

Creating stable, permanent housing solutions for local youth

Ending youth homelessness in Allegheny County may seem like a daunting goal, but the Department of Human Services (DHS) is seeking to do just that.

At any point in time, approximately 50 youth in Allegheny County between the ages of 18 and 24 fit the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness, meaning they live on the street, in emergency shelters or in transitional housing programs. To improve outcomes, DHS is working to meet federal benchmarks and criteria for ending youth homelessness by the year 2020. These guidelines seek to create a systemic response to prevent homelessness whenever possible, and, in instances that housing crises cannot be avoided, the guidelines specify that they should be brief and non-recurring.

DHS held a kickoff event on August 30 to garner community support for this effort and to create partnerships to ensure that its goals are met. Attendees included representatives from the Mayor's and County Executive's offices, advocates and non-profit organizations that provide services to youth in Allegheny County.

"Youth experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to trauma, victimization and exploitation," said Chuck Keenan, administrator in the Bureau of Homeless and Housing Services. "We want to work with community members to come up with smarter, faster and more effective solutions to this problem so local youth can find – and stay in – permanent housing as quickly as possible."

In 2017, Allegheny County met an earlier goal of creating a systemic way to prevent and quickly respond to homelessness for veterans in Allegheny County. DHS seeks to replicate some of these best practices in the efforts to end youth homelessness.

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