of recidivism may participate in the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative Re-entry Program. The program links people with service coordination, education, job readiness, treatment and family supports. The Jail Collaborative also supports post-jail programming in four Adult Probation Community Resource Centers (CRCs) located throughout the county. In 2018-2019, youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years accounted for 31% of the 316 re-entry program participants served and 22% of the 327 CRC participants served. Across both programs, participants were more likely to be black and male. In 2018-2019, the Jail Collaborative provided single-room occupancy for re-entry or probation clients who were homeless, with 33% becoming stably housed.

## **Survivors of Sexual Trafficking and Exploitation**

National research indicates that youth experiencing homelessness are especially at risk of sex trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation. According to a meta-study published by National Network for Youth (NN4Y), studies have found trafficking rates among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness ranging from 19% to 40%. The NN4Y report found that LGBTQIA+ youth and youth who have been in foster care experience trafficking at higher rates than other youth experiencing homelessness. It also found that high rates of trafficking were seen in young men and women, with girls and young women more likely to experience trafficking.

Of the hundreds of youth in Allegheny County who were assessed for homeless services at coordinated entry, a small number answered “yes” to questions that may indicate the possibility of sexual trafficking or exploitation (It is important to note that these questions do not ask outright whether a young person was being sexually exploited.):

- 28 youth answered “yes” to the question “Does anyone force or trick you to do things that you do not want to do?”
- 34 youth answered “yes” to the question “Do you ever do things that may be considered risky like exchange sex for money, food, drugs, or a place to stay, run drugs for someone, have unprotected sex with someone you don’t know, share a needle, or anything like that?”
- 20 youth answered “yes” to both of the above questions.

Sexual exploitation is frequently underreported for a variety of reasons. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, traffickers may use a variety of techniques to instill fear in their victims, including physically restraining victims or restricting their freedom of movement, limiting or monitoring their contact with outsiders, and using or threatening to use violence toward victims or their families. Additionally, The National Human Trafficking Hotline, which identified 621 victims of human trafficking in Pennsylvania in 2018, noted that lack of awareness of the definition of trafficking is a leading reason for underreporting. For example, a minor who is exchanging sex for food or shelter may not realize that they are victims of a crime and entitled to protection.

Therefore, the actual number of youth experiencing homelessness who have been or are currently being sexually trafficked or exploited is likely higher than the existing data suggests. Through partnership with the Allegheny County Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team (CSEC-MDT) and community agencies such as Pittsburgh Action Against Rape, which operates a drop-in center for young adults experiencing trafficking or exploitation, it may be possible to identify a more accurate count.

# Housing Needs

Affordable housing is an issue that has caught the attention of many local community members and leaders in recent years. In 2015, the City of Pittsburgh established an Affordable Housing Task Force to study and respond to this growing challenge. In a report published the following year, the Task Force identified a gap of approximately 17,241 affordable and available rental units in Pittsburgh for households at or below 50% of the median household income.

According to HUD's 2019 Housing Market Profile for Pittsburgh, the average rent for apartments in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area was \$1,104 during the fourth quarter of 2018. This represented an increase of nearly 5% from the previous year. The average rents for studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom apartments were \$840, \$985, \$1,189, and \$1,459, respectively. Based on those rates, someone earning \$15.01/hour – the self-sufficiency wage for a household of one in Allegheny County – can expect to spend slightly more than 30% of their annual income on rental for a one-bedroom apartment.

The implications for young people – who are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed – are significant. For a young person working at a fast food restaurant, where the local median hourly wage for front-line workers is just \$9.09, a market rate apartment can easily cost half of their annual income.

## Current System Gaps

In YHDP planning sessions held between May and December 2019, YAB members and YHDP stakeholders offered many recommendations about how the community could better address the housing needs of youth, described below.

**Increase Youth-Dedicated Housing:** YAB members and YHDP stakeholder expressed unanimous concern about the lack of housing available to youth, both within the CoC and throughout the community-at-large. These concerns align with recent efforts by DHS to quantify the gap in youth-dedicated housing within the CoC: a supply-and-demand analysis conducted in 2020 identified an annual gap of at least 60 youth-dedicated rapid-re-housing units. Beyond simply needing to increase the share of youth-dedicated housing units, youth recommend that the CoC offer a wider variety of program types tailored to the individual needs and preferences of young adults. Single occupancy units, shared housing (e.g. roommate matching), host homes, dormitory-style housing, and housing specially designed for parenting youth were all cited as program models worth exploring.

**Faster Connections to Permanent Housing:** Youth may access RRH and PSH programs for the general adult population; however, because the CoC's Coordinated Entry-prioritization process factors in chronicity, length-of-time homeless, and vulnerability, youth may have a harder time accessing PSH when chronic individuals are also on the wait list. Among YAB and YHDP stakeholders, there was concern about the length of time young people must wait for long-term housing to become available.

**Creating Safe Alternatives to Shelter:** Youth expressed a strong desire for creative and safe alternatives to emergency shelter, noting that many youth avoid shelter even if it means living on the street or couch-surfing with someone who makes them feel unsafe. Youth saw short-term host home stays as a possible solution to immediate housing needs, with the added benefit of helping youth build permanent connections to caring adults.

**Safety:** YAB members frequently cited safety – both physical and emotional – as an area to be addressed in YHDP planning. In the words of one YAB member “We have to feel safe to be engaged.” They discussed the critical importance of programs hiring staff who are empathetic, professional, and trauma-informed. They urged providers to examine their current disciplinary procedures and correct any practices that unintentionally create unsafe situations for youth (One example given by one youth was being told to leave shelter overnight.). They identified respect for personal belongings as an important factor in helping young people feel emotionally safe. Both youth and adult stakeholders discussed the need for programs to offer more healthy outlets for youth to deal with stress and the emotional impact of homelessness. They recommended homeless providers work to increase youth’s access to on-site and community-based mental health and drug and alcohol services (see “Increased Collaboration” below). Inclusion and cultural competency (discussed below) were often cited in discussions about safety.

**No More Wrong Doors:** Many YAB members shared their frustration that so many community programs and services impose restrictions on who can receive help based on eligibility criteria. They noted the wide range of age-related criteria across youth-serving organizations in the community, with various programs serving young people up to age 22, 24, 25, 26 or even 29 years. These inconsistencies made eligibility rules at individual programs seem arbitrary. Youth felt that the homeless system penalized young people who are doubled-up by not prioritizing them for CoC housing and other services. They voiced a strong desire to see more resources with the capacity to serve any young person who is unstably housed.

Youth and stakeholders expressed interest in seeing more frequent collaboration and co-location of services within homeless programs as a means of developing equitable access to the system. The 412 Youth Zone was frequently cited as a successful model, but some noted that its centralized location and eligibility criteria meant that many youth in need of services could not access them. Some youth felt that this model should be replicated in additional communities so that young people across the region could be better served. YAB members identified public libraries as potential hubs where youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness could connect to services and technology.

**Authentic and Positive Connections:** Relationships are paramount to the success of any youth-dedicated housing program. Youth often cited the critical role that program staff played in their own housing experiences and outcomes, noting that “the worker makes a difference for better or worse.” Characteristics youth look for in program staff include compassion, cultural competence and demonstrating respect for youth’s identities, and the ability to provide positive encouragement while empowering and holding youth accountable to make their own decisions. Additionally, youth wanted to explore programs that match young people with

host families both for support with short-term needs (e.g. providing temporary housing while a youth is waiting for an apartment, helping a first-generation college student navigate the admissions process) and for companionship that endures after the youth has exited formal programming and expands their network of caring adults and community members.

**Peer Navigators:** Youth expressed enthusiasm for creating a peer-support program that would “bring in youth with past experience in-shelter to mentor/support us in navigating the system.” Through such a program, they envisioned youth in-shelter being matched with another young adult who could provide coaching during and after their stay in-shelter. The navigators could play a role in helping youth access services and resources but should not attempt to play the role of case manager. Rather, their primary role would be to listen, provide encouragement, and “act as guides in the transition to adult life.”

DHS has an existing model for peer support known as the Youth Support Partner (YSP) Unit. Youth Support Partners are youth formally employed by DHS to provide peer engagement and support to youth who are currently active in DHS systems. They receive full-time salary and benefits, have lived humans services experience. YAB members and YHDP stakeholders recommend either expanding or replicating the YSP program to serve more youth experiencing homelessness.

**A Balance Between Privacy and Community:** YAB members spoke often about the need for housing programs that foster youth’s freedom and independence (In the words of one youth, “You have to empower us;” of another, “Program rules should be age-appropriate and give us freedom to be young.”) This concept is reflected in the desire some youth had for more private residential settings, including single occupancy units or units shared with one other roommate. At the same time, YAB members discussed the need for youth to be able to access and participate in on-site community spaces and activities on a voluntary basis, such as community service or paid work opportunities. One YAB member conducted research on dormitory-style “Travelers’ Lodges” and recommended that this model be adapted for young adults.

**Flexible Length of Stay:** YAB members expressed a desire for more flexible timeframes, including expanding the window of time a young person could be housed based on individual circumstances and needs. Youth wanted to be the drivers of their own futures and saw a direct correlation between length-of-time and quality of decision-making: “making decisions under pressure doesn’t lead to the best decisions.” They advised that the homeless system “give us time to adjust.”

**Youth Input on CoC Assessment Process:** The Allegheny Link currently utilizes the Transition-Age Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (TAY VI-SPDAT) as the assessment tool for youth. Youth over the age of 18 years may access homeless services designed for youth as well as those for the general adult population. However, as noted above, the current supply of youth-dedicated housing is limited and youth may face longer wait times to access adult housing if there are chronically homeless individuals on the wait list. In YHDP planning sessions, YAB members noted that “prioritization [e.g. referral to homeless services based on assessed needs] can feel arbitrary and unrealistic.”

**Increased Collaboration:** YAB members and YHDP stakeholders saw opportunities for providers of homeless services to expand partnerships with workforce development agencies, post-secondary institutions, behavioral health providers, and legal aid providers. These partnerships could result in a greater number of successful referrals (using warm hand-offs) and, when possible, offering more services on-site at housing programs. DHS' Youth Case Conferencing meetings were identified as a current example of successful interagency collaboration; expanding or replicating this model to engage additional cross-system partners could prove beneficial.

**More inclusive spaces:** As one YHDP stakeholder put it, "Targeting marginalized populations creates a system that works for everyone." Special considerations for LGBTQIA+ youth and youth of color are described below.

## **Housing Considerations of Specific Populations**

### **LGBTQIA+ Youth**

A national survey of homeless youth service providers conducted by True Colors Fund in 2015 found that "young people's sense of whether service agencies were safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth" was a key factor in their decision to engage with homeless services. Additionally, they found that LGBTQIA+ youth experienced longer durations of homelessness than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts – perhaps because they are less likely to have access to service agencies they perceive as safe. These findings were corroborated in the 2014 DHS report entitled "I'll Never Get Used to It: Young People Living on the Streets," which noted a lack of shelter options for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Developing cultural competency is a critical step for providers of homeless services to better serve LGBTQIA+ youth and youth of color who experience homelessness. Stakeholders pointed to newer, trans-led and LGBTQIA+-focused housing programs established in the Pittsburgh area (e.g. SisTersPGH, True T PGH, Proud Haven) as signs of community progress. However, stakeholders emphasized that all homeless providers should ensure that all youth feel comfortable accessing their services. Stakeholders recommended that homeless providers collaborate with youth to identify areas for improvement and re-design spaces and programming as needed.

DHS employs a full-time LGBTQIA+ champion/Safe Space designee who works across systems to promote LGBTQIA+ cultural competence, including providing training DHS staff, contracted providers, and community agencies. Additionally, DHS has formal LGBTQIA+ / Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Standards of Practice which apply to all DHS staff and provider staff across human service areas, including the homeless system. The Standards of Practice provide guidance for DHS and contracted provider staff to enhance their interactions and service delivery with individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+, with an emphasis on demonstrating empathy, eliminating bias and protecting individuals' confidentiality and safety. The standards cover such topics as communication, making appropriate referrals, housing and placement, and understanding disclosure related to SOGIE information.

While the LGBTQIA+/SOGIE Standards of Practice apply to all staff of any homeless program funded by DHS, recent conversations with YHDP stakeholders representing LGBTQIA+ communities indicate the need for an intentional strategy to ensure the standards are widely understood and implemented across the CoC. Such a strategy would include training and ongoing professional development (for both front-line and supervisory staff), collecting feedback from program participants and continuous quality improvement activities.

Youth and community stakeholders envision inclusion in the homeless system as taking several forms, including:

- implementing outreach and identification strategies that will result in a more accurate count of LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness
- staff who are more knowledgeable about what it means to welcome and support LGBTQIA+ youth (in the words of one stakeholder, “expertise is needed to work with LGBTQIA+ youth”)
- housing programs that are co-designed by youth to be more LGBTQIA+ inclusive
- greater engagement of QTPOC (queer trans people of color) community leaders to help youth connect to services
- borrowing lessons learned from recent partnerships that have focused on building LGBTQIA+ competence among public systems, including getR.E.A.L.: (Recognize. Engage. Affirm. Love) a recent DHS initiative designed to improved child welfare policy and practice.

## **Youth of Color**

As noted above, the majority of youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Allegheny County are youth of color (66%); white youth represented a smaller segment of unstably housed youth (24%). These demographics are nearly identical for the subset of youth who were served by CoC-funded homeless programs (65% and 28%, respectively). These numbers are striking in a county in which 79% of the population is white and 13% is black. In YHDP visioning sessions, YAB members noted that hiring adults who “respect where we are at and our personal histories, situations, and needs” is essential for operating a successful program for youth experiencing homelessness. They felt this could be accomplished by making a more deliberate effort to recruit “diverse staff that look like us and have similar experiences.” In the fields of youth development and education, a growing body of research suggests that youth benefit in many ways from having teachers, mentors, or other positive adult role models of the same race or ethnicity.

Cultural competency training, standards of care, and communities of practice are other recommended strategies to enable CoC and homeless agency staff to better identify and address racial bias. The YAB, the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, and community leaders (such as Gwen’s Girls, the Black Girls Equity Alliance, and other stakeholder groups) should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such efforts. YAB members also emphasized that homeless service programs could immediately implement a number of simple, low-cost activities to make all youth feel welcome, such as choosing secular celebrations over religious ones, providing multicultural personal care products, and offering a greater variety of healthy foods that address diverse dietary needs and preferences.



## **Pregnant and Parenting Youth**

Pregnant and parenting youth may need additional support in maintaining relationships to partners, family members, or others who are involved in child-rearing. Chapin Hall's 2018 issue brief on pregnant and parenting youth recommended that housing providers make a concerted effort to help pregnant and parenting youth maintain relationships that are important to them, citing national research that indicated some young parents struggle to find housing that allows them to reside with a partner.

Both the CoC's youth-dedicated housing-gap analysis and conversations with youth and community stakeholders identified a need for additional housing for pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness. Prevention and diversion strategies are also critical given the high rates of youth at risk of homelessness who were identified as pregnant or parenting. Youth and YHDP stakeholders saw value in creating specialized housing programs that create a strong sense of community and utilize a Positive Youth Development framework to meet the developmental, educational, and social-emotional needs of parenting youth.

## **Youth with Justice System Involvement**

The YHDP Leadership Council has identified justice-involvement of youth experiencing homelessness as an issue that demands further discussion and planning. As of December 2019, stakeholders have identified additional partners within the adult and juvenile justice systems to engage in YHDP planning efforts. This work could include review of local data as well as the "Collaborating for Change" framework with recommendations for local communities to strengthen cross-system partnerships to prevent unnecessary arrests of youth experiencing homelessness, as well as to prevent homelessness among justice-involved youth.

YHDP stakeholders have identified the intersection between sexual exploitation, justice-involvement and homelessness as a topic worthy of further planning, with the goal of creating jail-diversion interventions for young adults who are arrested for prostitution charges. Housing could be a key component of such a strategy. Cross-system partners including Allegheny County family court judges, DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families, Pittsburgh Action Against Rape, the 412 Youth Zone, and the DHS Youth Support Partner Unit have done past planning to identify potential program models; engaging the CoC, YAB, and other stakeholders can help align additional resources.

## **Survivors of Sexual Trafficking and Exploitation**

Allegheny County established the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team (CSEC-MDT) to develop a county-wide response to commercial sexual exploitation of children. The CSEC-MDT is co-facilitated by the deputy director of the DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families and the executive director of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR) and includes many stakeholders including the FBI, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, and others. The CSEC-MDT and Allegheny County CoC are currently identifying opportunities for expanded cross-system collaboration including mapping resources and pathways available to youth who have experienced sexual exploitation and have housing needs and identifying training needs of providers of homeless services.

## Social-Emotional Needs

Like all young people, youth experiencing homelessness have varying social and emotional needs which are shaped by their personal histories, experiences and environments. Age, family dynamics, and circumstances leading to homelessness are among the many factors to consider when developing strategies centered on social-emotional well-being.

Available local data on homeless youth indicate that many have a history of physical, emotional, or sexual trauma. Family conflict was the leading self-reported cause of homelessness among youth who responded to the Allegheny County YOUTH Count survey in 2015. Fifty-three percent of respondents reported that they had been hurt or harassed by someone in their life, with the largest number (32%) having been hurt by a parent or guardian.

The Healthy Allegheny Teen Survey, conducted in 2014 with over 1,600 participating teens in Allegheny County, found that youth who were homeless or otherwise marginalized were less likely to report having consistent supportive relationships to help them through difficult times. They were also more likely to report feelings of depression and suicidality in the past 12 months.

A cross-system analysis of 18- to 24-year-old youth that DHS identified as currently homeless, at risk of homelessness, or receiving homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019, showed high rates of past involvement in behavioral health services. Sixty-five percent had involvement in mental health services, with 28% involved in the last year. Twenty-eight percent had ever been involved in drug and alcohol services, with nine percent involved in the last year. Further analysis is being done to determine whether there are any disparities across different subpopulations of youth, as well as whether youths' involvement in homeless services tended to precede or follow their involvement in behavioral health services. This information could be beneficial to YHDP stakeholders when developing prevention and assessment strategies.

**Youth-driven and Individualized Supports:** While research points to several common areas of need across the general homeless-youth population and within specific subgroups, YHDP stakeholders have emphasized the need to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. In YHDP visioning sessions, YAB members frequently talked about the need for service providers to take more time to get to know them as individuals, understand their backgrounds and preferences, and help them map out solutions that aligned with their personal goals.

**Greater Continuity of Care Across Youth and Adult Systems:** Some youth expressed concern about their ability to navigate human services designed for adults, which they perceived as unwelcoming to youth: "Some adult resources are negative. Some churches want you to have tattoos and some don't want you to have them, or they might be racist." Others who had utilized adult programs reported feeling isolated because they "didn't fit into the older system." One youth recommended that youth programs provide a class to teach transition-age youth how to navigate adult systems. Another suggested that adult service providers try to create a more youth-friendly culture.

**Building Natural Support Networks:** Stakeholders frequently raised the idea of family mediation and, to a lesser extent, family finding – noting that these approaches should defer to youth to define whom they consider family. Youth and stakeholders also saw a need to help young people build their social capital through support networks consisting of trustworthy peers, adults, and community members. They emphasized that the goal should be to help youth establish natural and permanent relationships, not another “program” that ends when youth reach a certain age or milestone.

Youth noted the positive impact of programs like the 412 Youth Zone and Systems Improvement Through Youth (SITY) as places to make friends, develop valuable leadership skills and feel a sense of belonging. Some confided that they dreaded aging out and losing those vital connections; as one YAB member put it, “I don’t want to age out. I grew here and made bonds here...you can see the change in yourself and your peers.” Some youth expressed interest in creating alumni groups to maintain the sense of purpose and connection they currently experience as participants.

**Increased Access to Behavioral Health Services:** Several stakeholders saw a gap in behavioral health services for youth experiencing homelessness, especially those who are not being served by the homeless system. Describing this gap, stakeholders identified a need to expand formal services (such as hiring more counselors and social workers to support unstably housed college students) as well as community spaces that foster healthy behaviors (such as creating “sober spaces” where young people can socialize, relax and access free WiFi during evening hours).

**Transition Planning:** Youth said they worried about what would happen when they are too old to participate in youth-centered spaces and programs. Several described older peers who were “scrambling” to line up needed resources and supports. YAB members saw the need for providers of homeless services to develop a more gradual process to help transition-age youth develop the self-sufficiency required when they age out of youth programs. (“Aging out on your birthday just doesn’t feel right,” as one young adult put it.) They recommended that programs work with participants early on to create a formal transition plan that ramps up in the six-month period leading up the maximum age of eligibility and tapers off over a period of several months after exit. Transition planning would include coaching, life skills classes, and individual goal-setting.

This final recommendation presents an opportunity to leverage best practices developed by the county’s child welfare system, which over the last decade has steadily expanded its array of transition services for youth ages 14 to 24 years who are involved in foster care. Through the Independent Living Initiative, youth are paired with transition planners who collaborate with youth, their assigned caseworkers, family and other supports to develop a transition plan and make service referrals. They are also able to partner with education liaisons who advise students on educational options, help them navigate the transition to higher education or career training, and provide ongoing support to help ensure their success.

Youth transitioning out of foster care may also participate in the Opportunity Passport, a matched savings program designed to improve financial literacy; YVLifeSet, an intensive evidence-based coaching program that develops life skills; the 412 Youth Zone, which offers a range of programming including coaching and case management; and the ACTION-Housing Lofts, centrally located apartments where youth pay 30% of their net income as “rent,” which is a savings account available to the youth when they discharge from the program. Additionally, KidsVoice staffs a unit of attorneys solely for legal representation for older youth to overcome problems related to housing, credit, expungement of records, driver’s license barriers, etc.

Youth and YHDP stakeholders have recommended exploring how the CoC might expand or replicate these robust program offerings to make similar services available to youth experiencing homelessness who do not have a history of child welfare involvement. Both the manager of Transition-age Youth and the Transition-age Youth system coordinator are members of the YHDP Leadership Council and bring expertise to this planning work.

## **Social-Emotional Considerations of Specific Populations**

### **Pregnant and Parenting Youth**

Pregnant and parenting youth need access to a range of resources and supports above and beyond those of the general population of homeless youth. These may include but are not limited to prenatal care, breastfeeding support, perinatal behavioral health services, parenting education or support groups, respite care, and childcare assistance. Managing the daily rigors of caring for an infant or young child is specially challenging for youth who lack a strong support network.

YHDP stakeholders and CoC leaders have identified opportunities to leverage new and existing program models in order to improve service access for pregnant and parenting youth who are homeless. Each of these programs is voluntary, relationship-focused, and designed to simplify the process of accessing resources that span multiple systems. They include:

- Hello Baby, a new county-wide initiative designed support all families with newborns. Using a tiered approach, Hello Baby will offer universal, differentiated and priority services to families based on need. Hello Baby is expected to launch in early 2020.
- Family Centers, a network of 28 community hubs that offer myriad resources designed to strengthen and stabilize families. FCs have been historically underutilized by families that are at high risk of child welfare involvement, including those who are transient, distrustful of service, or lacking transportation. Among the cohort of 18- to 24-year-old youth that DHS identified as currently homeless, at risk of homelessness, or receiving homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019, only six percent had ever been involved in Family Centers.
- The Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC), consolidates childcare services (which were previously scattered across several community offices and providers) to offer a one-stop shop for families to access childcare subsidies, human services navigation services and early intervention screenings. The ELRC is operated locally at a downtown site and six regional Family Centers,
- The Housing Support and Service Coordination (HSSC) program, which has, since 2013, provided streamlined case management to homeless families both during and after their stay in emergency shelters.

## **Youth of Color**

Available local data reinforces the importance of trauma-informed and culturally aware approaches to service delivery for youth of color who are experiencing homelessness. For example, according to an analysis of the Healthy Allegheny Teen Survey, conducted in 2014 with over 1,600 participating Allegheny County teens, black girls reported more physical and sexual abuse, as well as neglect, than white girls. Black girls also report more violence and victimization, teen-dating violence, forced sex, and being threatened or injured with a weapon. Black girls were nine times as likely as white girls to have someone close to them murdered.

Additionally, the Pittsburgh Equity Indicators report found that while instances of homicide, and use of force during arrest, and domestic violence decreased for both black and white residents between 2017 and 2018, black residents were still significantly more likely to experience these events. The plan noted that the City received funding in 2019 to establish a new Domestic Violence Unit that will expand data collection and processing to improve investigations of domestic violence, and develop collaborative justice system projects and community outreach in the area of domestic violence. This initiative presents a potential opportunity for YHDP stakeholders to participate.

## **LGBTQIA+ Youth**

In YHDP planning discussions, local stakeholders identified the need for trauma-informed care across all programs and spaces with which LGBTQIA+ youth engage. Another recommendation was developing strategies to help parents and caregivers who are struggling with their child's sexual orientation or gender identity, with the aim of preventing homelessness, or when possible, helping to reunify youth with their families.

## **Survivors of Sexual Trafficking and Exploitation**

National research compiled by National Network for Youth found that youth experiencing homelessness who have also been victims of sex trafficking are more likely to have mental health and substance use issues, to have experienced physical and emotional abuse by parents or guardians, and to have a history of sexual abuse. Victims may be fearful of seeking help or providing details about their circumstances (for example, if their abuser or trafficker is monitoring their phone calls). Service providers who do outreach, assessment and intake must have adequate training on how to ask the right questions to identify warning signs of exploitation.

## **Educational Needs**

The educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness are multi-faceted, reflecting the vast range of educational systems and programs with which teens and young adults may engage. Youth may be enrolled in middle or high school, pursuing a GED, or participating in any number of post-secondary or career-training programs. On the other hand, many are disconnected from school. According to Chapin Hall's review of the Voices of Youth Count Survey, nearly half of youth aged 16 to 24 years who were homeless or housing unstable were disconnected from school or work, compared to 13% in the general population. Additionally, 34% of 18- to 25-year-olds surveyed said they lacked a high school diploma or GED, compared with 14% of 18- to 25-year-olds in the general population.

## Educational Status of Youth Involved in Homeless Services

Youth are asked about their educational status upon entry into a homeless program. This data is tracked in HMIS, the CoC's information management system. Education data was available for 558 clients ages 18 to 24 years who were engaged in homeless services between December 1, 2018 and November 30, 2019. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of these youth's self-reported educational status. Many of the homeless system-involved youth (57%) reporting having a high school diploma or GED. More youth reported graduating high school and receiving their high school diploma (51%) than receiving their GED (6%).

Nineteen percent of the youth reported having less than a high school diploma/GED. The three youth who were identified as completing 8th grade or less reported that they had dropped out of school. Of the 84 youth who identified as having stopped attending school during high school, client case notes showed that two youth reported being expelled and 77 noted dropping out.

This number of homeless system-involved youth who reported having less than a high school diploma or GED is significantly less than the national average reported by Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count education brief, which found that 34% of 18- to 25-year-olds experiencing homelessness reported lacking a high school diploma or GED. However, it is important to note that Voices of Youth Count used a different methodology – phone-based surveys – and was not limited to just youth engaged in homeless services. There is limited local data on the educational status of unsheltered youth, youth who do not qualify as homeless under HUD, and those who do not reach out for services.

A smaller number of homeless system-involved youth reporting having participated in vocational school (2%) or post-secondary education (8%). Of those with post-secondary education involvement, most reporting having completed some college (only five youth reported having earned either an associate's or bachelor's degree).

**Figure 4: Highest Level of Education Reported by Youth Involved in Homeless Services (Source: HMIS)**

Highest Level of Education Reported by Youth	Number of Youth	Percentage of Youth in Homeless-System
8th Grade or Less	3	1%
Some High School	100	18%
High School Diploma	288	51%
GED	32	6%
Vocational School	9	2%
Some College	37	7%
Associate's Degree	4	<1%
Bachelor's Degree	1	<1%
Data Not Collected	84	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **School-Aged Youth**

The number of unaccompanied youth identified by school districts in Allegheny County is on the rise: it increased from 347 in the 2015-2016 school year to 412 in 2017-2018, the most recent school year for which data is available. The school districts that identified the most unaccompanied youth in 2017-2018 included Pittsburgh Public Schools (110), followed by Woodland Hills (46), East Allegheny (25), Gateway (19), McKeesport (15), Shaler Area (13), and Clairton City (13).

According to the most recent report released by Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program, the rate of students experiencing educational barriers in Region 4 (the ten-county southwest Pennsylvania region including Allegheny County) was the highest of any region in the state: 30% of students in this region had a documented barrier compared with the statewide rate of 14%. Transportation was the most common barrier reported for students in Region 4 (75% of barriers reported were transportation-related), followed by determining McKinney-Vento eligibility (27% of barriers reported). Students also faced, to a lesser degree, barriers related to school selection and obtaining medical or school records. The report noted that Region 4's transportation challenges were considerably greater than any other region in the state.

In Region 4, 67% of students experiencing homelessness remained in their Local Education Agency (LEA) or school, 24% had two LEA/school moves, and 5% had more than two moves during the school year. The percentage of Region 4 students who moved schools was slightly higher than the overall rate for Pennsylvania. Student mobility is a significant factor in educational success and students identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest.

More than half (55%) of students in Region 4 for whom data was available were identified as chronically absent. The report attributed chronic absenteeism to ongoing transportation barriers and mobility of students experiencing homelessness.

At the state level, the ECYEH report found that students experiencing homelessness were performing substantially lower than historically underperforming students on Pennsylvania state academic assessments, scoring approximately 10 percentage points lower than the historically underperforming population in all grades and content areas. Region-specific data was not included in the report.

Finally, across Pennsylvania, the dropout rate was significantly higher for students identified as homeless (4%) compared to the state average (1.7%), with the highest dropout rates occurring in grade 12. Sixty nine percent of grade-12 students identified as homeless, graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma. The report noted that the dropout rate for students identified as homeless had decreased from 5% in the 2016-17 school year.

## Youth Enrolled in Post-Secondary Education

The 2019 Chapin Hall research brief “Missed Opportunities: Education Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America” combined data from the Voices of Youth Count national survey, youth point-in-time counts, CoC and provider surveys, interviews with youth, and other sources to identify several major findings regarding the education of young adults experiencing homelessness:

- Post-secondary credit completion rates were lower for 18- to 25-year-old youth experiencing homelessness than their peers who had not experienced homelessness. This was true across all racial groups, with significant disparities for youth of color.
- Youth experiencing homelessness are less likely to be enrolled in four-year colleges: the Voices of Youth Count survey indicated that among young adults ages 18 to 25 years, four-year college enrollment was four times higher for youth who did not experience homelessness in the previous 12 months (52% compared to 15%).
- The #RealCollege survey identified a high prevalence of housing instability and homelessness among young people enrolled in two- and four-year colleges, with higher rates of housing instability and homelessness among students enrolled in community and technical colleges.
- The relationship between educational attainment and homelessness is bidirectional, with local educational attainment serving as a risk factor for homelessness and homelessness serving as a risk factor for lower educational attainment.

A survey of 1,815 college students across seven Pittsburgh-area institutions of higher education found significant number of students had recently experienced housing instability while attending college. Only 25.7% of respondents indicated they strongly agreed in being confident about their ability to pay their housing cost/rent on time. The results showed observable disparities between white students and students of color, as well as between students with disabilities and those without disabilities. Students with disabilities were more likely to report housing instability, and nonwhite students and first-generation students were more likely to be helping to financially support siblings or parents and taking out credit card debt to cover academic or living expenses.

Interviews and focus groups with administrators of nine PCHE institutions identified several barriers to meeting the needs of students who are housing insecure, including gaps in institutional structure, lack of formal processes and policies, and a need for training for students, staff, and faculty. Recommendations included creating a student assistance program to centralize resources for students in need of support, implementing a unified basic needs training program across the colleges and universities in the Pittsburgh region, and developing campus and community partnerships to address housing insecurity.



## Educational Needs Identified by YAB and YHDP Stakeholders

In conversations with YAB members and YHDP stakeholders, education came up frequently as an opportunity for growth and improvement at both the community and systems level. Discussion focused primarily on the needs of youth who are enrolled in post-secondary education and those who are disconnected from school. Needs identified included both structural gaps (such as a lack of housing during term breaks) and social barriers (such as perceptions and biases). Recommendations included:

- **Removing structural barriers to education:** Youth and other stakeholders discussed the need to develop intentional partnerships and strategies to eliminate barriers to participation in post-secondary education, including college and career-training programs. Wraparound supports and collaboration between education and housing programs were both seen as important ways to do so; for example, developing a housing program that provides specialized supports for youth pursuing post-secondary education. For youth enrolled in post-secondary education, ensuring that campus housing is available during breaks and vacations is critical. Transportation and childcare assistance could also help young people connect to and persist in educational programs.
- **Bridging gaps in education:** Young adults who were previously enrolled in secondary or post-secondary education should be re-engaged and supported with resuming education if and when they wish to reconnect. Opportunities to earn life experience credits and/or recognize past credits earned would help reduce the time and cost to complete a degree or credential.
- **Aligning with employer-recognized career pathways:** Education and employment needs were often discussed interchangeably, underscoring the reality that young adults experiencing homelessness need education and training that will result in jobs and offer the financial security to bring an end to homelessness. Work-based learning, paid internships, and pre-apprenticeships were recommended strategies to help youth make meaningful connections between learning and employment.
- **Shifting mindsets:** YHDP stakeholders noted that work is needed at the community and institutional level to overcome the stigma associated with homelessness, increase expectations for what young adults can accomplish, and adopt a collective “do whatever it takes” mindset to keep students in school. Youth want to see more service providers, including shelter staff as well as peer support partners, offer coaching to help young adults develop a personal vision, set life and career goals, and identify practical steps to begin accomplishing those goals.
- **Supporting resilience:** In the words of one YAB member, “it can be difficult to see your path forward in life” while managing the daily stressors of homelessness. One stakeholder who works with homeless youth transitioning from high school to college (many of whom are first generation college students) observed that in one student cohort, nearly half of the youth dropped out of college due to stress and other difficulties associated with college life. Stakeholders saw a need for increased access to counseling and social-emotional support at all educational levels – from middle schools through post-secondary – to support homeless youth in their educational pursuits. While public schools and college campuses have social workers and counselors on staff to provide these kinds of supports, stakeholders noted that in many cases, the demand for services far exceeded institutional capacity.

## **Educational Considerations of Specific Populations**

### **Pregnant and Parenting Youth**

Preliminary data from HMIS indicates that among youth ages 18 to 24 years who were involved in the homeless system, non-parenting youth were more likely than parenting youth to report completing a high school diploma or attending college, while parenting youth were more likely to report attending vocational schools.

A significant factor in parenting youth's educational attainment is access to childcare. Quality childcare, especially early learning programs, have been shown to provide many positive benefits for children and parents, both short-term and across the lifespan. Young children experiencing homelessness are a federally mandated priority population for Head Start and Early Head Start programs, meaning they are categorically eligible to enroll. However, families must contend with wait lists for a limited number of slots. Regional shortages of quality, affordable, and accessible childcare create barriers for parenting youth experiencing homelessness to continue their education.

YHDP stakeholders recommend partnership with Project ELECT (Education Leading to Employment and Career Training, a Pennsylvania Department of Education program funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services that enables school districts to help pregnant and parenting teens earn a diploma or GED) to identify how parenting youth experiencing homelessness are currently being served by the program, ways to engage more youth, and opportunities to leverage best practices to support youth who do not qualify for Project ELECT but could benefit from similar services.

### **Youth of Color**

School suspensions have been shown to negatively impact students' academic achievement and graduation rates and have been a focus of local partnerships including OnePGH and the Black Girls Equity Alliance. "Inequities Affecting Black Girls in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," a report released in 2016, found that black girls attending Pittsburgh Public Schools were more than three times as likely as white girls to be suspended from school, and that black girls are especially likely to be disciplined for behaviors which are subjective, such as defiance and disrespect. The report noted that black girls are often disciplined when they are defending themselves from harassment or assault at school, citing national survey data that indicated two-thirds of black girls in grades eight through 11 had been sexually harassed at school (compared to half of white girls).

According to the Equity Indicators Annual Report released by the City of Pittsburgh in 2018, there was a decrease in school suspensions between 2017 and 2018 for both black students and white students enrolled in Pittsburgh Public Schools, however, black students remain more than three times as likely to be suspended from school at least once during the school year. While neither of these reports provided data specific to black youth experiencing homelessness, given the high rates of chronic absenteeism found in homeless students in southwest Pennsylvania, it is likely that the effects of school discipline and truancy are compounded for youth who are both black and housing insecure.

For homeless youth who are involved in human services and attend a school district that has a data-sharing agreement with DHS, further analysis can be done to identify educational disparities affecting youth of color who are experiencing homelessness.

## **LGBTQIA+ Youth**

Due to the current data limitations described previously, there is a large gap in our knowledge about the prevalence and needs of LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County. According to the True Colors Fund 2019 publication, “At the Intersections: A Collaborative Resource on LGBTQIA+ Youth Homelessness”, “experiences with bullying in school coupled with family rejection in the home, result in some LGBTQIA+ youth skipping school or running away.” Research from Chapin Hall corroborates these findings, noting that both LGBTQ youth and youth of color are at greater risk of not completing high school. Additional conversations and collaboration with LGBTQIA+ youth who are currently or formerly homeless is critical to YHDP planning efforts. YHDP stakeholders are currently exploring opportunities to engage more LGBTQIA+ youth as leaders in the project’s design phase.

## **Employment Needs**

Depending on their individual circumstances, youth experiencing homelessness may face significant barriers to participating in the labor market, such as limited education or work history, lack of transportation or access to work attire, or difficulty showing up to work consistently because of transience or other factors. According to a white paper released by the Heartland Alliance National Initiatives on Poverty and Economic Opportunity, youth without a high school diploma were four times as likely to be unemployed as their counterparts with a bachelor’s degree or higher. For those who work, underemployment – working one or more low-paying jobs or in jobs with limited hours – can make it impossible to find and maintain housing.

Supporting youth in obtaining livable-wage jobs is therefore a critical component of our plan to prevent and end youth homelessness. In Allegheny County, the current self-sufficiency wage, defined as the amount of income needed to meet basic needs without public subsidies or private assistance, was \$15.01/hour (\$31,225 annually) for an individual in 2019.

Public workforce development programs have been shown to help low-income youth increase their household’s financial stability, provide connections to post-secondary education opportunities, and increase future earning potential. In Allegheny County, Partner4Work is the designated workforce development board that administers Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other public funds that help individuals overcome barriers to employment. Partner4Work oversees a public workforce system that includes the PA CareerLink one-stop centers; in-school, out-of-school, and summer youth employment programs, registered apprenticeships, transitional jobs, and many other programs. Other core workforce partners include Literacy Pittsburgh, which provides adult basic education services; the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, which supports individuals with disabilities; and a vast network of training and employment service providers that include high schools, career and technical education programs, post-secondary institutions, and community-based agencies.

For homeless youth who are disconnected from the workforce, have dropped out of school, are underemployed, or are looking to advance in the workforce, participating in one of these programs can lead to numerous positive outcomes, including GED and/or attainment of industry-recognized credentials, job placement, increased earnings, and job retention. Under the WIOA, homeless youth are a priority category enrollment for public workforce programs.

Available data from Partner4Work provides a partial glimpse of the involvement of youth experiencing homelessness in public workforce programs.

- Of the 417 youth served in WIOA youth programs in the 2018 program year, 31 were identified as homeless (7%). As noted below, this number may be an under-count.
- Less than 1% of youth participating in Learn and Earn Summer Youth Employment Program, a summer job program for low-income youth residing in of Allegheny County, self-identified as homeless.

According to local workforce-system administrators, data-reporting guidelines may lead to under-reporting of youth experiencing homelessness. When a young person is identified as homeless, the state's workforce system database requires verification through supporting documentation. In most situations, however, the youth are eligible to participate in workforce programs for other reasons. If that is the case, they can enroll in programming through other eligibility criteria that are easier to document, thus avoiding the need to identify their homeless status. Additionally, many young people may not realize they are homeless since the workforce system uses the broader definitions of homelessness under the McKinney-Vento and Runaway and Homeless Youth Acts.

### **Needs Identified by YAB and YHDP Stakeholders**

When discussing ways to increase employment outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness, youth and community stakeholders identified the following areas of focus:

**Stronger collaboration between homeless and workforce development systems:** At the systems level, this work is beginning to happen. In 2019, Allegheny County DHS and Partner4Work secured funding from the Heartland Alliance to strengthen cross-system collaboration, with a focus on data-sharing, board- and leadership-level engagement, cross-system staff training, and employment-focused case conferencing. Once realized, these practices will create a foundation of shared knowledge that will enable YHDP stakeholders to better identify, plan, and evaluate the impact of cross-system partnerships.

**Increasing youth and providers' knowledge of career pathways and programs that help young people gain skills and credentials that are relevant to employers and provide growth opportunities:** Despite the growth of pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs in recent years, many youth remain unfamiliar with these opportunities. Through the Heartland Alliance grant, DHS and Partner4Work are designing a cross-training initiative that will equip providers of homeless services and workforce development professionals to more effectively address the employment barriers faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. Applying a youth-centered lens, YHDP stakeholders may consider ways to engage youth experiencing homelessness in the design and delivery of the trainings.

**Helping youth connect to better-paying jobs:** To start, homeless and workforce partners can work together to create strategies aligned with the region’s “opportunity occupations,” jobs that pay at least \$15/hour and are generally accessible to job seekers without a four-year degree. According to labor market analysis conducted by Partner4Work in 2018, opportunity occupations represented 41% of all jobs posted online for the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area.

**Reducing employment barriers commonly faced by youth experiencing homelessness:** Provide wraparound supports, such as transportation assistance, childcare, and access to work clothing. Bus passes are often provided by program providers, but to access many jobs in the region, more creative strategies need to be explored (such as bike shares and rideshare credits).

**Greater collaboration between homeless housing providers and employers or workforce programs:** YAB members discussed their interest in finding ways for youth living in shelters or transitional housing to build their resumes through on-site work experience. This could include a formal partnership with a local employer or simply creating opportunities for youth to earn money or stipends for jobs done at the shelter. Additionally, greater efforts should be undertaken to connect youth experiencing homelessness to existing youth employment programs like the Learn and Earn Summer Youth Employment Program, which provide low-income youth with six to eight weeks of paid work experience, soft skills and leadership training, and transportation assistance.

**Additional recommendations included:**

- At the collegiate level, increasing paid internship opportunities to reduce inequities for youth who cannot afford to work without pay.
- Increasing access to financial literacy, budgeting, and work readiness training for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Identifying employers who are willing to hire young people with barriers and leveraging their influence to expand this mindset to more regional employers. Partner4Work and its partnering workforce development providers already operate several employer-led program models that can serve as a blueprint, including Transitional Jobs and STRIVE, a workforce development program designed for transition-age youth with justice system involvement.

## **Employment Considerations of Specific Populations**

### **Pregnant and Parenting Youth**

Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness may face uncertainty about how to improve their financial security while juggling multiple responsibilities, structural barriers imposed by benefit cliffs, and lack of access to childcare. Youth and YHDP stakeholders noted that even when a homeless family has access to subsidized childcare, they often face additional barriers including mobility, lack of transportation, and work schedules that don’t align with childcare hours. They noted that many young adults experiencing homelessness work in retail or other service industry jobs that demand work during non-traditional hours. In the Greater Pittsburgh area, there are currently very few licensed childcare providers that offer expanded hours for parents who work night or weekend shifts. This is also a barrier for parenting youth who wish to participate in employment training or up-skilling programs.

National research indicates that many young parents who are homeless do not receive the need-based benefits for which they are eligible. According to the Voices of Youth Count Survey, young parents experiencing homelessness self-reported relatively low participation rates in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), at 36% and 64%, respectively. Data on participation in early childhood programs was not included in the study. Further analysis of benefit and childcare subsidy participation among pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County would be beneficial for designing programs and strategies to support the employment and income-related needs of this subpopulation.

## **Youth of Color**

The Pittsburgh Regional Workforce Diversity Indicators report released in 2015 found that black residents, the largest minority population in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, had the lowest rate of employment. Furthermore, it found that black workers were most heavily concentrated in the region's lowest-paying occupations and industries, including food services and waste management. Both employment rates and incomes for people of color in southwestern Pennsylvania were lower than the average seen in similar economies throughout the country. The Pittsburgh Equity Indicators Report found that black Pittsburghers changed jobs more frequently than their white peers in 2016, noting that "instability in employment can have a spillover effect on other important indicators of economic well-being, such as paying for housing and food security." The 2016 Pittsburgh Regional Diversity Survey found that black workers were the least likely of minority workers to say their employers are committed to hiring a diverse workforce or advancing racial and ethnic minorities.

The employment barriers facing black residents of Allegheny County can be partly traced to multiple causes, including but not limited to discrimination, educational disparities, and structural barriers such as lack of transportation. Within the city limits, over a third of black people use public transportation to get to work; yet job opportunities are increasingly located far from urban centers. YHDP planning efforts will consider how to forge stronger partnerships between providers of homeless services and existing workforce development programs that are working to eliminate employment barriers and racial disparities.

## **LGBTQIA+ Youth**

In 2018, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, which investigates complaints of discrimination in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations, added sexual orientation and gender identity to its definition of protected groups. That means people can now file complaints with the commission if they feel they were discriminated against in those settings because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness, in addition to needing the same type of employment supports and resources as all homeless youth, may need legal aid to help them address instances of workplace discrimination. Another need identified by YHDP stakeholders is assistance in obtaining gender-affirming work clothing.



## Part III: Taking Action: Goals and Next Steps

### YHDP Goals and Commitments

The following section outlines community goals and objectives, along with specific action steps, partnerships and anticipated milestones to carry out each strategy.

#### Goal 1: Identify all youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County

##### Objective 1.1: Better identify youth in key subpopulations at high risk of homelessness

**1.1A** Engage school district McKinney-Vento liaisons to identify youth experiencing homelessness who have dropped out or aged out of school. This includes:

- Identifying effective school-based identification strategies (regional and national)
- Presenting best practices to regional McKinney-Vento liaisons and identifying new strategies to implement regionally and in individual districts
- Developing a process to track outcomes related to outreach and engagement efforts with school district McKinney-Vento liaisons

Responsible Partners: Allegheny Intermediate Unit, YHDP Core Planning Team, National Center for Homeless Education

Target Completion: Summer 2021

**1.1B** Strengthen partnerships to ensure LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness are being identified and quickly connected to supports and services. This includes:

- Convening partners to establish joint outreach and referral processes, including co-location of Youth Homelessness Prevention/Diversion services within LGBTQIA+ community spaces
- Establishing necessary subcontracts/MOUs to support the above partnerships

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, Selected YHDP provider(s), LGBTQIA+ Community Leaders

Target Completion: November 2020

**1.1C** Strengthen partnerships to ensure youth who are immigrants or refugees who are experiencing homelessness are being identified and quickly connected to supports and services. This includes:

- Expanding homeless system outreach to the Immigrants and International Advisory Council (IIAC)
- Designating and convening a regional immigrant and refugee homelessness subcommittee
- Identify local needs and strategies to better connect immigrant and refugee communities to housing supports and services

Responsible Partners: Immigrants and Internationals Advisory Council, DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, YHDP Core Planning Team

Target Completion: December 2020

**Objective 1.2: Expand the “front door” of the homeless system to make services more visible and accessible to youth in need of housing**

**1.2A** Train community agencies to serve as resource access points and referral partners for youth experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Working with the YAB, youth with lived experience, and community-based stakeholders to identify key community partners (e.g. public libraries, early childhood agencies, faith-based organizations)
- Developing a complete project plan that includes a budget and timeframes for training development and implementation
- Assessing the homelessness training needs of targeted community partners, designing and delivering training content tailored to their needs

Responsible Partners: Selected YHDP provider(s), YHDP Core Planning Team, Youth Action Board, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Homeless Children’s Education Fund

Target Completion: Spring 2021

**1.2B** Establish low-barrier outreach space(s) offering community-building and access to light-touch services. This includes:

- Partnering with Youth Action Board, other youth with experiences with unsheltered living, and outreach partners to identify local community spaces that could serve as low-barrier outreach sites
- Beginning planning conversations with targeted organizations
- Developing a project plan including immediate ways to connect programming of these outreach spaces with Mobile Prevention and Diversion project

Responsible Partners: Youth Action Board, DHS Field Unit, Street outreach partners



Target Completion:

- Youth Action Board: Spring 2020
- DHS Field Unit: Fall 2020
- Street outreach partners: Winter 2020

## **Goal 2: Work upstream and across systems to prevent homelessness in targeted subpopulations**

### **Objective 2.1: Expand upstream efforts to strengthen families and reduce the risk of homelessness in LGBTQIA+ youth**

**2.1A** Expand existing evidence-based interventions and promising practices to support youth who identify as LGBTQIA+ and their caregivers. This includes:

- Evaluating current family-strengthening interventions for CYF-involved youth and caregivers (e.g. Affirm and Steps 2 Connect programs)
- Where current program capacity exists, recruiting additional participants from CoC programs
- Identifying opportunities and budgetary needs to scale programming to serve non-CYF-involved youth and caregivers at risk of homelessness

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation, YHDP Core Planning Team

Target Completion: January 2021

**2.1B** Cultivate networks of LGBTQIA+ affirming faith leaders to offer informal, community-based supports to families struggling with issues related to SOGIE. This includes:

- Reconvening the network of LGBTQIA+ affirming faith leaders and developing action plans for the network based on identified goals and objectives
- Identifying homelessness/ housing-related resources to provide ongoing support to the interfaith network

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, Partnering faith-based organizations, YHDP Core Planning Team

Target Completion: July 2021

## **Objective 2.2: Implement 2-generation partnerships to reduce homelessness in young families**

**2.2A** Leverage family center network to target services for pregnant and parenting youth who are highly at risk of homelessness. This includes:

- Conducting focus groups with youth – including those with lived homeless experience – to shape family center youth engagement strategies
- Expanding housing navigation services to more regional family centers
- Developing cross-system plans to disseminate information and promote referrals between family centers and homeless system

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, Family Center Network, Youth Action Board, YHDP Core Planning Team

Target Completion: December 2020

## **Objective 2.3: Scale efforts to prevent youth with foster care involvement from becoming homeless**

**2.3A** Implement and grow new homelessness prevention program models targeted to youth and families with foster care involvement. This includes:

- Launching the CYF Homeless Prevention Program (NOVA) which provides one-time monetary, housing and basic assistance to CYF families who are housing-unstable or at immediate risk of homelessness
- Launching the Fostering Youth to Independence (FYI) voucher program, which provides affordable housing for up to three years for eligible youth
- Identifying lessons learned and expansion opportunities as part of a continuous quality improvement process

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families, DHS Office of Community Services, Local public housing authorities, Familylinks, ACTION Housing

Target Completion: Ongoing

**2.3B** Expand housing options for youth ages 18 to 21 years seeking to resume foster care involvement. This includes:

- Assessing the feasibility of expanding new Host Home model as a housing option for formerly foster care-involved youth who are seeking to resume care
- Identifying strategies to support the expansion of the Host Home model, such as braided funding and development of cross-system policies and processes

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families

Target Completion: December 2020

**Objective 2.4: Implement cross-system programs that increase employment and reduce the risk of homelessness among youth with justice system involvement**

**2.4A** Implement new state-funded youth re-entry project focused on stabilizing youth ages 18 to 24 years with foster care and justice system involvement. This includes:

- Implementing the federally funded STRIVE program to increase employment outcomes of youth ages 18 to 24 years with justice system involvement
- Establishing desired program outcomes
- Evaluating outcomes and identifying growth opportunities, including further coordination across the homeless system

Responsible Partners: Partner4Work, DHS Office of Community Services, Auberle, KidsVoice

Target Completion: March 2022

**Objective 2.5: Implement cross-system, regional strategies to prevent and address the commercial sexual exploitation of youth**

**2.5A** Develop focused housing strategies to respond to Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in youth ages 18 to 24 years. This includes:

- Establishing a CoC work group to identify housing and service needs of adults and youth, ages 18 to 24 years, who are CSE survivors
- Sharing key findings with CSEC-MDT to inform county-wide strategies
- Identifying youth housing gaps for this population and pursue funding opportunities to meet these needs

Responsible Partners: Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee (HOCC), Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children –Multidisciplinary Team, DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families

Target Completion: June 2021

**2.5B** Increase homeless system awareness of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) and ensure delivery of trauma-informed services to survivors. This includes:

- Increasing cross-system referrals and utilization between Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR) youth drop-in and youth-serving homeless providers
- Identifying and delivering CSE trainings for providers of homeless service
- Identifying and implementing coordinated entry strategies to safely identify and engage survivors

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, Allegheny Link, Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee (HOCC)

Target Completion: June 2021

## **Objective 2.6: Implement cross-system, regional strategies to prevent and address the commercial sexual exploitation of youth**

**2.6A** Assess and respond to demand for YHDP prevention/diversion and host home services among unaccompanied minors. This includes:

- Developing cross-system policies across the CoC and CYF for serving minors, including provisions for braided funding and service delivery
- Evaluating efforts and identifying areas for improvement

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: October 2020

## **Goal 3: Build a robust youth homelessness response system designed by and for youth with lived experience**

### **Objective 3.1: Expand regional inventory of housing and service options to ensure youth have immediate access to safe and stable housing of their choice, without preconditions**

**3.1A** Implementing a Mobile Prevention and Diversion project to create a mobile, rapid-response system to support youth at imminent risk of homelessness. This includes:

- Selecting providers as part of the local YHDP funding process
- Leveraging state rental-assistance funds and creating clear referral process for targeted YHDP populations to access those resources
- Establishing YHDP Standards of Practice for operating the Mobile Prevention and Diversion project, which includes a CQI framework

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Allegheny Link, Youth Action Board, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: October 2020

**3.1B** Offer short-term, family-based host home stays as a safe alternative to emergency shelter. This includes:

- Selecting providers as part of the local YHDP funding process
- Establishing YHDP Standards of Practice for operating the Host Home Project, which includes a CQI framework

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Youth Action Board, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: October 2020

**3.1C** Increase Youth Rapid Re-housing (RRH) units to fill current gaps within the CoC and reduce wait times for youth to enter housing. This includes:

- Selecting Youth RRH providers as part of the local YHDP funding process
- Establishing YHDP Standards of Practice for operating the RRH projects, which includes a CQI framework
- Adopting new coordinated entry processes to reduce the length of time from referral to enrollment

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Allegheny Link, Youth Action Board, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: October 2020

**3.1D** Scale shared-housing strategies that increase housing affordability and increase opportunities for youth to reside with chosen supports. This includes:

- Selecting RRH providers as part of the local YHDP funding process
- Building a regional knowledge-base on shared housing, which includes identifying, documenting, and sharing best practices with community partners and service providers

Responsible Partners: Selected YHDP providers, DHS Housing Navigator Team, Youth Action Board

Target Completion: October 2020 - ongoing

**3.1E** Increase housing options for post-secondary students experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Maintaining or expanding regional inventory of housing for CYF-involved youth who need housing during college breaks
- Forming a network of youth-friendly, community-based housing providers and landlords who are committed to providing emergency housing options
- Exploring opportunities to establish Housing Choice Voucher programs for college students who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Building response systems within local Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to respond to housing instability among students (see Objective 4.3 below)
- Launching the Pittsburgh Scholar House program (see Objective 4.3 below)

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education, Local housing authorities, Local landlords and community-based agencies, Youth Action Board

Target Completion: December 2021

**Objective 3.2: Ensure youth served by the homeless system receive consistent, high quality support in their transition to stable housing**

**3.2A** Implement a Youth Navigation Project to provide comprehensive service coordination to homeless system-involved youth who do not have a designated case manager. This includes:

- Hiring and onboarding youth navigators
- Integrating youth navigators into the coordinated entry system and Young Adult Case Conferencing
- Establishing YHDP Standards of Practice for operating youth navigation, which includes a CQI framework

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Homeless Services and Supports Coordination Unit, Young Adult Case Conferencing Team, Youth Action Board

Target Completion: October 2020

**3.2B** Enhance collaboration between street outreach workers and youth drop-in center staff to increase resource utilization by unsheltered youth experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Establishing key points of contact and referral processes across the two access points
- Continually assessing progress of cross-agency collaboration via Young Adult Case Conferencing meetings

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, 412 Youth Zone, Street outreach providers

Target Completion: March 2020 - ongoing

**3.2C** Increase utilization of Integration and Teaming Meetings (ITMs) among youth experiencing homelessness who have multisystem involvement. This includes:

- Using data to establish benchmarks for ITM utilization among youth involved in homeless system
- Providing training and tip sheet resources to youth-serving homeless providers with ITM guidance
- Reviewing data on ITM utilization and outcomes for continued process improvements

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, DHS Integrated Program Services, Young Adult Case Conferencing Team, Selected YHDP Providers

Target Completion: July 2020 - ongoing

**3.2D** Connect eligible pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness to Hello Baby resources and services. This includes:

- Establishing a process for homeless providers to identify and refer families to Hello Baby and distributing information to homeless providers and other community partners that serve youth experiencing homelessness
- Reviewing data on Hello Baby participation among pregnant/parenting youth experiencing homelessness

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, YHDP and CoC-funded homeless providers

Target Completion: Fall 2020 - ongoing

**3.2E** Designate resource specialists to support homeless providers in providing youth-centered supportive services and connections across multiple domains. This includes:

- Reviewing promising models for utilizing subject matter experts/resource specialists in other DHS systems
- Identifying existing subject matter experts in education, employment, permanent connections, and healthcare
- Assessing feasibility of developing a separate, dedicated support specialist team for the homeless system or leveraging capacity of existing SMEs

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, YHDP Community of Practice, Youth Action Board

Target Completion: July 2021

**Objective 3.3: Foster a culture of continuous learning and promote equitable and effective practices, and strengthen youth leadership across the youth homelessness response system**

**3.3A** Leverage new sources of data to evaluate program impact and make youth-centered decisions. This includes:

- Establishing new YHDP performance indicators and benchmarks, including strategies to measure how key youth subpopulations (LGBTQIA+, survivors of sexual exploitation) are accessing and being served by homeless system
- Creating human-centered design strategies to collect participant feedback on YHDP programs
- Building out HMIS tracking mechanisms for new data elements including SOGIE and CSEC
- Training homeless providers on culturally sensitive methods to collect new HMIS data elements

- Monitoring YHDP performance via quarterly meetings
- Engaging the YAB in planning efforts to update the coordinated entry processes utilizing predictive analytics

Responsible Partners: YHDP CQI Committee, CoC Analytics and Performance Committee, DHS Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning, DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: October 2020 - ongoing

**3.3B** Adopt YHDP Standards of Practice (SoP) for all youth-serving programs within the CoC. This includes:

- Facilitating YHDP SoP design workshops to align program policies and practices with YAB guiding principles including SOGIE, racial equity and cultural competency standards
- Formally adopting YHDP SoP and incorporating into programmatic monitoring tools
- Establishing YHDP provider Community of Practice to share best practices and troubleshoot challenges

Responsible Partners: Youth Action Board, YHDP Core Planning Team, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: October 2020 - ongoing

**3.3C** Ensure all YHDP and current youth-serving providers of homeless services demonstrate core competencies for effective youth work. This includes:

- Establishing training and continuous learning plans with providers
- Identifying lead partners to deliver training in harm reduction, Housing First, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, SOGIE standards of practice, motivational interviewing, positive youth development, racial equity and trauma-informed care

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Youth Action Board, Selected YHDP and other CoC providers that serve youth

Target Completion: October 2020

**3.3D** Expand and formalize the role of the Youth Action Board within the CoC. This includes:

- Identifying YAB roles, priorities and goals for the YHDP project implementation phase
- Identifying technical assistance and professional development needed to carry out goals
- Planning and launching YAB-led projects targeted to CoC, including youth guide to homeless system, peer mentoring and monthly community service activities



- Planning touchpoints for YAB to report back to Homeless Advisory Board on progress of YHDP projects and YAB efforts
- Designing an alumni mentoring program to support up-and-coming YAB members and extend involvement of members after they turn 25 years of age

Responsible Partners: Youth Action Board, YHDP Core Planning Team, Youth Support Partner Unit, True Colors United

Target Completion: December 2020 - ongoing

### **Objective 3.4: Build cross-system capacity to continue to prevent and quickly resolve incidents of youth homelessness**

**3.4A** Identify and secure additional sources of funding to bring the youth homelessness-response system to scale. This includes:

- Designating DHS staff person to regularly research local, state and national funding opportunities related to youth experiencing homelessness
- Continually assessing gaps and needs for youth homeless response system
- Maintaining a prioritized list of funding needs and apply for funding that aligns with needs

Responsible Partners: Allegheny County CoC, YHDP Leadership Council, Youth Action Board

Target Completion: Ongoing

**3.4B** Use data-driven approaches to prevent youth from returning to homelessness. This includes:

- Establishing a Youth Homelessness Prevention Work Group including selected YHDP providers and DHS staff, which will meet regularly to review data to identify youth at risk of becoming homeless or returning to homelessness
- Identifying key indicators of youth at risk of returning to homelessness; establishing by-name list and tracking outreach efforts to prevent homelessness

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Allegheny Link, DHS Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning

Target Completion: November 2020

## **Goal 4: Help youth identify, participate and persist in learning and employment opportunities aligned with their individual goals.**

### **Objective 4.1: Increase high school credential attainment (diploma or GED) among youth who experience homelessness**

**4.1A** Implement best practices to maximize credit accrual and high school completion. This includes:

- Identifying and sharing best practices for maximizing credit accrual at regional homeless liaison convenings
- Identifying local resources available for credit recovery and disseminating information with youth-serving providers of homeless services
- Identifying local and state-level policy and practice recommendations to increase credit accrual for students experiencing homelessness

Responsible Partners: YHDP Education/ Employment Work Group, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Homeless Children's Education Fund

Target Completion: August 2021

**4.1B** Promote new cross-system data partnerships that improve housing and educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Identifying innovating practices for data-sharing (e.g. Chapin Hall Upstream Prevention project) and holding the HCEF regional summit to showcase those promising practices
- Identifying shared goals and objectives for cross-system data-sharing and pursuing new data partnerships and in-school interventions designed to prevent homelessness and foster school success

Responsible Partners: Allegheny County DHS, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Homeless Children's Education Fund (HCEF)

Target Completion: December 2021

### **Objective 4.2: Connect youth experiencing homelessness to career pathways with a focus on industry-recognized credentials and livable wage jobs**

**4.2A** Expand system level collaboration between workforce development and homeless systems to include a focus on transition-age youth. This includes:

- Conducting cross-system trainings on youth homelessness and public workforce system, including focus on trauma-informed care
- Establishing data-sharing agreements and partnerships with workforce-development partners to measure participation of homeless system-involved youth in the public workforce system

Responsible Partners: Allegheny County DHS, Partner4Work, Partnering workforce development agencies

Target Completion: September 2020 - ongoing

**4.2B** Increase participation in public workforce programs among youth experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Surveying district homeless liaisons to assess involvement of McKinney-Vento students in workforce and career/tech education programs
- Designating key points of contact to serve as subject matter experts and referral specialists
- Establishing an information-dissemination plan to build broader youth awareness of workforce system resources, programs and events
- Implement new partnership strategies, such as holding regular PA CareerLink orientations and office hours at youth drop-in center

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, Partner4Work, 412 Youth Zone, PA CareerLink, Additional providers of workforce and homeless services

Target Completion: December 2020

### **Objective 4.3: Increase post-secondary access and success for youth experiencing homelessness**

**4.3A** Scale evidence-based school counseling models that promote college and career readiness in high school students experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Recruiting and entering into partnerships with local school districts to provide college and career readiness programming for McKinney-Vento students and those at risk of homelessness (STEPS-A program)
- Providing ongoing technical assistance and support for school partners throughout implementation
- Evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of STEPS-A programs

Responsible Partners: Homeless Children's Education Fund, UPMC, Partnering Allegheny County school districts

Target Completion: Summer 2022

**4.3B** Promote access to financial assistance to reduce the cost of education and training for youth experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Developing a plan to connect eligible youth experiencing homelessness to new PA Fostering Independence Through Education waiver
- Educating regional school district homeless liaisons on the higher education waiver process
- Creating a targeted regional inventory of financial aid resources for youth experiencing homelessness
- Creating tip sheets and training resources and building awareness among eligible youth, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and providers of homeless services

Responsible Partners: Homeless Children’s Education Fund, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education, YHDP Education and Employment Work Group

Target Completion: July 2021

**4.3C** Build response systems within local Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to respond to housing instability among students. This includes:

- Establishing homelessness response best practices for IHEs
- Designating collegiate points of contact for youth experiencing homelessness
- Developing and administering homelessness awareness, empathy and resource curriculum geared toward IHE administrators and staff
- Continuing to promote effective IHE strategies and partnerships around homelessness

Responsible Partners: Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education and affiliated post-secondary institutions, YHDP Core Planning Team, National Center for Homeless Education

Target Completion: Ongoing

**4.3D** Implement a 2-generation housing program with on-site childcare and supportive services to help single parents experiencing homelessness complete post-secondary education. This includes:

- Establishing Pittsburgh-based Family Scholar House
- Building local partnerships to support project implementation, including coordination with YHDP providers and other community stakeholders
- Developing and disseminating a regional inventory of educational and supportive services for single parents

Responsible Partners: Pittsburgh Family Scholar House Steering Committee, Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education

Target Completion: Ongoing

**Objective 4.4: Expand access to high quality, affordable early childhood education (ECE) to support parenting youth to attend work or school**

4.4A Form a robust and ongoing partnership between the homeless response and ECE systems to promote access to quality, affordable ECE supports for pregnant and parenting youth. This includes:

- Convening cross-system leadership to establish an action plan that enhances collaboration
- Establishing cross-systems referral protocols between the homeless response and ECE systems
- Creating a community relations campaign focused on ECE resources on DHS client portal

Responsible Partners: DHS Office of Community Services, Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) and affiliated providers, Allegheny Intermediate Unit

Target Completion: January 2021 - ongoing

**Goal 5: Support youth in establishing permanent connections to caring adults, peers and community members.**

**Objective 5.1: Promote positive peer supports for young experiencing homelessness**

5.1A Create peer support groups for young families experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- Piloting a young adult parent support group
- Identifying lessons learned and positive practices with the involvement of young adult program participants
- Identifying potential replication communities/sites

Responsible Partners: 412 Youth Zone, DHS Office of Community Services, Family Centers

Target Completion: Fall 2021

5.1B Increase peer-to-peer supports for youth involved in the homeless system. This includes:

- Establishing targets for expanding the number of youth involved in the homeless system who have a designated peer as support
- Designing strategies to reach targets, such as increasing utilization of Youth Support Partner Unit or designing new programming

Responsible Partners: Youth Action Board, Allegheny County DHS

Target Completion: Spring 2021

**Objective 5.2: Promote positive adult and community supports for young people experiencing homelessness**

**5.2A** Develop “Host Families” initiative to provide mentoring support for youth experiencing homelessness and create volunteer pipeline for Host Home project. This includes:

- Hosting planning sessions with the YAB and selected host home provider to review YAB recommendations for Host Family model
- Conduct project design work and identify action steps for implementation

Responsible Partners: Youth Action Board, YHDP Core Planning Team, Selected Host Home provider

Target Completion: October 2021

**5.2B** Promote natural mentoring within Youth Action Board and youth-serving providers of homeless services. This includes:

- YAB meeting with Mentoring Partnership to identify training needs to support alumni mentoring initiative
- Establishing the YHDP Community of Practice to help identify training needs to integrate natural mentoring practices for youth participants and adults

Responsible Partners: Youth Action Board, Mentoring Partnership, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: January 2021

**Objective 5.3: : Promote healthy relationships for youth experiencing homelessness**

**5.3A** Identify effective, trauma-informed program models that support youth with family mediation and reunification and incorporate into prevention and diversion service array

Responsible Partners: YHDP Core Planning Team, Selected YHDP providers, Youth Action Board

Target Completion: June 2021

**5.3B** Provide education and training to youth and staff of homeless services providers on intimate partner violence, dating violence and healthy relationships. This includes identifying recommended trainings for providers of youth services and incorporating those into the training plan for all YHDP and CoC-funded providers of youth services

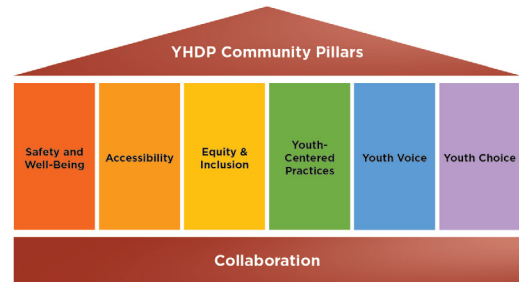
Responsible Partners: Allegheny County Youth and Young Adult Intimate Partner Violence Task Force, YHDP Core Planning Team, Youth Action Board, Selected YHDP providers

Target Completion: June 2021

# Spotlight: Advancing YHDP Community Pillars

The following section highlights specific activities

designed to align the youth homelessness response system with the local guiding principles of our work, known as the Community Pillars. A detailed explanation of each pillar along with strategies for implementation are outlined below. HUD-defined YHDP Values and Principles are indicated in **bold** text.



## Safety and Well-Being

**Guiding Principle:** Our community will prioritize the safety of young adults experiencing homelessness. We will hold one another accountable for serving youth in ways that foster their physical, emotional, psychological and social well-being, including adherence to the principles of **Trauma-Informed Care**.

### Actions and Strategies:

- Working in close partnership with the DHS Trauma Think Tank to promote Trauma-Informed Care at the system and program level. Trauma Think Tank staff will participate in developing YHDP Standards of Practice, including specific guidance to ensure that program policies, practices, communications, activities and physical spaces align with TIC principles (Objective 3.3B).
- Ensuring that YHDP project providers train all staff in Trauma-Informed Care and making no-cost training resources available from the DHS Trauma Think Tank (Objective 3.3C).
- Developing focused strategies to address and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and intimate partner violence in transition-age youth experiencing homelessness (Objectives 2.5 and 5.3).
- Identifying effective, trauma-informed program models that support youth with family mediation and reunification and incorporate into prevention and diversion service array (Objective 5.3A).
- Leveraging the Family Center network to target services for pregnant and parenting youth who are highly at risk of homelessness (Objective 2.2A).
- Continuing the CoC's active participation in community-wide planning, training and continuous learning activities led by the DHS Trauma Think Tank for universal implementation across all Allegheny County human service systems and providers (for more information, please see Appendix B, DHS Trauma-Informed Framework).

## Accessibility

**Guiding Principle:** As a Housing First community, we view housing as a basic need and right of all youth. When a youth experiences a housing crisis, we will quickly mobilize to connect youth to permanent housing with no preconditions and to offer low-barrier, individualized and client-driven supports to help them remain stably housed.

## **Actions and Strategies:**

- Building a mobile, rapid-response system that brings the “front door” of the homeless system to youth who are at imminent risk of homelessness, helping them access safe, stable housing within a matter of hours or days, while receiving on-going supportive services to find and maintain permanent housing (Objective 3.1A).
- Reducing wait time to access permanent housing by increasing the regional inventory of youth-dedicated Rapid Re-housing units and adopting new coordinated entry business processes to reduce time from referral to enrollment (Objective 3.1C).
- Investing in shared-housing strategies that reducing the overall cost of housing. Shared housing makes housing more immediately accessible to youth (Objective 3.1D).
- Applying the Allegheny County CoC Housing First mandate to YHDP-funded programs and providing YHDP Standards of Practice guidance on what Housing First means for transition-age youth. (Objective 3.3B).

## **Equity and Inclusion**

**Guiding Principle:** Recognizing that social and structural differences are deeply embedded in the fabric of our society, we will act with intention to identify and understand the disparities that exist for youth who are part of different social groups and to co-design culturally competent services and interventions to eliminate those disparities.

## **Actions and Strategies:**

- Expanding outreach and prevention efforts in collaboration with local coalitions that represent communities of color, LGBTQIA+ communities, immigrants and refugees, and other frequently marginalized communities to better identify the prevalence of youth homelessness and to ensure youth at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness are quickly connected to supports and services (Objectives 1.1B, 1.1C, 3.1A).
- Emphasizing equity and inclusion in procurement decision-making, including assessing submitted proposals for demonstrated cultural competency as well as evidence of partnerships, programming, and hiring strategies that promote racial and gender equity.
- Ensuring that YHDP project providers train all staff in racial equity, SOGIE Standards of Practice and cultural competency and making no-cost training resources available from the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion (Objective 3.3C).
- Observing the adage of “what gets measured is what gets done” by instituting new data collection standards, benchmarks and evaluation practices to measure how programs impact youth in different social groups. As new data elements are added to Allegheny County’s HMIS, the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion will provide sub-recipients with guidance and training on discussing sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in ways that are respectful, trauma-informed and in adherence to DHS SOGIE Standards of Practice (Objective 3.3A).



- Engaging the YHDP Continuous Quality Improvement (YHDP CQI) Committee to regularly review how projects are performing on equity and inclusion indicators, including looking at how many youth of color, LGBTQIA+ youth, youth with disabilities, and immigrant and refugee youth are entering programs and exiting with positive outcomes (Objective 3.3A).

## Youth-Centered Practices

**Guiding Principle:** Our community will ensure that all systems and programs supporting unstably housed youth adopt the principals of **Positive Youth Development**, with an emphasis on nurturing young people’s strengths and communicating our high expectations for what they can accomplish in life. We will promote protective factors that are known to help youth overcome adversity by building **Social and Community Connections**, including access to caring adults and peers and engagement in school and community activities.

### Actions and Strategies:

- Developing and expanding initiatives that increase education access and remove barriers to achievement at both the secondary and post-secondary levels (Objectives 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4).
- Incubating new strategies to promote positive peer and adults supports and healthy relationships (Objectives 5.1 and 5.2).
- Investing in agencies with youth-centered cultures, using criteria established by the Youth Action Board which include empathy, respect for youth voice and choice, an eagerness to grow and embrace feedback from participants, and intentional strategies to hire and retain staff with exceptional youth-engagement skills. These criteria will be formally incorporated into scoring rubrics for YHDP-funded projects, and the Youth Action Board will support selected agencies in implementing and maintaining youth-centered approaches through YHDP Standards of Practice and YHDP Continuous Quality Improvement (YHDP CQI) Committee work. (Objectives 3.3A and 3.3B).
- Ensuring that youth-serving providers of homeless services train staff in motivational interviewing, positive youth development, harm reduction, education and employment pathways, and other necessary skillsets for delivering youth-centered services. CoC-funded providers will be trained on progressive engagement and appropriate application of these principles for youth populations. (Objective 3.3C).

## Youth Voice

**Guiding Principle:** Our community is committed to amplifying the voices of youth. Youth leadership will be an integral part of community decision-making, with adults and youth working in partnership to design programs, services and systems that prevent and end youth homelessness.

### Actions and Strategies:

- Supporting the growth and sustainability of the Youth Action Board to ensure that youth with lived experience with homelessness continue to play a lead role in CoC planning, decision-making and program evaluation. This will include continued

investment of resources and staff time to help members of the Youth Action Board achieve identified goals around professional development, community service and leadership development (Objective 3.3D).

- Embracing “*Problem-solving with youth, not for youth*” as the underlaying service delivery philosophy across all YHDP programs. **Individualized and client-driven support** reinforces youths’ strengths, assets and central role as decision-makers. Allegheny County will add new services, enhance cross-system referrals and adopt best practices to ensure that all youth have access to consistent, high quality support in their transition to stable housing (Objective 3.2).

## Youth Choice

**Guiding Principle:** Our community recognizes that young adults have agency and the freedom to make their own decisions. Youth will be empowered to choose their own support networks and pathways out of homelessness. Service providers will seek to understand, encourage, and support youth at each step along the way.

### Actions and Strategies:

- Utilizing YHDP funding to launch new CoC programs that offer youth greater choice in housing arrangements depending on their individual preferences and needs (Objectives 3.1A, 3.1B, 3.1C, 3.1D). These include:
  - Mobile Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit, which focus on youth-led problem-solving conversations to identify housing solutions;
  - Host Homes, which will provide a safe alternative to emergency shelter; and
  - Rapid Re-housing programs that offer youth the option of residing alone or in shared housing.
- Using Motivational Interviewing as a standard practice across youth-serving homeless service agencies to provide empathetic, nonjudgmental and supportive case management that helps youth build self-confidence, set goals and identify action steps. Providers receiving YHDP funding will be required to train all frontline staff in Motivational Interviewing techniques and implementation guidelines will be reinforced in CoC Youth Standards of Practice (Objectives 3.3B and 3.3C).
- Developing community Standards of Practice that outline the foundation of **individualized and client-driven supports**.

## Collaboration

**Guiding Principle:** We will prioritize collaboration among the many different systems, programs, and communities with which youth experiencing homelessness interact. Together, we will work not only to keep young adults from falling through the cracks, but to help young people thrive.

## **Actions and Strategies:**

- Enhancing existing networks to improve services and outcomes for and with youth involved in the homeless system. Several strategies are intended to enhance Young Adult Case Conferencing Team's work to coordinate services and supports for youth. One of these will be to increase utilization of Integration and Teaming Meetings (ITMs), a client-centered DHS process designed to support those with multisystem involvement.
- Creating new collaborative structures to address unmet needs, including a Youth Homelessness Prevention Team that brings together analysts and youth prevention and diversion specialists to build data-driven prevention models, as well as a resource specialist team that designates points of contact to share subject matter expertise across the youth homelessness response network (Objectives 3.4B and 3.2E).
- Specific action steps intended to formalize and deepen collaboration at both the systems and program level are noted throughout the YHDP Goals and Commitments Matrix. Collaboration is the bedrock of the Coordinated Community Plan and no strategy can be accomplished without multiple organizations and individuals coming together to contribute ideas, time and resources.

## Spotlight: Supporting Specific Youth Populations

Within the action steps described above are several strategies that support specific populations of youth. This chart provides an at-a-glance reference to quickly identify these targeted strategies.

<b>Population</b>	<b>Strategy #</b>	<b>Strategy Description</b>
Pregnant and Parenting Youth	2.2A	Develop multi-system partnership to target services for pregnant/parenting youth
	3.2D	Connect eligible pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness to Hello Baby resources and services
	4.3A	Implement 2-gen housing program with on-site childcare and supportive services to help single parents experiencing homelessness complete post-secondary education
	4.4A	Form a robust and ongoing partnership between the homeless response and Early Childhood Education systems to promote access to quality, affordable ECE supports for pregnant and parenting youth
	5.1A	Create peer support groups for young families experiencing homelessness
Youth of Color	3.3A	Leverage new sources of data to evaluate program impact and make youth-centered decisions
	3.3B	Adopt YHDP Standards of Practice for all youth-serving programs within the CoC
LGBTQIA+ Youth	1.1B	Strengthen partnerships to ensure LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness are being identified and quickly connected to supports and services
	2.1A	Expand existing evidence-based interventions and promising practices to support for youth who identify as LGBTQIA+ and their caregivers
	2.1B	Cultivate networks of LGBTQIA+ affirming faith leaders to offer informal, community-based supports to families struggling with issues related to SOGIE
	3.3A	Leverage new sources of data to evaluate program impact and make youth-centered decisions
	3.3B	Adopt YHDP Standards of Practice for all youth-serving programs within the CoC

<b>Population</b>	<b>Strategy #</b>	<b>Strategy Description</b>
Minors	2.6	Enhance homelessness prevention supports for unaccompanied minors with a focus on helping doubled-up youth identify safe, stable housing
	3.1A	Implement a Mobile Prevention and Diversion project to create a mobile, rapid-response system to support youth at imminent risk of homelessness <i>* DHS will design and implement cross-system policies and guidelines for serving unaccompanied minors in this project</i>
	3.1B	Offer short-term, family-based host home stays as a safe alternative to emergency shelter <i>* DHS will design and implement cross-system policies and guidelines for serving unaccompanied minors in this project</i>
Youth with Foster Care Involvement	2.3A	Provide public housing vouchers and supportive case management to youth transitioning out of foster care
	2.3B	Implement new prevention services targeted to families with CYF involvement
	2.3C	Expand housing options for youth ages 18 to 21 years seeking to resume care
Youth with Justice System Involvement	2.4	Implement cross-system programs that increase employment and reduce the risk of homelessness among youth with justice system-involvement
Survivors of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking	2.5A	Develop focused strategies to respond to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – Multidisciplinary Team (CSEC-MDT) in youth ages 18 to 25 years
	2.5B	Increase homeless system awareness of commercial sexual exploitation and ensure delivery of trauma-informed services to survivors
	3.3A	Leverage new sources of data to evaluate program impact and make youth-centered decisions
	3.3B	Adopt YHDP Standards of Practice for all youth-serving programs within the CoC
Immigrant and Refugee Youth	1.1C	Strengthen partnerships to ensure immigrant and refugee youth experiencing homelessness are being identified and quickly connected to supports and services
	3.3B	Adopt YHDP Standards of Practice for all youth-serving programs within the CoC

# New Projects

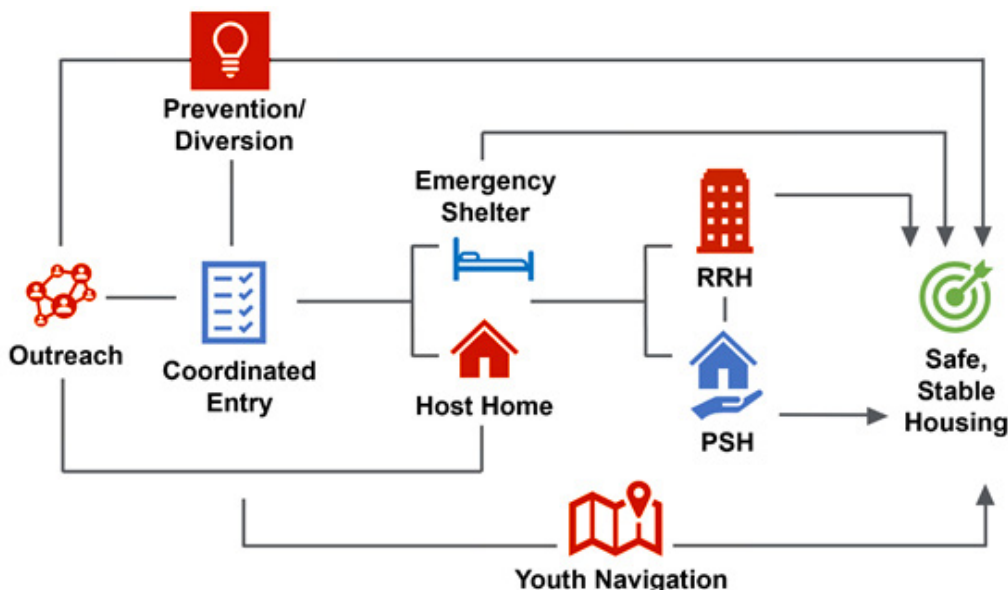
The following sections describe new projects, initiatives and system change work designed to achieve progress on community-identified goals. New YHDP-funded projects will work congruently with parts of the youth system that do not receive YHDP funding to create a complete system centered around young people.

## New YHDP-Funded Projects

The following projects were prioritized for YHDP funding based on their potential impact, ability to fill gaps in the Allegheny County CoC, and alignment with eligible HUD CoC project types.

- A Mobile Prevention and Diversion Project will target resources for unstably housed youth to help them quickly connect to housing outside of the CoC. Through partnerships with geographically distributed outreach and referral sites, the project will make CoC resources more visible and accessible to youth.
- A Youth Navigation Project will support young people experiencing homelessness whose individual circumstances indicate the need for more intensive service coordination to secure and maintain permanent housing.
- A Host Home Project will create safe alternatives to emergency shelter, utilizing housing and support provided by community volunteers.
- Significant investment in Youth Rapid Re-housing will scale the supply of permanent housing units to match the demand, while also promoting shared housing strategies that reduce the cost of housing and promote chosen support networks.

Figure 5 illustrates Allegheny County’s youth homelessness response system, which encompasses multiple pathways all leading to safe, stable housing for youth. The items in yellow representing system components that will be added to the CoC or significantly increased through YHDP funding.



## **Mobile Prevention and Diversion**

Mobile Prevention and Diversion Project will build a rapid-response system to support youth who are at imminent risk of homelessness, offering services that are highly accessible and that integrate a variety of creative communication methods. Project staff will meet youth wherever they are and rapidly engage them in problem-solving discussions to help identify safe and appropriate housing options.

Services will be youth-centered and will use a strengths-based approach to help young people identify and mine strengths, successes and resources they've used in the past to help them with this bout of housing instability. The "toolkit" of services included with this project will include various problem-solving strategies such as crisis mediation, family reunification, motivational interviewing, direct connections to community resources, and more. The project is also meant to expand the "front porch" of the homeless system to more locations throughout community, with special consideration to communities of color, LGBTQIA+ ally spaces and spaces serving young parents.

The target population for this project includes youth ages 18 to 24 years who are at risk of homelessness (HUD Category 2) and/or experiencing an incidence of homelessness (HUD Category 1 or 4) that can be resolved with minimal assistance and without entering homeless system. This program may also be offered to minors under the age of 18 years.

The program will utilize a variety of creative strategies to identify youth, including peer-to-peer outreach and partnerships with street outreach workers, drop-in centers, schools and post-secondary institutions, public libraries and other community spaces utilized by youth. The program will work closely with the Allegheny Link to develop seamless business processes for youth assessment and referrals and to ensure that youth with higher service needs are connected to the appropriate interventions.

Desired project outcomes include the following:

- Youth obtain immediate safe, stable housing
- Youth avoid entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered living
- When possible, family conflicts that led to housing instability are resolved
- More intensive homeless services are conserved for those with highest service needs and vulnerability

DHS anticipates serving approximately 200 youth per year in this program during the two-year YHDP grant period. The project is designed as a Supportive Services Only (SSO) project type and will have an estimated annual budget of \$275,000 to \$325,000.

## **Youth Navigation**

The Youth Navigation Project will enhance the CoC's capacity to help highly vulnerable youth achieve the best possible outcomes by providing a consistent, primary point of contact to help support in navigating their way to permanent housing. The project will align with best practice case management models being implemented in Allegheny County family shelters but modified for the specific needs and characteristics of transition-age youth.

The target population for this project includes youth ages 18 to 24 years who are experiencing homelessness (Category 1 and 4), involved in street outreach or shelters, and whose individual circumstances indicate the need for more intensive service coordination in order to secure and maintain permanent housing.

Youth will be connected to Youth Navigation services through DHS Youth Case Conferencing and it is expected that services will typically be initiated while the young person is staying in shelter or engaging in street outreach programs, though other access points could be identified.

Navigators will provide direct support to youth in crisis as they navigate their way through the homeless system. They will act as the young person's primary point of contact for service coordination from the time they enter the homeless system through their transition into permanent housing. Youth navigators will provide comprehensive service coordination to help youth connect housing, education, employment, healthcare, childcare, family strengthening programs and other services depending on the circumstances and individualized needs of each young person.

Desired project outcomes include the following:

- Youth obtain safe, permanent housing
- Youth identify and make progress on educational/employment goals
- Youth establish permanent connections to caring adults, peers or community networks
- Youth see improvement in indicators of social-emotional well-being as determined by individual client needs
- Youth have adequate income to maintain market rate housing (single occupancy, shared housing, or other arrangement)
- Youth do not become homeless again

DHS anticipates serving approximately 40 to 60 youth per year in this program during the two-year YHDP grant period. Project duration will be variable depending on participant need, with the ability to provide services for six months after permanent housing is achieved. The project is designed as a Supportive Services Only (SSO) project type and will have an estimated annual budget of \$150,000 to \$175,000.

## **Host Homes**

The Host Home Project will create a safe, family-based alternatives to shelter for youth experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness. The project will offer housing on a short-term basis (up to six months) paired with supportive services. Youth may choose this housing option as they participate in family mediation with the intention of returning to live with family, or as a place to stabilize and connect to permanent housing options in the community or within the CoC.



The target population for this project includes youth ages 18 to 24 years who are experiencing homelessness (HUD Category 1 or 4) or are at imminent risk of homelessness (HUD Category 2) and need a safe, temporary, and welcoming place to stay while they make decisions about permanent housing options.

The agency identified to provide host homes will be responsible for recruiting, screening and training families to serve as hosts, ensuring that all host homes are safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming of young adults of all backgrounds, especially youth of color and LGBTQIA+ youth. Host home training activities will include content related to racial equity, LGBTQIA+ / SOGIE standards of practice, trauma-informed care, positive youth development and mentoring.

Core services will include a comprehensive and youth-centered process for matching participants and hosts; development of host home agreements; ongoing host home support and technical assistance; flexible and youth-driven case management and supportive services, including transition planning; connections to education and employment opportunities; and connections with natural supports when appropriate.

Desired project outcomes include the following:

- Reduced number of youth staying on the streets or other unsheltered/ unstable living conditions and associated risk factors
- Youth exit to safe, stable housing
- Youth increase income through employment or benefit enrollment
- Youth take measurable steps toward educational goals
- Youth establish permanent connections to caring adults, peers or community networks
- Youth see improvement in indicators of social-emotional well-being as determined by individual client needs

DHS anticipates serving approximately 10 to 15 youth per year in this program during the two-year YHDP grant period. Project duration will be flexible depending on participant need, with an expected average length-of-stay of three months and a maximum length-of-stay of six months. The project is designed as a Supportive Services Only (SSO) project type and will have an estimated annual budget of \$100,000 to \$125,000.

## **Youth Rapid Re-housing**

Rapid Re-housing (RRH) is an intervention housing model that prioritizes a rapid move from homelessness to permanent housing. Young people will receive rental assistance and supportive services as they transition into long-term housing stability. New Youth-Dedicated RRH projects will promote greater youth choice and will offer the option of shared-housing arrangements. Shared housing refers to long-term living arrangements between two or more unrelated people who choose to live together as a way of sharing costs and building a community of support. By developing a systemic shared-housing initiative, we will help young people build strong support networks, maximize the utilization of the limited affordable housing, build stronger relationships with landlords, and make housing costs more affordable for young people.

The target population for this project includes youth ages 18 to 24 years at imminent risk of homelessness (HUD Category 2) or experiencing homelessness (HUD Categories 1 or 4).

Core services will include youth referrals, intake and needs assessment; housing identification (youth may choose between single occupancy or shared housing); shared-housing matchmaking and shared-housing agreements; rent and move-in assistance; individualized and client-driven case management and supportive services; motivational interviewing, goal setting and transition planning; conflict mediation; career planning and connections to education and employment opportunities; reconnections with natural supports when appropriate; and voluntary community service and leadership development programming. Supportive services will be designed around strengths-based case management strategies, with goals driven by the individual needs and desires of each youth.

Desired outcomes include the following:

- Youth obtain safe, permanent housing
- Youth identify and make progress on educational/employment goals
- Youth establish permanent connections to caring adults, peers or community networks
- Youth see improvement in indicators of social-emotional well-being as determined by individual client needs
- Youth have adequate income to maintain market rate housing (single occupancy, shared housing, or other arrangement)
- Youth do not become homeless again

DHS anticipates serving approximately 100 youth per year in this program during the two-year YHDP grant period, with the creation of approximately 60 new RRH units annually. The goal of the RRH is to be flexible to respond to the array of needs identified, and this includes extending project stays to 36 months<sup>4</sup>, when it is identified that additional time will enable a youth to remain permanently housed. The project is designed as a Permanent Housing-Rapid Re-housing (PH-RRH) project type and will have an estimated annual budget of \$750,000 to \$1,000,000.

## **Additional System Initiatives**

In addition to the YHDP-funded projects described above, the Youth Action Board and YHDP stakeholders identified several priority initiatives to enhance Allegheny County's youth homelessness response system. Brief project descriptions are provided below, and planned partners and action steps are included in the YHDP Goals and Commitments section.

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<sup>4</sup>Pending approval from HUD

## **Increasing Community Access Points**

This initiative aims to provide training and ongoing professional development to equip community agencies, such as public libraries, recreation centers and employment training programs, to serve as spaces where youth experiencing homelessness can find basic supports and resource referrals. Community access points will increase the reach of the homeless response system and create more opportunities for young people to connect with necessary services. Additionally, this initiative will provide consistent messaging among community partners that are already engaging with young people.

The project mirrors existing models that have a history of successfully identifying youth experiencing homelessness (e.g. McKinney-Vento liaisons in school districts), with an emphasis on engaging older youth within the community spaces in which they socialize, learn or receive other services. By establishing trained points-of-contact in a variety of community settings distributed across urban, suburban and rural areas, the project is intended to create a community of “No Wrong Doors.”

Community access points will be asked to designate one or more staff persons to complete training in core competencies including recognizing warning signs of homelessness in youth, facilitating age-appropriate and trauma-informed conversations about housing, and helping youth connect to coordinated entry and other local resources. Participating agencies will provide light-touch supports such as making warm referrals, helping youth navigate resources online and providing emergency supplies such as food or bus passes.

Key action steps and milestones are described in Objective 1.2A.

## **Developing Low-Barrier Outreach Spaces**

The concept of a low barrier outreach space came about in discussions with street outreach workers who identified a lack of community spaces where youth can find social connection and a respite from the stressors of unsheltered living. There is a need for spaces that will appeal to unsheltered youth – especially those who live or primarily associate with people over the age of 25 – who feel “too old” for youth programs and yet still desire the social connections and personal growth opportunities those programs offer.

One or more low-barrier outreach spaces, established in partnership with a local arts organization, recreation center or other existing businesses, will offer youth a safe place to participate in both unstructured and organized activities such as music, art, sports, volunteering, cooking and other programs that promote friendship and community connectedness. During drop-in hours, coffee, snacks, and basic amenities (at a minimum, access to restrooms, phone charging stations and Wi-Fi) will be provided. Activities will be largely participant-led and self-directed. Youth seeking shelter, support with medical or behavioral health needs, or other types of assistance will have access to an on-site outreach worker for one-on-one consultation, service referrals, and emergency resources. However, staffing will be minimal, and all services will be voluntary. In this way, the project focuses on the primary goal of promoting social-emotional wellness through a “no pressure, low-stakes” approach that aligns with the principles of Harm Reduction and Trauma-Informed Care.

Prior to developing a full design of this project, more information is needed to identify community spaces that are comfortable and affirming for youth. The Youth Action Board, as well other youth who are currently unsheltered or have previously slept unsheltered, will be critical in designing the project.

Key action steps and milestones are described in Objective 1.2B.

## **Peer Navigation Services**

Peer navigation services will be provided by a dedicated team of individuals who have recently lived the experience of homelessness as a transition-age youth and who offer support and solidarity to those currently involved in the homeless system. Additionally, this initiative will create a platform for recruiting new Youth Action Board members.

The primary goals of the adding peer navigators to the system are:

1. To connect youth to positive peer supports, reducing the sense of loneliness and alienation that many unaccompanied youth face during instances of homelessness;
2. To listen and offer non-judgmental support when challenges arise, and;
3. To advocate for youth by gathering and sharing feedback and recommendations about what's working and not working in individual programs and across the youth homelessness response system.

Design of the Peer Navigator Project is similar to the existing DHS Youth Support Partner Unit, which engages individuals with lived experience who offer support and advocacy to youth involved in one or more human services systems, including those involved in the homeless system. A key next step in developing this initiative will be to assess the current and potential demand for peer navigators among youth involved in the homeless system as well as the existing capacity of the Youth Support Partner Unit to meet the demand. This will help determine whether peer navigators can be added to the existing structure or if a new, stand-alone project will be needed.

Additional action steps and milestones are described in Objective 3.3D.

## **2-Generation (2-Gen) Housing Models**

A group of local partners, led by the Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education and local philanthropic agencies, is working to replicate the Louisville-based Family Scholar House program in the Pittsburgh region. Pittsburgh Family Scholar House will offer housing and an array of supports for families experiencing homelessness who are headed by a single parent. Program goals include providing stable housing for families while helping them achieve family, education and career goals. Areas of focus include increasing access to high quality early childhood education and supporting parenting to successfully complete post-secondary education or career training programs.

Key action steps and anticipated milestones are described in Objective 4.3D

## **Youth Homelessness Resource Specialists**

Within Allegheny County's child welfare system, a dedicated team of resource specialists helps frontline workers address the holistic needs of children, youth and families. The resource specialist serves as a subject matter expert in one or more domains, such as secondary education, college and career planning, healthcare and insurance, and legal matters. Primarily working "behind the scenes," resource specialists offer information, best practice guidance, referrals and specialized services to help providers address the needs of children, youth and families.

A proposed new project will replicate this model, creating dedicated resource specialists with expertise in the areas of education, employment, permanent connections, healthcare and behavioral health. For example, a permanent-connections resource specialist could offer family-finding services for agencies seeking to connect youth with natural supports, while a youth-career-pathways resource specialist could help providers navigate the local landscape of post-secondary education and workforce development programs, scholarships and resources available to young adults. Resource specialists could provide ongoing support to providers of homeless services via communications, technical assistance and train-the-trainer workshops. Such programming is thought to be especially beneficial for service providers that serve the general adult populations, as these agencies often serve youth but may have extremely limited internal capacity to develop expertise in youth systems and resources.

The ultimate outcome of this project is to enhance youth outcomes across many quality-of-life indicators. As a shared service available to homeless service agencies across the CoC, resource specialists would offer a cost-effective way to boost consistency and quality of supports to youth served by the homeless system while minimizing duplication of efforts.

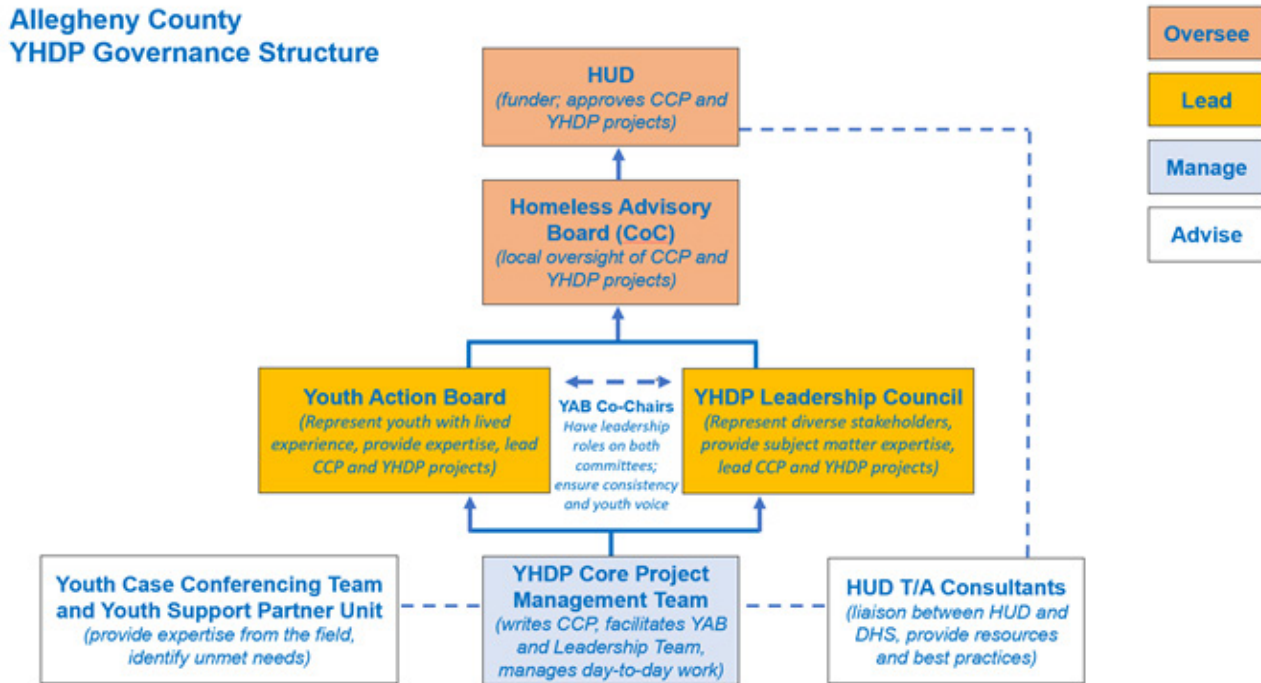
The project will leverage existing resource specialist teams when possible, building capacity to support the CoC provider network. Resource specialists could include a combination of centralized staff positions within DHS, contracted agencies, and/or or a distributed network of subject matter experts within different organizations.

Elements of this project can be realized through the YHDP-funded projects, as each sub-recipient must partner closely with other agencies and systems to ensure youths' educational, employment and social-emotional needs are being met. Additionally, the YHDP Goals and Commitments Matrix outlines multiple strategies to enhance information-sharing and collaboration between the CoC and other systems.

Key action steps and milestones are described in Objective 3.2E.

## YHDP GOVERNANCE

Allegheny County’s YHDP leadership and governance structure was carefully designed to put youth voice and leadership at the forefront of decision-making. Descriptions of key YHDP stakeholder groups and their roles in YHDP planning and decision-making follow.



### Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is a department of Allegheny County government and serves as the YHDP lead agency. DHS is the Unified Funding Agency for the Continuum of Care (CoC) and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In addition, the CoC designated DHS as its Infrastructure Organization (IO), facilitating the day-to-day and operational responsibilities necessary to fulfill the core duties of the CoC for over two decades. As part of this work, DHS manages the Allegheny Link (“the Link”), the coordinated-entry system for all persons presenting for assistance, including youth. DHS is an integrated human service agency and, as such, is well-positioned for this role given its stewardship and access to county-wide funding for many of the services that supplement and complement HUD’s funding (e.g. mental health; drug and alcohol; child welfare; independent living; etc.). DHS subsidizes the staffing needed to support the CoC and its governing body, the Homeless Advisory Board (HAB). It also maintains internal analytical capacity through a dedicated analytics team in its Office of Analysis, Technology and Planning (ATP) and provides access to the county’s Data Warehouse, enabling cross-system analysis of the individuals and families accessing homeless services.

*Allegheny County DHS serves as the backbone agency for YHDP, supplying administrative, fiscal, and operational support for YHDP planning and programming.*

## Homeless Advisory Board

The Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) is a public/private partnership formed to assist Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills in reviewing public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the well-being of homeless persons and families. The Allegheny County Continuum of Care (CoC) relies on the Homeless Advisory Board to act on its behalf to review, make recommendations to, and endorse the annual submission of the CoC; monitor HUD's priorities in the delivery of services to people who are homeless and ensure that Allegheny County has met those priorities in its CoC application; identify gaps and prioritize housing and services in the CoC; and assist in implementing the goals and objectives outlined in the Allegheny County Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

The HAB's membership includes representatives that will be closely tied to the YHDP, including leadership from the Homeless Children's Education Fund (local education advocacy group that works in coordination with our Local Education Agency) and Familylinks (youth service provider, CoC's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program recipient, and youth emergency shelter administrator).

***The Homeless Advisory Board will provide local oversight of the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan and resulting projects that are part of the Allegheny County CoC. Formal approval (in the form of a signed letter of support) from the HAB is required for submission of the Coordinated Community Plan and YHDP project funding requests to HUD. Additionally, the HAB makes final decisions on procurement of providers to administer YHDP-funded projects.***

## Youth Action Board

The Allegheny County CoC actively works with a Youth Action Board (YAB), a group of youth under the age of 24 years who currently or previously experienced homelessness. The YAB's vision is to provide a formal and regular platform for participants to engage in a mutually respectful give-and-take with service providers, policy-makers and other youth advocacy groups active at the county, state and national levels. These activities advance the mission to strengthen the overall system of supports and services for youth in the wider community. The YAB's members also lead through in-person interactions and sharing of ideas with DHS senior management and direct services staff.

The YAB functions as a sub-committee of the DHS broader youth advisory council, System Improvement Through Youth (SITY), which has been part of DHS's youth voice strategy for over a decade and provides the structure and expertise to meaningfully and continuously engage youth. The YAB's integration with SITY provides greater opportunities to impact CoC-wide work. The youth represent lived experience across human services which fosters dialogue about cross-system needs and barriers, leading to more integrated recommendations to DHS leadership.

YAB is currently comprised of eight individuals and has capacity for 14 members. Members are youth aged 16 to 25 years who are active in or alumni of DHS child-serving systems including: homelessness services, child welfare, mental health, intellectual disability, developmental

disabilities, juvenile justice, and drug and alcohol. YAB is facilitated by the DHS Youth Support Partner (YSP) Unit, paid youth staff with lived experience in human services system who are trained to strategically use their knowledge to connect with youth.

During monthly YAB meetings, youth lead candid, culturally competent and efficient exchange of ideas with DHS senior management and direct services staff. Youth are paid for their participation in YAB and meetings and activities are scheduled at times and locations identified as convenient by youth participants. YAB employs a consensus-building method of making decisions. When discussing projects, the YAB members discuss options, possible effects of each, how those options may impact the service delivery system, and other factors to arrive at a decision. If the group is unable to reach a consensus on an option, the group votes and the option with the most votes is pursued.

***The Youth Action Board leads the development of the Coordinated Community Plan vision; recommends specific actions and strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness; and serves in a leadership capacity throughout YHDP planning and implementation. Formal approval (in the form of a signed letter of support) from YAB is required for submission of the Coordinated Community Plan and YHDP project funding requests to HUD.***

### **YHDP Leadership Council**

The YHDP Leadership Council brings together a wide variety of stakeholders, including young adults who have experienced homelessness, housing providers, child welfare agencies, education and workforce development organizations, and other community partners, to shape Allegheny County's YHDP vision, principals, goals and strategies. The council will meet throughout the grant period to monitor progress toward the vision and strategic goals of the Coordinated Community Plan. Members are recruited based on their knowledge of youth homelessness (members include individuals who have lived experience, professional experience, or both), their ability to commit time and resources on behalf of their organizations, and their willingness to actively participate in YHDP planning and implementation activities. The YHDP Leadership Council met monthly during the Coordinated Community Planning period; between meetings, members provided support by serving as subject matter experts, participating in sub-committees, and offering connections to relevant resources and contacts. A full list of members is included in the Acknowledgements section.

The YAB co-chairs participate in the YHDP Leadership Council as standing members and act as liaisons between the YHDP Leadership Council and the YAB, including presenting ideas and obtaining feedback. They play a critical role in ensuring that both leadership committees are aligned and driven by youth voice. All Youth Action Board members are encouraged to participate in the YHDP Leadership Council and are compensated for time spent attending meetings.

***The YHDP Leadership Council works in tandem with the Youth Action Board to lead the development of the Coordinated Community Plan vision; recommends specific actions and strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness; and serves in an advisory capacity throughout YHDP planning and implementation.***



## **YHDP Core Planning Team**

YHDP Core Planning Team is a cross-disciplinary team consisting of key DHS staff and partners with functional responsibility for different components of YHDP, including transition-age youth services, coordinated entry, street outreach, education and justice-system engagement, data analytics and Youth Action Board facilitation. The YAB co-chairs participate in this team in addition to their YAB duties and are compensated for time they spend working with both groups.

The YHDP Core Planning Team provides staff support to ensure YHDP goals and milestones are met, including: facilitating YHDP Leadership Council meetings, liaising with the YAB and the HAB, working closely with HUD Technical Assistance partners and evaluators, drafting the Coordinated Community Plan, developing YHDP project budgets and proposals, managing procurement and monitoring of funded YHDP projects, and documenting results.

*The YHDP Core Planning Team provides operational support to assist youth, community stakeholders and CoC staff in developing and implementing Allegheny County's Coordinated Community Plan and related projects.*

## **Youth Support Partner Unit**

Youth Support Partners (YSPs) are youth formally employed by DHS, receiving salary and benefits, who have lived experience and received services, to provide peer engagement and support to currently active youth. The YSPs are a model unique to Allegheny County; they share their insights with youth currently in the system, advocate for them and help them plan for their future. As young adults who have lived experience with services as a youth, YSPs provide a mentor role and example of youth success “after services.” In addition to serving as staff co-facilitator for the Youth Action Board, YSPs are represented on the YHDP Leadership Council and Core Planning Team. They play a key role in YHDP planning by offering their own vital perspectives as system professionals with lived experiences with homelessness and helping youth address any issues or barriers that impact their participation in YAB.

**Youth Homelessness Case Conferencing Team:** In June 2017, DHS and community partners established a Youth Homelessness Case Conferencing Team. Case conferencing meetings are attended by staff from street outreach, emergency shelters, rapid and permanent supportive housing, coordinated entry, service programs, and the Youth Support Partner Unit. At biweekly meetings, participants review a by-name master list of youth experiencing homelessness, track individual youth's movement toward permanent housing, identify barriers to housing, and create plans to connect youth to needed resources. Meetings are facilitated by the DHS transition-age youth coordinator at ACTION Housing's Uptown location. Additionally, each of the case conferencing partner organizations is represented in the YHDP Leadership Council and the DHSYHDP manager regularly attends case conferencing meetings. These feedback loops help ensure YHDP planning is continually informed by the real-world, current experiences of local young adults experiencing homelessness.

*The Youth Support Partner Unit and the Youth Homelessness Case Conferencing Team are closely involved in YHDP planning. Although they do not have a formal role in YHDP decision-making, both teams contribute considerable real-world knowledge and lived experience with issues related to youth homelessness.*

## **YHDP Decision-Making**

### **Planning Process, Communication, and Infrastructure**

The Youth Action Board (YAB) and YHDP Leadership Council are empowered to lead planning efforts for YHDP. They are supported by the DHS YHDP manager and Core Planning Team. Planning meetings are documented in writing and meeting notes and materials are distributed to YHDP Leadership Council and YAB members.

YAB and YHDP planning updates and priorities are currently reported to the Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) by DHS staff during regularly scheduled CoC Infrastructure Organization reports at HAB meetings as well as via electronic communications between meetings. However, DHS is currently exploring ways to more directly and formally engage members of the YAB and YHDP Leadership Council in the HAB (such as establishing voting seats for youth or designating the YHDP Leadership Council as one of the HAB's official committees).

### **Funding Decisions**

Funding decisions for YHDP projects will be guided by the CoC's procurement bylaws. The CoC uses a formal, open and competitive procurement process to identify new projects for funding. After analyzing local needs, the CoC Infrastructure Organization issues a public Request For Proposals (RFP), open to any eligible organization. The RFP includes detailed instructions for submission and is broadly distributed throughout the community.

The YHDP Core Planning Team will work closely with the CoC procurement administrator to develop scoring criteria that align with the vision, guiding principles, and goals of the Coordinated Community Plan. Criteria include but are not limited to: organizational experience and capacity, implementation strategy, ability to implement Housing First, and plans to meet program standards, including but are limited to positive youth development, trauma-informed care, and working with coordinated entry and HMIS.

The YHDP Core Planning Team also ensure that the independent review committee has representation from YAB members and/or other youth who have lived experience with homelessness, as well as from key stakeholder groups, including communities that are most impacted by youth homelessness. YHDP stakeholders who have been involved in planning activities may be invited to participate in the review process provided there is no conflict of interest; staff, volunteers, and board members of organizations seeking YHDP funds may not participate in the review process.

Based on the score results and analysis of local needs, the review committee will put forth a recommendation to the Youth Action Board and Homeless Advisory Board to then review the recommendation and justification. The Homeless Advisory Board will make a final decision on all projects that receive CoC funding.

# Continuous Quality Improvement

We will utilize the following strategies to ensure continuous quality improvement of our Coordinated Community Plan:

- 1. Youth-led review committee:** Establishing a YHDP Continuous Quality Improvement (YHDP CQI) committee that will meet quarterly to review progress toward YHDP benchmarks. This committee will complement and augment other existing CQI strategies administered through the CoC (described below) ensuring that youth and community stakeholders continue to exercise leadership during YHDP implementation. The committee will include representation from the Youth Action Board, YHDP Leadership Council, community stakeholders, CoC leadership and monitoring teams, the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, and the DHS Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning (ATP). Meetings will be scheduled to prioritize youths' availability.

The committee will convene for the first time in winter 2020, prior to the launch of new YHDP-funded projects, to establish shared benchmarks for the overall Coordinated Community Plan as well as specific performance indicators for individual strategies. The focus of early committee meetings will be engaging youth in the design of performance benchmarks and ensuring alignment with the vision, guiding principles, and goals of the CCP.

Once YHDP projects are launched, the committee will regularly review data from HMIS and partnering systems to track performance and identify areas for continued growth and collaboration. The YHDP CQI committee will share quarterly status updates with the full Youth Advisory Board and YHDP Leadership Council. It will also provide feedback to providers. Additionally, the scope of the YHDP CQI committee will extend to all CCP goals, objectives and strategies, including those that do not receive YHDP funding.

- 2. Performance evaluation:** The CoC develops homelessness system-level performance measures for bi-monthly review. These performance measures include HUD's system-level performance metrics, and locally identified metrics including first-time homelessness counts, homelessness counts by project type, length-of-stay in homelessness programs by project type, recidivism, and exits to permanent housing. All metrics were developed and are monitored by the CoC's Data and Planning Committee. All metrics are reviewed through the Homeless Scorecard (live web-based data dashboard) to monitor progress in achieving HUD and local performance goals.
- 3. Monitoring:** CoC providers are monitored programmatically and fiscally on an annual basis, in accordance with federal requirements and local standards and benchmarks. Monitoring activities focus on ensuring agencies address deficiencies, comply with data collection and reporting requirements, make appropriate referrals to supportive services, house clients in facilities that comply with housing quality standards, keep proper client files, fulfill performance standards, and meet fiscal requirements. Monitoring results are shared with the CoC to inform project rankings and the development of future evaluation tools and performance standards.

4. **Technical assistance:** To prevent providers from falling out of compliance, DHS offers preventive technical assistance to a provider who seeks support, when DHS or the CoC determines that a provider is operating at a performance level that borders on non-compliance and/or when DHS receives complaints through the DHS Director's Action Line (the DHS dedicated phone line for client questions, complaints and requests for information concerning DHS staff and services).


Additional strategies that are currently being explored include:

- **Youth programming quality-assessment tools:** Numerous resources have been developed to help service providers assess and improve the quality of their youth programming. For example, Youth.gov's "Assessing Youth Involvement and Engagement" tool helps organizations determine whether their youth programming helps or hinders youth development, program engagement, and retention. Locally, assessments like these have been used effectively with youth providers through initiatives like the United Way's Allegheny Partners for Out-of-School Time (APOST). A shared assessment tool could serve as valuable technical assistance resource for CoC providers, particularly adult-focused programs that traditionally serve fewer young adults and may be less familiar with the concepts of Positive Youth Development.
- **Client-driven program evaluation:** Most data used to measure performance comes from the CoC's HMIS system which receives daily input directly from service providers. Additionally, the CX unit within the DHS Office of Analysis, Technology and Planning is currently testing various strategies to engage with youth and receive feedback on services. These methods have included SMS text messaging, web-based surveys and satisfaction kiosks at service locations. The CX team is working to establish a broader youth outreach initiative and use data collected to inform program changes and quality improvement. It is our hope that, in a more advanced quality improvement structure, this information can also be used in scoring and ranking projects and providers for new contracts. Doing so will help establish a more robust youth-driven quality improvement culture.
- **Performance-based contracting:** The CoC has identified performance-based contracting as a best practice and is studying the strategies used in other communities for potential replication.

# Signatures of Endorsement

By signing below, representatives from each organization express their approval of the Allegheny County Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program's Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness.


## Allegheny County Youth Action Board

 _____ <i>Signature</i>	Jasmine Adotey _____ <i>Name</i>	April 17, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>
 _____ <i>Signature</i>	Isis Cox _____ <i>Name</i>	April 17, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>
 _____ <i>Signature</i>	Darrell Pullie _____ <i>Name</i>	April 17, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>
 _____ <i>Signature</i>	Skye Stackhouse _____ <i>Name</i>	April 17, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>
 _____ <i>Signature</i>	Leslie Zacharias _____ <i>Name</i>	April 17, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>

## Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board

 _____ <i>Signature</i>	John Lovelace, Chair _____ <i>Name, Title</i>	April 17, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>
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## Allegheny County Department of Human Services

 _____ <i>Signature</i>	Marc Cherna, Director _____ <i>Name, Title</i>	April 21, 2020 _____ <i>Date</i>
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# Appendix A - YHDP Values and Principles Summary<sup>5</sup>

YHDP Value/Principle	Description
<b>Special Populations</b>	<p>Consideration for populations of youth experiencing homelessness that are particularly vulnerable: LGBTQ+, gender non-conforming, minors (under 18), youth involved with juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and victims/survivors of sexual trafficking and exploitation. For these particularly vulnerable and often overrepresented young people, there is a need for identification and engagement strategies, infrastructure considerations, and housing and service-delivery approaches that are responsive to their specific needs.</p>
<b>Equity</b>	<p>Research has found significant racial and ethnic disparities in rates of homelessness. Specifically, Black, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ persons experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates compared to other populations. YHDP communities should consider and address significant disparities in rates of homelessness of youth across the system and approach both planning and projects that address inequity.</p>
<b>Positive Youth Development and Trauma-informed Care</b>	<p>Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Trauma-informed Care (TIC) are accepted best practices in housing and service delivery for youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Positive Youth Development is an approach for working with young people that focuses on psychological, emotional, and social development rather than problems or deficits.</li> <li>▪ Trauma-informed Care is an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. It emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both consumers and providers, and helps to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.</li> </ul>
<b>Family Engagement</b>	<p>Family engagement plays a critical role in providing support and promoting well-being of youth and young adults as a prevention strategy and as youth regain stability after experiencing homelessness. HUD believes that the best diversion and intervention strategy is to engage families, whenever appropriate, through community partnerships with organizations such as child welfare agencies, schools, youth providers, and other community human services and homeless services providers.</p>

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from the FY18 YHDP Notice of Funding Availability:  
<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/FY-2018-YHDP-NOFA.pdf>

<b>YHDP Value/Principle</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Immediate access to housing with no preconditions</b> <i>(Housing First)</i>	Housing is a cornerstone for meeting a multitude of basic needs necessary for success. Young people should be provided with rapid access to safe, secure, and stable housing that meets their needs as quickly as possible, without the condition that they are ‘ready’ for housing.
<b>Youth Choice</b>	Allowing youth to exercise self-determination is a youth-centered approach that values youths’ expressed needs, self-awareness, and community knowledge. This youth-centered approach emphasizes youth choice in terms of the kind of housing youth need and the extent and nature of supports and services they access and presents alternative options for youth when needed.
<b>Individualized and client- driven supports</b>	Understanding that the needs of the young people to be served will be unique. Housing and support packages that help prevent and end homelessness among youth must recognize and respond to individual differences across individuals to serve them appropriately and efficiently.
<b>Social and community integration</b>	The goal of youth homelessness services should be a successful transition to adulthood, including the successful integration into a community as a positive contributing community member. To accomplish this requires the community to provide socially supportive engagement and the opportunity for youth to participate in meaningful community activities.
<b>Coordinated Entry</b>	A youth-inclusive coordinated entry process requires CoCs to implement a systems-level, youth-focused approach for youth access, screening and assessment, prioritization, and referral to housing and supportive services.

## Appendix B: DHS Trauma-Informed Framework

Allegheny County is committed to adopting the principles of Trauma-Informed Care in all levels of engagement with youth experiencing homelessness. Recognizing the tremendous impact of trauma on those served in homeless and other human service systems, in 2015 Allegheny County DHS established the Trauma Think Tank, a cross-system collaborative which promotes a trauma-informed organizational approach. Participants include representatives from each DHS program office, Allegheny County’s provider community, family and youth. Its mission is to enhance understanding of trauma and its impact, and foster collaborations that promote a trauma-informed approach at all levels of the human services system. The Allegheny County Trauma Think Tank frames being trauma-informed around the key questions: “What is this person’s experience? Further, how will we engage, plan, and serve differently because of this understanding?”

Recent efforts have included establishing a DHS-wide Trauma-Informed Framework, implementing a training series for direct care human service professionals, supervisors, and program administrators, and launching an online trauma resource library for continuous learning. It has also formed a steering committee to develop and implement universal Trauma-Informed Standards of Practice across all human service domains including the homeless system, represented by the senior administrator for the CoC. The Trauma Think Tank will be a key partner in the design, implementation and evaluation of YHDP projects. Specific strategies to align youth homelessness initiatives with the principles of TIC are included in the *Spotlight: Advancing YHDP Community Pillars*.





# Appendix C: DHS Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Allegheny County's Department of Human Services is tasked with meeting the human service needs of county residents through an extensive range of information exchange, prevention, early intervention, case management, crisis intervention and after care services. We have a commitment to creating accessible, culturally competent, integrated and comprehensive services to these populations. In service to this mission, it is critical that our staff, contracted providers, and community partners maintain and uphold our commitment to equity and inclusion.

Our commitment to equity recognizes the social and structural differences that are deeply embedded in the fabric of society. This recognition acknowledges the following:

- All people are individuals, but they are also members of social groups.
- These social groups are valued unequally in society.
- Social groups that are valued more highly have greater access to resources.
- The goal of equity is to address the disparities that occur because of unequal access and to allow each individual, regardless of social identity, an opportunity to succeed.

To fully practice inclusion, we must engage in ongoing self-reflection about our own socialization within these groups and recognize that these social and structural differences can occur at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels. At DHS, this practice will be reinforced through ongoing training and professional development in addition to enactment of agency practices and policies that create environments where all voices are heard, and the capacity of individuals and families are recognized and activated.

To support these efforts, the Department of Human Services established the Office of Equity and Inclusion in 2018.

## Why Focus on Racial Equity?

Our goal is to lift the tide for all. As a member of the [Government Alliance for Racial Equity](#), we lead with race because race intersects with all other identities and people of color, regardless of their other identities, are the populations with the worst outcomes. If we don't solve for race, we can't resolve any of the disparities that we see within our system. Although our work leads with race, it does not mean that we do not account for other marginalized identities. We are using a model that is race *explicit* not race *exclusive*.

## Theory of Change

The ultimate goal of our racial equity work should be to eliminate racial inequities and improve outcomes for all racial groups. Government played a primary role in the creation of racial inequities, through laws, policies, and practices. Our ideas of "equality and justice" have shifted over time, and we now have collective values for a more inclusive democracy.

To achieve our aspirations and to get to different outcomes, we will need to fundamentally transform government. This requires high level leadership, committed action teams, supportive community leaders, and effective structures and practices. Our theory of change is derived from the Texas Model for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities.

- Advance data-driven strategies
- Use a shared racial equity framework
- Engage in cross-system collaboration
- Develop effective leaders
- Facilitate community collaborations

### **Best Practice**

Our strategy and best practice is guided by GARE’s recommendation. This strategy has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and is suitable for widespread adoption.

1. **Normalize**—Establish racial equity as a key value by developing a shared understanding of key concepts across the entire agency and create a sense of urgency to make changes.
2. **Organize**—Build staff and organizational capacity, skills, and competencies through training while also building infrastructure to support the work, like internal organizational change teams and external partnerships with other institutions and community.
3. **Operationalize**—Put theory into action by implementing new tools for decision-making, measurement, and accountability like a racial equity tool and developing a racial equity action plan.

From the [GARE, Racial Equity Toolkit 2019](#).

The DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion is a key partner in Allegheny County’s YHDP planning efforts. Additionally, local organizations representing LGBTQIA+ communities and communities of color have participated in the YHDP planning process, sharing their recommendations about how the homeless system and individual programs can apply an equity lens to their work to better serve youth whose identifies are often marginalized. Specific strategies to align youth homelessness initiatives with the principles of equity and inclusion are included in the *Spotlight: Advancing YHDP Community Pillars* beginning on page 61 and in the *Spotlight: Supporting Specific Youth Populations* on pages 66–67.

# Appendix D: Methodology Used to Quantify Youth Homelessness and Limitations of Data Sources

## Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

HMIS data is pulled for any youth ages 18 to 24 years with an active program involvement in any project between December 1, 2018 through November 30, 2019. We deduplicated the numbers of youth by using a unique identifier. We utilized self-reported data maintained by the individual homeless providers to collect basic demographic information, living history information, exit destinations and income, employment and benefit information.

This information is comprehensive for CoC, local- and state-funded programs. All programs are required to enter the Universal Data Elements outlined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development 2020 Data Standards.

While this information is vast for programs in HMIS, there are certain limitations to the information collected from HMIS. Most importantly, all this data is self-reported by the youth. This can pose several issues, including but not limited to misunderstandings of the questions, information not verified by a third party, poor data quality, and data entry errors.

## Allegheny Link

Allegheny Link provides data through its role as Allegheny County's Coordinated Entry system. Individuals who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in need of various related or unrelated services, can call, email or walk-in to the Allegheny Link to be connected to resources. From this data source, we utilized youth in households with no one 25 years of age and older that were between the ages of 18 and 24 years who had contact between December 1, 2018 through November 30, 2019 and identified housing as a need. We deduplicated the numbers of youth by using a unique identifier. We utilized self-reported demographic information and if the youth completed a homeless assessment, the data points from the homeless assessment.

This information is comprehensive for all individuals who completed a homeless assessment to be eligible for homeless services. While this information is in-depth for individuals who qualify as HUD's definition of literally homeless, there are limitations in the data when considering youth who are involved with intimate partner violence, domestic violence, doubled-up youth, and housing-unstable youth. To address these limitations, Allegheny County utilized specific data points and broadened our cohort of youth. We then cross referenced those youth with those who were involved in the homeless system and youth drop-in centers. For the individuals who did not have additional involvements in other systems, a deeper analysis is being conducted to include those youth.

## Synergy IL

Synergy IL data is the database that is used to collect and store information for transition-age youth aging out of the foster care system, youth who attend the youth drop-in center, the 412 Youth Zone, and a project called Youth Village Life program. Because this database is centered

around youth 18 to 24 years of age, we pulled data for youth aged 18 to 24 who noted being homeless, housing unstable, couch surfing, and/or doubled up. Most of this data stems from the 412 Youth Zone drop-in center.

This information is an excellent resource because of its proximity to youth programs. However, there are great limitations to collecting data from this source. These limitations include but are not limited to, self-reported data from the individual, poor data quality, and outdated answers. Additionally, most of this self-reported data comes from a youth's involvement with the 412 Youth Zone and their youth coaches completing and updating a youth summary in Synergy IL. There may be additional, uncaptured youth who do not have contact with a youth coach, or who have not confided in their youth coach regarding their housing situation.

### **Allegheny County Data Warehouse**

The Allegheny County DHS Data Warehouse is a comprehensive system that integrates data from more than 20 internal and external sources. Individuals with involvement in services related to homelessness, mental health, drug and alcohol, child welfare, the justice system, the education system, and several other sources, have a record in the Data Warehouse. For the purposes of data collection of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project, DHS filtered out the cohort of youth identified from HMIS, Allegheny Link, and Synergy IL to cross reference additional service involvement for each youth.

The information is excellent to determine cross-systems involvement. The limitation, however, is there is not a consistent schedule for uploading new data from each data source into the Warehouse. Additionally, poor data quality and a lack of consistency across data collection requirements create limitations as well.

### **Local Education Agency Data**

Limitations:

- **Definition of Unaccompanied Youth:** The school system's definition of unaccompanied youth includes any person, up to 21 years of age, who was homeless and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. For the purposes of this Coordinated Community Plan, we assume that the vast majority, if not all, unaccompanied youth identified by Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are teens and older youth. However, we recognize that the available LEA counts may include younger children. If we are able to obtain disaggregated age data for unaccompanied youth, we will adjust the estimated count accordingly.
- **Data Suppression:** Unaccompanied youth counts are not publicly available for every LEA in Allegheny County. To protect students' privacy, the Department of Education suppresses data for very small groups of students identified as homeless. This means that the actual number of unaccompanied youth may be greater than the 412 identified. In Allegheny County, data is suppressed for fifteen LEAs that counted between zero and two unaccompanied youth during the 2017-18 school year.

- **Duplication:** Counts are not deduplicated across LEAs, only within individual LEAs. This means that a homeless student who enrolled in more than one LEA during the school year may be counted multiple times. Mobility impacts a significant number of homeless students. In Region 4, at least 29% of homeless students moved schools at least once during the 2017-18 school year.
- **Characteristics of Unaccompanied Youth:** Youth who are over the age of 21 (the maximum age that a student with a disability can attend school in Pennsylvania) are not counted by local LEAs. Furthermore, the cohort of unaccompanied youth identified in Allegheny County is not disaggregated by youth age or grade level. Thus, we are unable to determine how many of the identified unaccompanied youth in Allegheny County are teenagers or young adults. In the Pennsylvania ECYEH State Evaluation Report for 2017-18, 99% of unaccompanied youth in Region 4 were enrolled in grades K-12 and one percent were identified as infants, toddlers, or preschool age. The report does not identify whether youth identified as homeless were themselves pregnant or parenting.

# Appendix E: 2019 Continuum of Care Programs and Capacity

## Current Homeless System Capacity

The current components of the Allegheny County Continuum of Care (CoC) are listed below.

### Outreach

The CoC's street outreach effort is led by a network of more than 10 publicly and privately funded teams. The network includes specialty teams to ensure every need is met, including: medical street outreach (Dr. Jim Withers of Operation Safety Net is internationally recognized for his work in street medicine), drug and alcohol outreach that incorporates harm reduction strategies; youth outreach; and a SAMHSA-funded effort for individuals with behavioral health issues. In addition to making regular checks of camps, abandoned buildings, cars and hidden locations across the county, outreach teams receive information on where people are located from BigBurgh (a web-app for homeless services), Allegheny Link, police and community groups. Street outreach also engages people at drop-in centers, shelters and food lines and asks where other people are staying to ensure that persons not utilizing services are found and served. Outreach teams are out every day of the week. Certain areas where homeless populations are known to congregate and live are visited multiple times each week.

The CoC facilitates a weekly provider meeting to review a by-name list of unsheltered, homeless individuals and to strategize effective engagement approaches. These are separate from the Youth Case Conferencing Meetings described above. In addition, the Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee (HOCC), a subcommittee of the CoC's advisory board, meets twice a month to discuss ways the teams can better identify, engage, and serve unsheltered homeless individuals.

Outreach is tailored to engage unsheltered populations who are unlikely to ask for help by using evidence-based practices such as motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, and peer support. All outreach workers strive to engage individuals by meeting their basic human needs, developing trust, and fostering deep, personal connections. Allegheny Link also has a mobile unit that meets individuals wherever they are to assess their needs and provide referrals to housing.

### 412 Youth Zone

A significant development in the crisis response system for youth experiencing homelessness was the establishment of the 412 Youth Zone. The 2014 DHS study on young people experiencing homelessness recommended creating a downtown drop-in center to facilitate the provision of services and supports. At the same time, the DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families was assessing the effectiveness of its Independent Living services for older youth. By combining these two initiatives through a competitive procurement process, the 412 Youth Zone was established and has become a signature service for the county.

The center builds on the extensive experience of the lead organization, Auberle, to provide comprehensive support services to youth transitioning out of foster care and youth experiencing homelessness. The 412 Youth Zone does not provide housing, but rather links with the CoC's housing providers and offers youth a one-stop destination to access a full range of support services, including, but not limited to: laundry, shower, and meal facilities; physical, mental, and behavior healthcare; life skills resources and trainings; and onsite connections to service organizations that provide education, legal, and workforce development support. The 412 Youth Zone adds a daytime resource dedicated to youth, expanding the CoC's ability to comprehensively meet the needs of this population, while also creating a central space to engage with youth in a manner that feels safe and welcoming to them. The Allegheny Link also has a presence at the 412 Youth Zone and "brings coordinated entry to the center" to engage youth that may be resistant to call or stop into the Link offices.

### **Coordinated Entry**

The Allegheny Link ("the Link") provides the Coordinated Entry system for all persons presenting for assistance, including youth. The coordinated entry process matches people who are homeless with programs best suited to meet their needs through adherence to HUD CPD-16-11 (prioritization of those who are chronically homeless, have the longest length of homelessness and have highest service needs). Youth receive an additional level of prioritization, along with veterans and people fleeing domestic violence. When all other criteria are equal (chronic homeless status, vulnerability), a youth who is homeless is prioritized over a non-youth applicant.

The Link currently utilizes the TAY VI-SPDAT as the assessment tool for youth. However, the CoC is developing a predictive risk model (PRM) that is intended to predict which clients may have a significant housing crisis, allowing services to be implemented prior to the event and avoiding deeper system involvement and instability. This model is following the footsteps of a model in use in the county's child welfare system, which has shown positive impacts on children and families. In the preliminary model to predict homelessness, algorithms utilize integrated data from the Data Warehouse. The individuals flagged for risk of future homelessness events are typically very frequent service users with complex histories – in other words, not the bulk of the population. YHDP stakeholders are helping the CoC to assess how this approach might impact youth populations.

Whenever possible, diversion from the homelessness system occurs. If this is not possible, Link specialists assess the household seeking assistance to determine the project type most appropriate for that household and program(s) for which they are eligible. Additionally, all efforts are made to connect youth to other mainstream services including public benefits, mental health, drug and alcohol services.

Individuals can access coordinated entry either by contacting the Allegheny Link call center or through directly contacting a shelter. Street outreach providers, police officers and volunteers assist the unsheltered population to access the CoC. The Link has staff on site at emergency shelters, drop-in centers and accompanying street outreach workers to further assist those with significant barriers to access the coordinated entry system. The CoC has worked with providers to remove unnecessary barriers to entry so that people experiencing homelessness are not turned away.

## Homeless Housing

The following chart indicates the total number of beds available in the CoC during calendar year 2019, (excluding providers of services to victims of domestic violence which are prohibited from using HMIS) and, of those, how many beds are dedicated for youth experiencing homelessness.

Project Type	2019 total number of beds in CoC	2019 total number of youth-dedicated beds in CoC
Emergency Shelter	515**	18
Transitional Housing	169	8*
Rapid Re-housing	622	80
Permanent Supportive Housing	2376	8
Safe Haven	7	0

\*The CoC's youth-dedicated transitional housing program lost funding on 9/30/2019.

\*\*Current estimate; number of shelter beds can fluctuate based on season and family compositions.

## Youth-Dedicated Housing by Project Type

### Emergency Shelter

Youth-dedicated shelter beds are available at the Familylinks Downtown Outreach Center and Shelter (DOCS) in Uptown Pittsburgh. DOCS provides emergency shelter, food, and clothing for 60 days to youth ages 18 to 24 years who are homeless or transient. Medical care and counseling are also available as needed.

Organization Name	Project Name	Units HH w/ Children	Beds HH w/o Children
Familylinks	Downtown Outreach Center	0	18
<b>Total:</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>



## Rapid Re-housing (RRH)

The CoC offers Rapid Re-housing programs to help people move from homelessness to permanent housing in the community through housing search assistance, rental assistance, and service coordination.

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Units HH w/ Children</b>	<b>Beds HH w/o Children</b>
<b>ACTION-Housing</b>	MyPlace RRH	5	60
<b>Auberle</b>	At Home	0	10
<b>Total:</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>70</b>

Auberle's At Home and ACTION Housing's MyPlace are the CoC's youth-dedicated Rapid Re-housing programs. Both providers specifically serve transition-age youth (18 to 24 years) who are experiencing homelessness and/or are actively fleeing domestic violence. Their programs can also serve couples (if they are both transition-age youth). Additionally, the MyPlace RRH program can also serve homeless youth with children. All clients who served by these programs are assessed by the Allegheny Link and referred via coordinated entry.

Clients enrolled in MyPlace or At Home are connected with case managers. The case managers assist the client with locating and securing their own apartment in an area of their choosing within Allegheny County. This can include private market rentals and subsidized properties (ex: LIPH, LIHTC). Once a landlord is located who has an available unit, is willing to rent to the client, and is willing to work with the service provider, the available apartment is inspected. If the unit passes inspection, the lease for the apartment is signed. The lease for the apartment is always in the client's name, and utilities may be in either the client or landlord's name. The security deposit for the unit is then paid directly to the landlord by the service provider.

If the client moves into a subsidized unit, Auberle/ACTION may only offer assistance with the security deposit and case management services. If the client moves into a non-subsidized unit, then Auberle/ACTION may be able to provide additional financial assistance by paying a percentage of the client's rent to the landlord. The length of time that the financial assistance is provided (as well as the amount) can vary by client based on their financial situation. Assistance is typically provided for three to six months but can last for as long as 12 months. The percentage of financial assistance provided generally decreases over time, with the expectation that the client will gradually be able to take over payments for the rent on their own. Case management services and supports (ex: assistance with looking for employment, applying for benefits, obtaining furniture, etc.) are offered by the service provider, however, participation is optional since these programs are contracted as housing-first.

## Penn Free Bridge Housing

PennFree Bridge Housing helps individuals and families who are homeless and for whom alcohol and/or drug addiction are factors in their ability to maintain housing. The CoC does not have any youth-dedicated PennFree Bridge Housing units; however, eligible young adults may participate in these programs.

## Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs are available for individuals with disabilities, for families with a family member with a disability, and individuals who would otherwise be living on the street (chronic street homeless). Residents may remain as long as necessary. Each program offers additional services to help participants become more independent. Occupancy fees are based on a sliding scale.

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Units HH w/ Children</b>	<b>Beds HH w/o Children</b>
<b>ACTION Housing Inc.</b>	MyPlace PSH	0	8
<b>Total:</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

Allegheny County currently provides eight youth-dedicated PSH units at ACTION Housing's MyPlace program. MyPlace provides housing and intensive case management services to young people who have aged out of the foster care system in Allegheny County and are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Young adults can stay in the program for up to 24 months in a one-bedroom apartment in the Pittsburgh area. MyPlace links youth to education, employment opportunities, life skills development, and an array of community services. The goal is to enable the participants to ultimately live independent, self-sufficient lives.

To qualify for the MyPlace program, youth must be between the ages of 18 and 24 years, have aged out of the foster care system and be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and be committed to reaching employment, educational, and personal development goals. Youth must be referred to the program by agencies currently providing services to homeless and foster care youth.

## Housing Choice Vouchers

The CoC has an established homeless admission preference through the Housing Choice Voucher program with the two largest public housing authorities (PHAs) in the geographic area. Representatives from both PHAs sit on the CoC governance board (HAB), allowing for a close working relationship. The Homeless Admission Preferences were created five years ago and are an important part of the CoC Move On strategy. The CoC also collaborates with both PHAs on other voucher-type programs including Mainstream vouchers, Family Unification Program, and Fostering Youth to Independence vouchers. These preferences allow participants of PSH, RRH, and transitional programs that will require a housing subsidy to

maintain stability to move to the top of the HCV waiting list. The CoC makes referrals on an ongoing basis to these two housing authorities so that program participants can have access to affordable, subsidized housing options. These preferences have enabled the CoC to open the back door of the homeless system into permanent housing and create space in the system for newly identified homeless individuals and families to take their place.

### **Housing for Older Youth Involved in Child Welfare**

For youth ages 18 to 21 years that are still active in child welfare (or want to resume participation), DHS offers a selection of housing options.

- **Resumption Youth:** DHS contracts with Familylinks to reserve three beds in its Downtown Outreach Center and Shelter (DOCS) to provide emergency housing assistance and stabilization services to transition-age youth who may want to request that the courts resume jurisdiction or who are awaiting a court motion to place them in the care of child welfare.
- **College Youth:** DHS assists college-age youth in securing safe, affordable housing during college breaks or summer vacations. The program is unique in providing youth the opportunity to sign a lease, which begins the all-important process of establishing credit.
- **Older youth making a planned exit from child welfare care:** DHS has established a new pilot program that provides unsupervised independent living in an apartment building dedicated to housing for transition-age youth—with the frequent support and involvement of their caseworkers. Any former foster youth that becomes homeless has access to the CoC homeless system and can receive services through the DHS Independent Living program, including the comprehensive drop-in center, the 412 Youth Zone.

### **System Navigation and Service Coordination**

Allegheny County DHS offers several program models designed to streamline service coordination and support individuals in navigating human service systems. In addition to the 412 Youth Zone (described above), these include Housing Support and Services Coordination (a CoC program), the Youth Support Partner Unit (a DHS-wide initiative), and Independent Living (a program of the DHS Office of Children, Youth, and Families). These programs are not specifically focused on youth experiencing homelessness but could be replicated or expanded to serve homeless youth populations. Currently, youth experiencing homelessness can and do participate in these services if they meet program requirements. For example, any parenting youth who is living in a family shelter may participate in Housing Support and Services Coordination and young adults with past foster care involvement may participate in Independent Living programs.

### **Housing Support and Services Coordination (HSSC)**

In 2013, the CoC recognized the need for user-centered case management that would prevent families from having to work with multiple case managers during their homeless experience. Working closely with the HAB and service providers, a centralized Housing Support and

Services Coordinator (HSSC) model was created. The HSSC model provides each family with a dedicated DHS housing support and services coordinator, upon entry to shelter. The HSSC stays with the family, regardless of where their housing or supportive services originate. HSSC staff can provide broader support than just housing service linkages. More importantly, they continue to assist families through their transition into stable housing. The HSSC model has been fully adopted by our CoC and family shelters.

### **Youth Support Partner Unit**

The goals of the Youth Support Partners (YSP) program are to educate and empower youth about their role in the planning process for their future and to bring the voice of youth to the forefront during every phase of service development and provision to effect positive change for individuals and systems.

Youth Support Partners (YSP) are young adult professionals who have personal lived experience in some area of the human services or juvenile probation system. They share their insights with youth currently in the system, advocate for them and mentor them. Their personal lived experiences gives them credibility and lends to successful engagement of youth in planning and achieving success. This innovative approach of hiring alumni to work as peer mentors is unique to Allegheny County.

In addition to personal experience, YSPs take part in ongoing professional trainings to expand their expertise. In particular, all YSPs complete the Strength-based Family Worker Credential training which focuses on positive youth-and-family engagement. They are also trained on the service and support offerings of DHS, its contracted providers and other agencies and community resources. With a heavy emphasis on skill-building, coaching, training, supervising, and team-building, the YSP Unit focuses on preparing the YSPs to work with youth from various backgrounds and experiences, with a strength-based, culturally competent, positive, and youth-driven approach.

The value of Youth Support Partners has been noted by judges, human service professionals, parents, caregivers and youth. This is reflected in the growth of the YSP unit from four YSPs in 2008 to more than 40 in 2018. The YSP Unit is not part of the Allegheny County CoC, but YSPs are available to support youth who are involved in the homeless system as capacity permits.

# Appendix F: 2019 Youth-Dedicated Housing Gap Analysis

## System Gap Analysis

A gap analysis conducted by the Allegheny County DHS Office of Analysis, Technology and Planning in 2019 suggests that there is a current shortfall of approximately 92 youth-dedicated beds for RRH and over 150 for PSH. The analysis considered the demand for housing as indicated by the number of youth assessed with moderate or high service needs (Figure 4), the current supply of youth-dedicated units by project type, and the average turnover rate per unit of housing (as determined by the average youth length-of-stay in housing).

Figure 4: Demand for Youth-Dedicated Housing

		Moderate Service Needs (RRH/TH)			High Service Needs (PSH)		
		Youth	All Clients	Youth %	Youth	All Clients	Youth %
<b>Total Households Assessed/Referred (Jan – Dec 2018)</b>	Families with Children	126	471	27%	66	311	21%
	Singles/Adult Households	130	913	14%	90	616	15%
<b>Average Monthly Households Assessed/Referred (Jan – Dec 2018)</b>	Families with Children	8	39	21%	6	26	23%
	Singles/Adult Households	11	76	14%	8	51	16%

Figure 5: Demand-Supply-Turnover Analysis

CoC Program Type	Moderate Service Needs (RRH/TH)		High Service Needs (PSH)	
	Singles/Adult Households	Families with Children	Singles/Adult Households	Families with Children
Demand # Households assessed/referred in 2018	130	126	90	66
Supply # Youth-dedicated beds or units per program type	78 beds	5 units	8 units	0 units

Annual number of beds or units available	117 beds	7 units		
Determined by median length of stay (RRH/TH) or number of exits (PSH) in 2018	(turnover rate of 1.5 beds/year)	(turnover rate of 1.5 units/year)	3 units	0 units
Estimated additional beds or units needed (annual need – annual supply)/turnover rate	9 beds	79 units	87 units	66 units

The supply-demand analysis noted that these results related specifically to dedicated beds/units for youth subpopulations. Youth may access RRH and PSH programs for the general adult population; however, because the CoC’s Coordinated Entry prioritization process factors in chronicity, length-of-time homeless, and vulnerability (per the TAY-VI-SPDAT), youth have a harder time accessing PSH when chronic individuals are also on the wait list.

## Appendix G: YHDP Partners and Roles

Type of Stakeholder	Organization	CoC Member	Describe Collaboration	Demonstration Participation
Local Government Agency	Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS)	Yes	DHS is the integrated human service agency within the CoC. DHS is comprised of five program offices for Community Services (OCS), Child Welfare (CYF), Behavioral Health (OBH), Aging (AAA), and Intellectual Disability (OID) as well as three support offices that support the work of the program offices	Lead planning effort
CoC Homeless Program	DHS, Bureau of Homeless Services	Yes	The Bureau of Homeless Services is a Bureau within DHS and has been the CoC UFA/Collaborative Applicant/grant recipient for 18 years. BHS will provide leadership, data, and advice as the community develops its coordinated plan. If a grant is awarded, BHS will monitor it, develop standards for programs that will be funded, issue the RFP to expend such funds, and work with the community to ensure that they meet the needs of homeless youth outlined in the community plan.	Lead planning effort, function as UFA, administer any grant funds
Child Welfare Agency	DHS, Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF)	Yes	CYF is a program office within DHS. It will provide child welfare services, transition planning for foster youth, independent living services, and connections to other mainstream services to homeless youth and will also provide feedback and data to the guide the community plan. CYF has been providing such services for over 25 years.	Participate in planning effort, provide supportive services, provide Independent Living services

Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Agency	DHS, Office of Behavioral Health (OBH)	Yes	OBH is a program office within DHS. It will provide mental health and substance abuse services to the YHDP participants and will provide feedback and data to guide the community plan. OBH has providing these services for over 25 years	Participate in planning effort, provide supportive services
Youth Led Advisory Group	Youth Action Board (YAB)	Yes	The YAB will provide advice and leadership to guide the work of the community plan. The board has been doing this since January 2018.	The Youth Action Board leads the development of the Coordinated Community Plan vision; recommends specific actions and strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness; and serves in a leadership capacity throughout YHDP planning and implementation. Formal approval (in the form of a signed letter of support) from YAB is required for submission of the Coordinated Community Plan and YHDP project funding requests to HUD.



CoC/ESG Governing Body	Homeless Advisory Board (HAB)	Yes	A coalition of stakeholders engaged around homelessness has been active in Allegheny County since 1982, formalizing into the CoC in 1994. Since that time, the CoC has integrated HUD and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Programs with a wide breadth of stakeholders to carry out the planning necessary to effectively engaged in a community-wide effort to prevent and end homelessness.	As the governing body for the entire CoC, the HAB will have a governance role around the YHDP, providing community oversight, direction and support throughout the entire project. When applying for projects under the YHDP, existing CoC/ESG providers will be potential project providers, though that will be ultimately determined by the project needs and the competitive and open Request for Proposals process.
CoC Homeless Program	Allegheny Link	Yes	The Allegheny Link is more than 10 years old and is a bureau within DHS. It provides coordinated entry and connections to other mainstream services to homeless youth.	Provide a coordinated entry/ point of access for homeless youth, as well as feedback and data to the guide the community plan.
Local Government Agency	Office of the Mayor, City of Pittsburgh	Yes	The Office of the Mayor, City of Pittsburgh has provided leadership and support to CoC initiatives since 2014. The Office had a key role in our successful CoC effort which ended homelessness for veterans.	Participate in planning effort.
Local Government Agency	County Executive	Yes	The Allegheny County Executive's Office has provided leadership and support to CoC initiatives since 2014. The Office had a key role in our successful CoC effort which ended homelessness for veterans.	Provide emergency shelter and rapid re-housing to homeless youth

CoC Homeless Program	Alle-Kiski HOPE Center	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter services to victims of domestic violence and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Allies for Health and Well Being (formerly Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force)	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for rapid re-housing services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years. The organization also provides screening and testing for STDs, including HIV/AIDS, and educates the community on health for the LGBTQIA+ population	Provide rapid re-housing and supportive services to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Auberle	Yes	Auberle is a 501c(3) organization that has served youth in the CoC for over 60 years. Auberle holds contracts for rapid re-housing and emergency shelter and manages the 412 Youth Zone, the county's drop-in center for homeless youth and youth (formerly) in the child welfare system.	Participate in planning effort, provide supportive services, provide meeting space for YAB
CoC Homeless Program	Bethlehem Haven	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Center for Victims	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter and rapid re-housing services to victims of domestic violence and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter and rapid re-housing to homeless youth

CoC Homeless Program	Community Human Services	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for street outreach, homeless shelter, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide street outreach to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	East End Cooperative Ministry	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter and permanent supportive housing services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter and permanent housing to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Family Promise	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 10 years	Provide emergency shelter to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Human Trafficking Coalition	Yes	The organization provides services to survivors of human trafficking, including minors and youth. The CoC and partner have been working together for nearly 10 years to address the needs of this population.	Provide housing and supportive services to survivors of human trafficking
CoC Homeless Program	Light of Life	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for street outreach, homeless shelter, and permanent supportive housing services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide street outreach, emergency shelter, and permanent housing to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Northside Common Ministries	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for street outreach, homeless shelter, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter and affordable housing to homeless youth

CoC Homeless Program	Operation Safety Net	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for street outreach, homeless shelter, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide street outreach to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Salvation Army	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Women's Center and Shelter	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter services to victims of domestic violence and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter to homeless youth
CoC Homeless Program	Womenspace East	Yes	The organization is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for homeless shelter services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Provide emergency shelter to homeless youth
Community Development Corp	ACTION Housing	Yes	ACTION Housing is a 501c(3) organization that develops and manages affordable housing. AHI is also a provider of rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing for youth. They are active participants in the HAB and Homeless Youth Leadership Group and have been a leader in the community for over 40 years.	Participate in planning effort, provide housing
Faith-Based Organization	Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community	Yes	The organization is a privately funded, non-contracted, and faith-based service provider that provides meals and services to people living on the streets	Provide street outreach to homeless youth

Health Care	Division of Adolescent Medicine, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC	Yes	The Division of Adolescent Medicine of Children's Hospital has been a member of the Unaccompanied Youth Task Force for nearly five years. They specialize in medical services to the youth LGBTQIA+ community and bring expertise to the unique needs of this group to the Task Force	Participate in planning effort, provide medical care, provide services to LGBTQIA+ youth
Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Agencies	Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation	No	The Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation offers comprehensive training services in gender, sexuality and HIV care to better serve LGBTQIA+ clients and staff. Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation has agreed to serve on the YHDP Leadership Council and share expertise on homelessness among LGBTQIA+ youth.	Participate in planning effort
Institutions of Higher Education	Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education	No	The Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE) is a voluntary, multi-purpose consortium of the 10 accredited colleges and universities in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. PCHE leads an initiative focused on identifying and addressing students' basic needs at the collegiate level, with a focus on hunger and housing instability. PCEH has agreed to serve on the YHDP Leadership Council and share expertise on homelessness among college-enrolled youth.	Participate in planning effort
Juvenile Corrections	Juvenile Justice/ Probation	Yes	The Mission of Juvenile Probation is to reduce and prevent juvenile crime; promote and maintain safe communities; and improve the welfare of youth and families who are served by the Court. Juvenile Probation has been a member of the Youth Support Network since 2017.	Participate in planning effort

Landlord	Wood St Commons	Yes	The organization is a large, single-room occupancy building in downtown Pittsburgh that provides shelter, weekly and monthly rental apartments, and food to unaccompanied youth. Wood Street Commons has providing housing for over 50 years to low income residents of the city.	Participate in planning effort
Local Education Agency	Pittsburgh Public Schools	No	The Pittsburgh Public School District (PPS) is the largest of 43 school districts in Allegheny County and second largest in Pennsylvania. The District serves approximately 25,000 students in pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. As such, it has the highest number of youth identified as homeless. The PPS homeless liaison serves on the YHDP Leadership Council.	Participate in planning effort
Local Advocacy Organization	Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania	Yes	The Housing Alliance is 501c(3) organization that advocates for affordable housing and issues affecting people who are homeless across the state. They have been a member of the HAB in recent years and actively participate in many local initiatives, including the Homeless Youth Leadership Group and Unaccompanied Youth Task Force, over the last 10 years.	Participate in planning effort
Local Advocacy, Research and Philanthropic Organizations	KidsVoice	No	KidsVoice provides legal advocacy and support to current and former foster youth, ages 16 to 24 years, to obtain the life skills and opportunity necessary to transition to adulthood. KidsVoice staff work closely with the 412 Youth Zone and serve on the CoC Youth Homelessness Case Conferencing Team. KidsVoice has agreed to serve on the YHDP Leadership Council and share expertise on homelessness among transition-age youth.	Participate in planning effort

Local Advocacy, Research and Philanthropic Organizations	SisTers PGH	No	SisTers PGH is a transgender-centered drop-in space, resource provider and shelter transitioning program based in Pittsburgh, PA. SisTersPGH, Corp offers outreach, accurate transgender education, trans-inclusion training, advocacy, and emergency housing/shelter for transgender people of Pittsburgh. SisTers PGH serves on the YHDP Leadership Council and shares its expertise on the needs of transgender youth experiencing homelessness.	Participate in planning effort
Local Education Agency	Allegheny Intermediate Unit	Yes	The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) is part of Pennsylvania’s public education system and is one of 29 Intermediate Units across the state. AIU provides specialized educational services to Allegheny County’s 42 suburban school districts and five vocational/technical schools. It is responsible for compliance with the McKinney Vento Act and has been ensuring that the educational needs of homeless youth (including enrollment, transportation, and attendance) are being met since the passage of the Act.	Participate in planning effort, provide educational services and data on homeless youth

Local Education Agency	Homeless Children's Education Fund	Yes	<p>The Homeless Children's Education Fund (HCEF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1999 to support the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County. The mission of the Homeless Children's Education Fund (HCEF) is to advance the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness, guiding them to be productive, empowered citizens. As a national model for addressing the educational needs of unstably housed children and youth, HCEF leads a collaborative effort among regional partners by providing educational programs and services in Allegheny County and advocating for policy and system improvement. HCEF is an active participant in the Youth Support Network which was established over three years ago to address the needs of homeless youth through community collaboration. HCEF also has representation on the HAB.</p>	Participate in planning effort, provide educational services
Local Law Enforcement	Pittsburgh Police	Yes	<p>The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police is an active member of the HAB and Youth Leadership Group and was also instrumental in the development of the BigBurgh web application. They will continue to participate in the community planning efforts, as they have been doing as a HAB member for over 10 years.</p>	Participate in planning effort



Local Philanthropic Organization	Pittsburgh Foundation	Yes	The Pittsburgh Foundation works to improve the quality of life in the Pittsburgh region by evaluating and addressing community issues, promoting responsible philanthropy and connecting donors to the critical needs of the community. The Pittsburgh Foundation serves on the YHDP Leadership Council.	Participate in planning effort, provide financial support
Local Research Organization	ICF International	No	ICF has been advising the CoC and its Collaborative Applicant for five years on its implementation of best practices, including coordinated entry and housing first, and has also assisted in limited (20 hours) of technical assistance surrounding youth homelessness.	Participate in planning effort
Local Research Organization	Youth Collaboratory	No	The Youth Collaboratory works with communities on coordinated responses to preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness. The Collaboratory has been advising the CoC and sharing its resources for less than one year.	Participate in planning effort
Non-Profit Youth Organizations	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	No	The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) oversees 19 public libraries within the City of Pittsburgh. All of CLP's public service staff have received homelessness training and staff at select branches regularly collaborate with the 412 Youth Zone and community-based programs that serve youth experiencing homelessness. As a member of the YHDP Leadership Council, CLP has identified an interest in enhancing its informal role as a youth outreach and engagement partner.	Participate in planning effort

Non-Profit Youth Organizations	Gwen's Girls	No	Gwen's Girls is a community-based youth development organization with a mission to empower girls and young women to have productive lives through holistic, gender-specific programs, education, and experiences. Gwen's Girls has agreed to serve on the YHDP Leadership Council and share expertise on homelessness among girls and young women with a focus on racial equity and inclusion.	Participate in planning effort
Non-Profit Youth Organizations	Mentoring Partnership	No	The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern PA (TMP) helps children by delivering resources to mentoring programs throughout our region. TMP promotes the importance of quality mentoring; presents best practices and research; and delivers training, technical assistance and professional development for the staff and volunteers of local programs. TMP has agreed to serve on the YHDP Leadership Council and provide assistance to ensure YHDP programming aligns with best practices in youth engagement.	Participate in planning effort
Non-Profit Youth Organizations	YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh	No	YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh provides community programming with a focus on youth development at eight locations throughout the region. YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh has agreed to serve on the YHDP Leadership Council and shares its expertise on Positive Youth Development.	Participate in planning effort

Privately Funded Homeless Org	Proud Haven	Yes	Proud Haven is a 501c(3) that currently provides drop-in services to the LGBTQIA+ population and hopes to open a shelter or develop a host home program for this population in the coming years.	Participate in planning effort, provide LGBTQIA+ services and support
Privately Funded Homeless Org	True T PGH	No	True T PGH serves as a community platform for LGBTQ resource-sharing, queer arts, activism, and entertainment. True T offers Option-U is a trans-focused LGBTQIA+ emergency housing program that creates a safe space for individuals to obtain stable housing while achieving personal and professional goals.	Participate in planning effort
Public Housing Authority	Allegheny County Housing Authority	Yes	ACHA has been a provider of affordable housing to the community since the 1940s. ACHA has also been an active participant in the CoC for nearly 15 years and for the last five has provided homeless preference vouchers to formerly homeless families, including youth	Participate in planning effort, provide housing
Public Housing Authority	Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh	Yes	HACP has been a provider of affordable housing to the community since the 1940s. HACP has also been an active participant in the CoC for 10 years and for the last five has provided homeless preference vouchers to formerly homeless families, including youth	Participate in planning effort, provide housing
Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program	Familylinks	Yes	Familylinks is a contracted provider in the CoC responsible for street outreach and homeless shelter services and has been a CoC member providing these services for over 20 years	Participate in planning effort, provide street outreach, emergency shelter, and transitional housing

Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Providers	Valley Youth House	No	Valley Youth House (VYH) provides programs a wide range of services for youth and families including street outreach, prevention, family preservation, behavioral health, emergency shelter, independent living and permanency. VHY is based in eastern PA and recently expanded to southwestern PA where it operates a new host home program in three counties adjacent to Allegheny County. VYH serves on the YHDP Leadership Council and shares expertise on alternative housing models for youth experiencing homelessness.	Participate in planning effort
WIOA Board and Employment Agencies	Partner4Work (Allegheny County Workforce Development Board)	Yes	Partner4Work has participated in the CoC's Employment and Training subcommittee of the HAB for nearly 10 years. This group leads the public workforce development system and partners with DHS on multiple projects, including an initiative to better connect individuals experiencing homelessness with employment.	Participate in planning effort, provide employment services
WIOA Board and Employment Agencies	Community College of Allegheny County	No	The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) offers nearly 160 degree, certificate, diploma and transfer programs, noncredit and workforce development courses across four campuses and five neighborhood centers, as well as other off-site locations. CCAC recently established a resource navigator unit to provide additional support to students with identified needs including housing instability. CCAC is a member of the YHDP Leadership Council and shares its expertise in post-secondary education and workforce development.	Participate in planning effort