

SOLID FOUNDATIONS DC:

Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness

District of Columbia Interagency
Council on Homelessness
Issued: May 2017





TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Letter from Mayor Muriel Bowser</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Chapter 1: Understanding Youth Homelessness.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Chapter 2: Comprehensive Plan Overview</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Chapter 3: System Transformation</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Chapter 4: Getting from Here to There: Key Strategies & Transition Planning.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Appendices</i>	<i>TBD</i>

**Appendices are under final review and will be added to this document at a later date.*



LETTER FROM MAYOR MURIEL BOWSER

Coming into office, I made ending homelessness in Washington, DC a top priority. In early 2015, my Administration released the Homeward DC plan – a roadmap for transforming an outdated homeless services system into an effective crisis response system that does more to prevent homelessness and ensure that those who do experience homelessness have safe shelter and knowledgeable support.

Recent data shows that our efforts to end homelessness are working – between 2016 and 2017, homelessness in Washington, DC decreased by 10.5 percent. However, we know there is more work to do. In particular, we know that there is more we can do to end youth homelessness. Youth experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable to harm and exploitation. The trauma and instability that results from homelessness can impact a young person’s development and have long-lasting effects on their well-being.

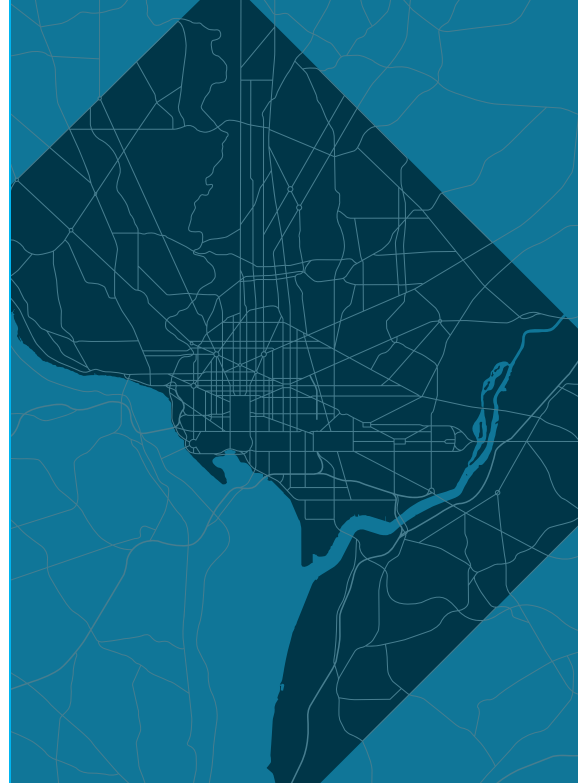
To better help young Washingtonians experiencing homelessness, we need to fully understand the challenges they face and the supports they need. So, in the fall of 2015, with the help of multiple District agencies and community providers, we initiated an annual census of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Though not yet required by the federal government, Washington, DC is one of the first cities to begin this practice, and the two years of youth census data collected have provided a strong foundation for this plan.

Real solutions to youth homelessness must go beyond connecting young people to permanent housing. The services and supports must also include a focus on reducing the impacts of trauma, supporting physical and emotion health, ensuring that vulnerable youth develop healthy, long-lasting relationships, and building the skills necessary for adulthood and independent living.

The health, safety, and long-term success of our youth will have an impact on our entire community, and our DC values require that we continue finding ways to make homelessness in the District of Columbia rare, brief, and non-recurring. By working together, we can build integrated systems that provide the support our young people need to stay healthy and succeed in school and life.

Sincerely,

Muriel Bowser
Mayor



INTRODUCTION

Unaccompanied youth homelessness – individuals under age 25 experiencing homelessness separate from their family unit – remains a persistent challenge across the country and here in the District of Columbia.¹ Every night, across America, thousands of young people go to sleep without the safety, stability, or support of a home and their family. In contrast to common perceptions, homelessness is not just an adult phenomenon. However, youth homelessness often manifests differently than it does for adults. Because of stigma, a lack of developmentally appropriate and culturally competent programming, and other policy and institutional barriers, youth experiencing homelessness often remain hidden to the public eye. Youth often resort to “couch surfing” with friends and sometimes strangers, engaging in risky behaviors just to survive. Many of these youth have experienced significant trauma – both prior to and after becoming homeless.

Without a safe, stable space to call home, many youth are unable to master critical skills crucial to development, thereby limiting their ability to successfully transition to adulthood. For this reason, addressing homelessness among youth requires more than just stabilizing the immediate crisis and providing a quick connection to permanent housing. It also requires helping youth to develop healthy relationships with trusted adults, addressing emerging physical and behavioral health conditions, building independent living skills and confidence, and helping youth get on a path towards economic self-sufficiency. Science has taught us much about youth brain development and the importance of stability and support as youth move through this critical developmental stage. The long-term costs to youth who miss this developmental window are great, as are the long-term costs to society.² Without appropriate support, today’s homeless youth are at risk of becoming tomorrow’s chronically homeless adults.³

¹ Throughout this plan, the term “youth” is used generally to include anyone under age 25 (i.e., minors under age 18 as well as transition age youth ages 18 to 24). However, there are very different considerations involved in serving these two groups, and the program interventions identified in Chapter 3 highlight this distinction. For more information on definitions used in this plan, see Appendix 1: Definitions.

² One study estimated that the cost of not providing services to high-risk youth ranged from \$470K to \$3M per youth. See: Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services (2009). *Stronger Youth and Smarter Communities: An Analysis of Portland’s Runaway and Homeless Youth Services*. Portland, OR: Portland State University. <http://commons.pacificu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=casfac>

³ Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual or family household that is sleeping on the streets or in shelter, where the individual or head of household has a disabling condition, and has been homeless for a year or longer, or has had four or more episodes within the past three years. For more information, see Appendix 1: Definitions.

Ending Youth Homelessness in the District

In March 2015, under the leadership of Mayor Muriel Bowser, the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) released *Homeward DC* – a data-driven strategic plan intended to guide the City’s efforts to transform the District’s homeless services system into an effective crisis response system focused on making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. The plan focused on the resources and strategies needed to serve single adults and family households. The system modeling conducted as part of the planning process did not include an emphasis on unaccompanied youth because – like many cities across the country – the District did not have the data needed to perform this type of analysis for the youth system. Further, at the time, the youth “system” looked and functioned less like a coordinated system of care than a handful of independent, loosely affiliated programs doing their best to meet overwhelming need with very few resources.

Consequently, the ICH began by launching an effort to develop a coordinated entry system (CES) for youth.⁷ The benefits of starting with coordinated entry were viewed as threefold:

1. Design and implementation of a CES for youth would require community partners to come together to work on a tangible goal, thereby developing critical interagency relationships needed to support our system-building work in the years ahead;
2. Having a CES would ensure we were using our limited shelter and transitional housing resources strategically to serve our most vulnerable youth (i.e., youth with no safe place to stay, as opposed to youth with family conflict who could safely return home with some services/assistance); and
3. By reducing/eliminating separate waitlists, implementation of a CES would improve our understanding about the number, characteristics, and circumstances of youth seeking assistance, including the number turned away because shelter/housing was not available for them when they needed it.

Around the same time the ICH began working with community stakeholders on a CES, the DC Council passed two important pieces of legislation: 1) the LGBTQ Homeless Youth Reform Amendment Act of 2014, and 2) the End Youth Homelessness Act of 2014. In addition to adding much needed financial

resources to serve unaccompanied youth, both bills supported the community’s efforts to improve data collection. The LGBTQ legislation required improved data collection on this subpopulation, while the End Youth Homelessness Act required (and established funding for) an annual youth homelessness census. Importantly, the latter also required the ICH to develop a Comprehensive Plan to End Youth Homelessness (CPEYH).

Learning from the Past: Risk of Chronic Homelessness Among Specific Cohorts

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania have found evidence of a unique aging trend among homeless single adults.⁴ In reviewing Census data from the last three decades, the researchers found that the bulk of the single adult homeless population is comprised of persons born during the latter part of the baby boom era, and that their risk for homelessness has increased as they have aged. Specifically, the age group in the population facing the highest risk of homelessness was 34-36 in 1990, 37-42 in 2000, and 49-51 in 2010. The researchers offer a few different theories related to the disproportionate housing instability and homelessness among adults from the late baby boom cohort. First, economic recessions in the late 1970s and early 1980s meant that late baby boomers came of age in a period characterized by depressed wages for unskilled workers, high rates of youth and young adult unemployment, and rising rental costs. The researchers also note that participation in the illicit drug trade, particularly in the context of the proliferation of crack cocaine – and the associated risks of addiction and involvement in the criminal justice system, may have also contributed to problems for this cohort. Finally, the authors note that social welfare expenditures were under pressure throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as anti-welfare sentiments became politically popular.⁵

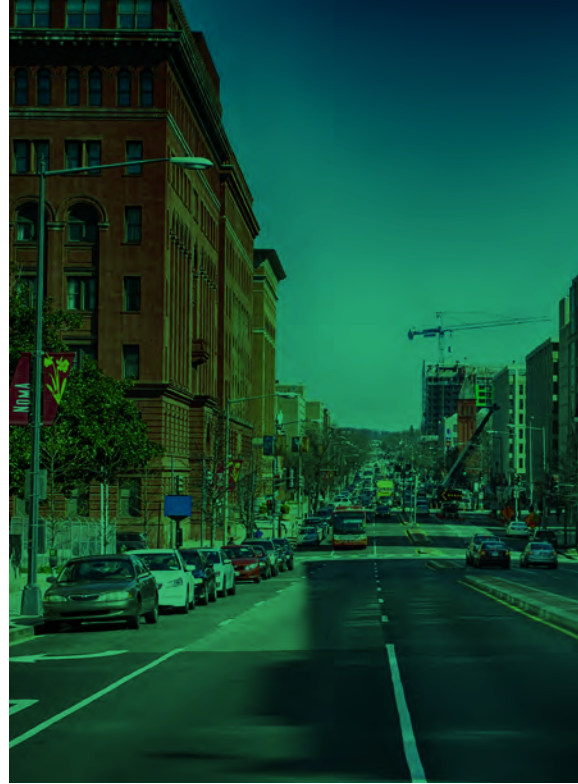
Of notable concern, the research provides some indication that a new cohort among young single adults may be emerging. While the data are not conclusive, the researchers caution that the “numbers bear watching in the coming years, as many in this cohort face increased labor market problems associated with the recent, deep recession and resulting high youth unemployment.”⁶

⁴ Culhane, Dennis, Stephen Metraux, Thomas Byrne, Magi Stino, and Jay Bainbridge (January 2013). *The Age Structure of Contemporary Homelessness: Evidence for Public Policy*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania. http://works.bepress.com/dennis_culhane/124.

⁵ *Ibid*, pages 10-11.

⁶ *Ibid*, page 13.

⁷ Per the Federal Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, passed in 2009, HUD has required that all Continuums of Care receiving Federal homeless assistance resources establish and operate a coordinated entry system (also referred to as coordinated intake or coordinated assessment). CES is a client-centered process that streamlines access to the most appropriate intervention for each individual or family experiencing homelessness. According to the HUD Continuum of Care regulations, a CES “is designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals...it must cover a specific geographic area, be easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services, be well advertised, and include a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool.” In addition to capturing client-specific information and facilitating real-time housing matches/referrals, the data collection and communication platform provides a portal to inform local policy and resource decisions. Like most communities across the country, the District began implementation of CES for single adults and family households; the District was one of the first communities across the country to begin work on a tailored CES for unaccompanied youth.



The Comprehensive Plan to End Youth Homelessness

As we fast-forward to today, the CPEYH builds on the efforts of the past two years by establishing a roadmap for building an effective system of care for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. As our data improves, our understanding of youth homelessness will continue to evolve. Likewise, our plan must also evolve. Over time, we will need to refine the modeling, and we will add or modify strategies as needed. However, this plan provides an immediate framework for advancing focused and coordinated work to prevent and end homelessness among youth. The plan is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Understanding Youth Homelessness provides key context on youth homelessness, including how we define and measure youth homelessness, what we know about the causes and costs of youth homelessness, and how trends in the District compare to trends across the nation;

Chapter 2: Comprehensive Plan Overview describes the plan's vision and goals, the principles we will use to guide our efforts in the coming years, and building blocks of the plan;

Chapter 3: System Transformation explains the results of the modeling completed as part of the strategic planning process. Modeling serves as a planning tool to help us estimate the types and number of different interventions required for our system (on average) to respond to the needs of young people experiencing homeless each year; and,

Chapter 4: Getting from Here to There: Key Strategies & Transition Planning highlights the strategies we will need to undertake in the coming years to optimize the investments we make in the system.

CHAPTER 1. UNDERSTANDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The causes of youth homelessness are many, and the trends nationally are very much mirrored by the experiences of youth in the District. This chapter establishes a foundation for the District's Comprehensive Plan to End Youth Homelessness (CPEYH) by exploring the causes and consequences of youth homelessness, based on national research, as well as local data.

Defining and Measuring Youth Homelessness

Before we examine causes and prevalence, however, it is important to discuss how we define and measure youth homelessness.

What Do We Mean By Unaccompanied Youth?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has defined an unaccompanied youth to be someone under 25 years of age who is unaccompanied by a parent, guardian, or spouse. Parenting youth under 25 years of age who have their children with them are also considered unaccompanied. Sometimes an additional distinction is made between minors under the age of 18 and transition age youth ages of 18 to 24 (+364 days).

How Does the Federal Government Define Homelessness?

Homelessness, imminent risk of homelessness, and housing insecurity are defined differently by different Federal agencies and in local law. The primary definitions relevant to this plan come from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

HUD's definition includes multiple different categories for the purpose of determining eligibility for HUD-funded homeless assistance and homelessness prevention programs (see text box below). Eligibility for HUD homeless assistance programming – and reporting to HUD on homeless prevalence in the community – centers on persons in the first category. HUD defines "literal homelessness" as a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including persons residing in a shelter or transitional housing program, persons sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, and persons residing in an institution (such as a jail or hospital) who were residing in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation prior to entry into the institution.

The ED homeless definition, created for the purpose of ensuring youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children, also focuses on persons who "lack a fixed, regular nighttime residence," but defines this phrase more broadly than HUD. Like HUD, they include youth in shelters and places not meant for human habitation, but they also include youth sharing the homes of others, in substandard housing, in trailer parks, etc.

Brain Research and our Understanding of Youth Development

This expanded definition of youth (up to age 25) is based on a growing body of research on brain development over the past two decades. Research has confirmed that although brain maturation occurs primarily during adolescence due to the surge of hormones associated with puberty, development and maturation of the prefrontal cortex is not fully accomplished until age 25. Notably, the prefrontal cortex controls executive functioning – including critical abilities such as determining good and bad, same and different, future consequences of current activities, predicting outcomes, and social "control" (the ability to suppress urges that, if not suppressed, could lead to socially unacceptable outcomes).⁸

⁸ Mariam Arain et al. Maturation of the Adolescent Brain. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment* 9 (April 2013): 449 – 461. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3621648/>

Given the different missions of these agencies, these different definitions make sense. HUD needs to target its limited housing assistance resources to those with the most severe needs, while ED needs to ensure all youth – regardless of their housing situation – have access to a quality education. However, differing definitions make it difficult to achieve a consistent count of youth who experience homelessness each year.

Defining Youth Homelessness in this Plan

For the purpose of this plan, the ICH uses the HUD definition. The modeling described in Chapter 3 focuses on Category 1 (youth residing in shelter or places not meant for human habitation, also referred to by HUD as “literally homeless”) and Category 3 (unaccompanied youth who have moved two or more times in the last 60 days, also referred to as “housing insecure”).¹¹ In reality, there is not a bright line between these two groups. A youth might be staying with a friend one night, on the street the next night, and with a different friend the third night. In other words, whether a youth is counted as “literally homeless” or “housing insecure” may depend only on the night the survey is conducted. For this reason, the ICH felt it was critical to account for the “housing insecure” group in this plan.

With regard to how youth are treated for the purposes of resource planning, the modeling in the CPEYH accounts for unaccompanied individuals under age 25 without children of their own.¹² Because parenting youth under age 25 make up such a significant proportion of the households in our family system (approximately 45% at the time the Homeward DC plan was developed), we chose to include these households in Homeward DC to ensure we were adequately planning for the resources needed within the family system.

It is important to note that all families entering the District’s homeless services system have access to a private room or apartment-style shelter (unlike the congregate setting for single adults), so accounting for this subpopulation in the youth model – versus the family system model – ultimately would not change the type or amount of facilities needed for this population. Therefore, youth-headed family households will continue to be accounted for in the Homeward DC plan for resource planning purposes, though it will be important that we tailor the service strategies used for these young families to be more developmentally appropriate and aligned with the vision set forth in the CPEYH.



U.S. Department of Education – Defining Homelessness¹⁰

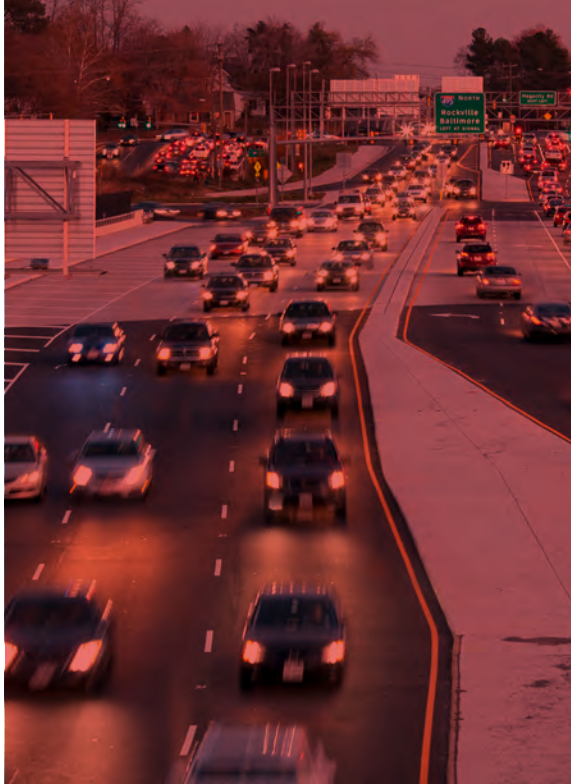
The U.S. Department of Education defines “homeless children and youth” as youth who “lack a fixed, regular nighttime residence,” including:

1. Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
2. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
3. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (1) through (3).

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html>

¹¹ Historically, the homeless services system has not tracked youth fleeing violence in the household (Category 4) as a separate category. Accordingly, these youth are already reflected in the literally homeless or housing insecure numbers described in this plan. Category 2 (youth leaseholders facing eviction) is also not a population we currently see in the youth homeless services system. Any youth in this category would be eligible for homelessness prevention assistance, but did not impact the data analysis or modeling for this plan.

¹² Individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 were originally included in the modeling done for the adult system in Homeward DC. However, acknowledging the unique developmental needs of this group, the intent was to remove this group from the adult model during the annual update to the plan once the youth plan was developed. Although only a small percentage of the overall adult system, this subpopulation represents the majority of individuals covered by the CPEYH.



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Defining Homelessness⁹

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development uses the following definitions for the purposes of determining eligibility for different homeless assistance programs.

- 1. Literally Homeless.** A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including: i) persons sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., cars, parks, abandoned buildings), ii) persons living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs); and iii) persons exiting an institution such as a jail or hospital, where the individual resided for 90 days or less, and resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering the institution.
- 2. Imminent Risk of Homelessness.** A person who faces imminent (within the next 14 days) eviction, has no subsequent residence identified, and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- 3. Homeless under other Federal Statutes.** An unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age who meets the homeless definition under another federal statute and who has not had a lease or occupancy agreement in the last 60 days, has moved two or more times in the last 60 days, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of special needs or barriers.
- 4. Fleeing Domestic Violence.** A person who is: fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence that has taken place in the person's primary nighttime residence or has made the person afraid to return to his/her primary nighttime residence; has no other residence; and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

⁹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1928/hearth-defining-homeless-final-rule/>

YOUTH STORY



They really helped me. They made me feel safe.

I ran away to be with my boyfriend. I went to the Monday night drop-in center, [where] I met Ms. Pam and I really liked her. I was nervous at first but she made me feel welcome. Sasha Bruce told me they have a program here where we can get a shower, get something to eat, wash our clothes, do creative stuff, and do job applications. I felt welcome. I liked it here. They really helped me. They made me feel safe.

Then I found out I was pregnant. They helped me through that with housing, because I'd been sleeping in an abandoned house at the time. They got me into Elizabeth House for pregnant moms. They helped me get back in school, and I'm in school now.

I lost my baby because I was not healthy at the time. And Sasha Bruce is the only place I knew where anybody would help me.

Right now, I'm getting my GED. I'm taking three classes. Hopefully I can graduate in June—hopefully! I'd like to be a motivational speaker and help people who were adopted like me.

I think the thing we need most is shelter for kids at night. During the winter, it's cold. It's cold. It's like, if you're walking the streets, you'd have to break into people's cars or break into abandoned houses just to go to sleep. They give us jackets and coats, but a place to go at night would make the biggest difference.

Measuring Youth Homelessness: National Data Sources

Unlike single adult and family homelessness, relatively little is still known about youth homelessness in America. While there are evaluations of programs to assist homeless youth, there is very little research comparing interventions, and none examining how different interventions address the issues of the different subpopulations.

We also do not have strong, consistent data on the prevalence or characteristics of youth homelessness, in part because we do not have a common way to define or count youth homelessness. Traditionally, HUD requires communities that receive Federal homeless assistance to capture data in two ways:

- 1. Point in Time (PIT) Count:** The annual PIT Count is conducted every January in communities across the nation in order to provide a comprehensive count of persons who are unsheltered and those residing in emergency shelter or transitional housing on a single night in January. The PIT Count excludes those who are doubled-up or unstably housed and is meant to provide a snapshot that allows the communities (and the nation as a whole) to assess changes over time.
- 2. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data:** HMIS is a client-level database that allows communities to track utilization of programs and services within the homeless services system, including client outcomes, project performance, and overall system usage. HMIS allows communities to produce an unduplicated count of the number of individuals and families that experience homelessness throughout the year. Data collected through the HMIS also provides context related to where someone was staying prior to becoming homeless, what types of programs and services they use, length of time spent in a given program, and their destination at the time of program exit.

In February 2013, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released the Framework to End Youth Homelessness,¹³ which focused on strategies to collect more and better data, and to build capacity for service delivery with a new intervention model focused on understanding risk and protective factors. Later that year, for the first time, HUD called for communities to conduct a youth-inclusive PIT count. As we have seen in recent years, however, the PIT Count is not very accurate for youth, since many communities do not have adequate shelter capacity or developmental competency for serving youth, and youth are more likely to couch surf (and otherwise remain hidden) than sleep on the street.

With regard to Federal administrative data systems, the Federal government previously required homeless service providers to input data into two information systems depending on which Department provided funding to a program. HUD grantees were required to input data into a locally operated Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), while the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) required its youth homelessness providers to input data into its Runaway and Homeless Youth Management and Information System (RHYMIS). Although HUD funds can be used to serve youth, they are predominantly targeted towards single adults and families. As a result, youth across the country were not reliably included in the data collected via HMIS. In contrast, while RHYMIS had an exclusive focus on youth, it was focused on measuring program outputs and was not universally able to de-duplicate individuals to assess population size.

With the support of the USICH, HUD and HHS have worked on systems integration. HMIS was expanded to include all Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program measures, and beginning in April 2015, all RHY grantees were expected to begin entering client-level data into RHY-HMIS. While this represents significant progress, these databases still only capture data on those youth receiving services by HUD- and HHS-funded programs (i.e., they often do not capture data on turnaways or unmet need).

Many communities around the country, including the District, have begun to supplement these data sources with a youth-specific census, using a methodology more appropriate for identifying and counting unaccompanied youth experiencing literal homelessness and housing instability.

National Trends, Causes, and Consequences of Youth Homelessness

As discussed, there are currently no solid estimates on the number of youth under age 25 that experience homelessness each year. The best available data, HUD's 2015 PIT Count, found that there were 36,907 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness at a single point in time last year – 4,667 of which were minors (under age 18), and 32,240 of which were transition age youth (age 18-24). Just over 17,000 of these youth were unsheltered.¹⁴ Again, however, we know this is an undercount because so many youth who experience homelessness are in doubled-up situations and missed during the night of the count. The 2015 figure represented an increase over previous years, but it's difficult to discern how much of the increase is from improved data collection and how much represents an actual increase in homelessness among youth.

¹³ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness. February 2013. Accessed at: <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/framework-for-ending-youth-homelessness>

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD 2015 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations. Accessed at: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_NatTerrDC_2015.pdf



While we have work to do to improve our understanding of the prevalence of youth homelessness and how it increases or decreases over time, we do have a stronger understanding of what triggers homelessness among youth. The National Network for Youth, in a summary of research on the characteristics of youth homelessness,¹⁵ has determined that there are four main causes:

1. Family instability, including child abuse and/or neglect, domestic violence, parental substance abuse, and family conflict – including conflict over sexual orientation or gender identity. Across various studies, the rates of sexual abuse among homeless youth range from 17% to 35%, and rates of physical abuse and neglect range from 40% to 60%.¹⁶
2. System involvement, including with the child welfare system, where a high percentage of youth age out of foster care without a strong support network in place and end up homeless, and with the juvenile justice system, where a high percentage of youth are released from incarceration only to become homeless.

3. Residential instability, usually due to economic issues. Youth may become homeless with their families but may be forced to separate because of shelter, transitional housing, or child welfare policies.¹⁷ In other cases, households may ask youth to leave at age 18 because of a lack of financial resources to support them or a cultural expectation that children will leave the family home at age 18.
4. Extreme disconnection from education, employment, and support networks, often resulting from one or more of the situations mentioned above.

While the causes of homelessness may vary, the prevalence of acute and chronic trauma prior to becoming homeless is a common theme across all subpopulations. These early traumatic experiences often contribute to vulnerabilities, and are often compounded once on the streets through exposure to community violence and victimization by predatory adults.

¹⁵ National Network for Youth. What Works to End Youth Homelessness? March 2015. Accessed at: <https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-What-Works-to-End-Youth-Homlessness.pdf>

¹⁶ National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Culture and Trauma Brief: Trauma Among Homeless Youth. 2007. Accessed at: http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/culture_and_trauma_brief_v2n1_HomelessYouth.pdf

¹⁷ Because of the prevalence of domestic violence among women experiencing homelessness, some family shelter and transitional housing programs throughout the country do not allow men in the facility, including adolescent boys. This, of course, puts families in search of shelter in a terrible position. Parents must choose between separating in order to access shelter, or staying together outdoors. This situation does not occur in the District of Columbia, where the right to shelter provisions in the Homeless Services Reform Act protect a family's ability to remain together.

Populations in Focus

Risk of homelessness increases for youth who are involved with juvenile justice systems or who have certain characteristics associated with vulnerability and/or housing insecurity. Many youth experiencing homelessness fit into more than one of the following subpopulations.

LGBTQ Youth

Nationally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth account for 30% to 40% of all youth experiencing homelessness but only 7% of the national youth population.¹⁸ In DC, 17% of homeless youth self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning, while 7% self-identify as transgender.¹⁹ LGBTQ youth are most likely to become homeless because of family conflict and rejection. While experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ youth are at greater risk of victimization for sexual exploitation and trafficking, sexually transmitted diseases, and developing mental health problems, including suicidal ideation and attempts.

Child Welfare System Involved Youth

Youth aging out of foster care have high rates of homelessness and housing instability. In some jurisdictions, up to 36% of youth who transitioned out of foster care reported at least one episode of homelessness.²⁰ In DC, 24% of homeless youth report past involvement with the child welfare system, while 6% cite aging out of foster care as the primary cause of their homelessness.²¹

Justice System Involved Youth

Youth who have run away or been homeless are involved in juvenile justice systems at high rates. Nationally, 6% of youth in Basic Center Programs (aged 18 and under) and 9% of youth in Transitional Living Programs (ages 16 through 22) were involved in juvenile justice systems.²² In DC, 19% of homeless youth report involvement with the juvenile justice system.²³ Running away is sometimes regarded as a status offense, which can directly lead to involvement in the juvenile justice system. Youth experiencing homelessness also report engaging in a variety of high-risk and illegal behaviors to

survive, such as theft, property offenses, drug possession/use/distribution, and prostitution, which can ultimately lead to arrest and justice system involvement. While homelessness is a risk factor for justice system involvement, being involved in the justice system is also a risk factor for homelessness. Justice-involved youth may be returning to communities and home settings that are unstable, and youth may lack the education or job skills to maintain employment necessary to achieve stability. In addition, youth may face barriers to housing because of their conviction or adjudication.

Sex Trafficked Youth

Young people often flee abuse and violence at home, but are exposed to further sexual victimization and human trafficking once on the street. Research has shown that 34% of youth reported sexual abuse before they left their homes, while 80% of runaway and homeless girls reported having ever been sexually or physically abused.²⁴ One quarter of youth living on the street and 10% of those in shelters have reported being forced to have “survival sex” in exchange for shelter, food, or money.²⁵ If the youth has already been the victim of sexual abuse, it increases the odds of the youth engaging in survival sex. In DC, 13% of homeless youth reported having transactional sex.²⁶

Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Being undocumented and/or non-English speaking increases the risk of homelessness. As individuals flee their home countries to escape widespread poverty, violence, and persecution, families are often separated. Once arriving in America, exploitation of workers and unequal pay is commonplace. Further, immigrants often have limited or no access to services and benefits – either because they are not eligible, because they are unable to access culturally appropriate services, or because they are reluctant to seek assistance for fear of deportation. Lack of a social network only exacerbates these problems.

¹⁸ The Williams Institute, *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless* (July 2012). Accessed at: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf>

¹⁹ UDC Homeless Youth Census Results (2016).

²⁰ Chapin Hall, *Predictors of Homelessness during the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood* (2016). Accessed at: <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/inside/predictors-homelessness-during-transition-foster-care-adulthood>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Fernandes-Alcantara, Adrienne L., *Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs*, Congressional Research Office (2016). Available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33785.pdf>.

²³ DC Homeless Youth Census Results (2016).

²⁴ Molnar, B., Shade, S., Kral, A., Booth, R., & Watters, J. (1998). Suicidal Behavior and Sexual/Physical Abuse Among Street Youth. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 213-222.

²⁵ Jody M. Greene, Susan T. Ennett, & Christopher L. Ringwalt, Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth, 89 *Am. J. Pub. Health* 1406, 1408 (1999). Accessed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1508758/pdf/amjph00009-0102.pdf>

²⁶ DC Homeless Youth Census Results (2016).



The Consequences of Youth Homelessness

Homelessness can have long-term impacts on a youth's physical and mental health and economic well-being. Without effective programs to help youth become independent and self-sufficient, they are at risk of repeated episodes of homelessness – becoming tomorrow's chronically homeless population. Youth who are homeless often have poor educational outcomes, physical and mental health problems, and increased risk of involvement in criminal activity. Youth experiencing homelessness have:

- Increased likelihood of having to repeat a grade in high school – twice as high as housed youth.²⁸
- Increased risk of not completing high school; studies have found only 20% to 30% of youth experiencing homelessness graduate from high school.²⁹
- Increased unprotected sexual activity, increasing risk of pregnancy and exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.³⁰
- Higher rates of substance abuse with an estimated 70% to 90% of youth experiencing homelessness using one or more substances.³¹
- High levels of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress, as well as increased rates of suicidal ideation, attempts, and completed suicides and earlier initiation of sexual activity (2-3 years earlier than youth in stable housing).^{32, 33}
- Committed illegal acts for survival, including breaking into abandoned buildings, stealing, or dealing drugs.³⁴
- Increased likelihood of becoming victims of crime, including rape, physical and sexual assault, and robbery. Youth experiencing homelessness are 2-3 times more likely to be victims of rape and sexual assault than youth in the general population.³⁵

Youth with Behavioral Health Needs

Behavioral health issues are strong indicators for risk of homelessness and can result in long-term effects on youth, including risk for chronic homelessness as an adult. High percentages of youth that experience homelessness have traumatic family experiences (e.g., sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, rejection), which may trigger mental health issues and/or substance use as a way to cope or self-medicate. Additionally, young adulthood is in the time when more severe mental health illnesses emerge. Roughly half of all lifetime mental disorders in most studies start by the mid teens, and three fourths by the mid 20s.²⁷ Mental health disorders can be difficult to diagnose and catch early, because first signs – including a change of friends, a drop in grades, sleep problems, and irritability – are behaviors that are common among teens. Particularly for families living in economically stressed conditions, youth with emerging mental health disorders may not get the support needed, leading to family conflict and even family rejection.

²⁷ Ronald C. Kessler, PhD, G. Paul Amminger, MD, Sergio Aguilar Gaxiola, MD, PhD, Jordi Alonso, MD, Sing Lee, MD, and T. Bedirhan Ustun, MD. Age of Onset of Mental Disorders: A Review of the Literature. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*. 2007 Jul; 20(4): 359–364. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1925038/>

²⁸ Edidin, Jennifer P., Zoe Ganim, Scott J. Hunter, Niranjana S. Karnik (November 2011). The Mental and Physical Health of Homeless Youth: A Literature Review. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*. 43(3):354-375. Accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51837166_The_Mental_and_Physical_Health_of_Homeless_Youth_A_Literature_Review

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Healthline (December 2014). Accessed at: <http://www.healthline.com/health-news/meet-the-new-face-of-homelessness-children-and-teens-121114>

³¹ Edidin, Jennifer P., Zoe Ganim, Scott J. Hunter, Niranjana S. Karnik (November 2011). The Mental and Physical Health of Homeless Youth: A Literature Review. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*. 43(3):354-375. Accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51837166_The_Mental_and_Physical_Health_of_Homeless_Youth_A_Literature_Review

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ National Network for Youth. Consequences of Youth Homelessness. Not dated. Accessed at: https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf

³⁵ Ibid

The Consequences of Youth Homelessness: Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness

According to U.S. Department of Education (ED) data, there were approximately 1.3 million homeless students enrolled in Pre-K-12 schools in the 2013-2014 school year; approximately 3,772 of these students attended schools in the District.³⁶

This figure – based on the ED definition of homelessness – includes children and youth experiencing homelessness by themselves as well as those experiencing homelessness as part of a family unit. These numbers continue to increase every year, and without systematic and comprehensive solutions to address affordable housing, the trend is likely to continue.

Studies show that homelessness has harmful effects on youth's physical and emotional wellbeing and on academic performance. Homelessness contributes to higher suspension rates, school turnover, truancy, and expulsions.³⁷ Youth experiencing homelessness frequently transfer schools and, as a result, are more likely to have mental health problems, poor attendance, and poor academic outcomes than other students who remain in stable school placements.³⁸ Youth who change schools typically need 6-18 months to regain a sense of equilibrium, security, and control, so those experiencing homelessness come to school with a deficit in background knowledge and need additional supports, services, and resources in order to put them on an equitable footing as their stably-housed peers.³⁹

School-Based Resources and Rights

While students experiencing homelessness face clear barriers, Federal law provides tools to support the education and stability of these children/youth. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ("McKinney-Vento") recognizes the multiple barriers faced by children and youth experiencing homelessness, and provides them several rights, including, but not limited to:



- Remain in the same school even if they move;
- Be immediately enrolled in a new school without typically required records;
- Participate fully in school activities;
- Receive transportation to and from school-related activities;
- Receive related school services needed such as tutoring and academic supports; and,
- Dispute decisions made by schools and school districts.⁴⁰

In 2015, McKinney-Vento was reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act. While the recently reauthorized McKinney-Vento provides a framework for local communities to address challenges related to access to education, much work remains with regard to implementation. Recommendations for next steps are found in Chapter 4 of this plan.

³⁶ U.S. Department of Education, ED Data Express, Homeless Students Enrolled in LEAs with or without McKinney-Vento Subgrants: 2013-14, Accessed at <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/>.

³⁷ Mai Abdul Rahman, The Demographic Profile of Black Homeless High School Students Residing in the District of Columbia Shelters and the Factors that Influence their Education (Mar. 2014).

³⁸ Ellen Bassuk, et al., The Prevalence of Mental Illness in Homeless Children: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (2014).

³⁹ Linda Jacobson, Moving Targets, Education Week (Apr. 4, 2001).

⁴⁰ 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3).

Homelessness in the District: How Do We Compare to National Trends?

During the development of this plan, the ICH reviewed three years of HMIS and PIT data, as well as data from the first two years of the HYC. Local trends very much mirror what we see in national data.

First, three years of HMIS data were analyzed to understand the experience of youth receiving services by the shelter and

housing programs in the District. The number and age group of youth with a new episode beginning in each year are indicated in Table 1.⁴¹ As the table shows, there is some fluctuation among age groups, though the total number of youth served in our system has remained fairly constant over each of the past few years. It's unclear if this is a reflection of system capacity (i.e., the number of beds in the system remained relatively flat over this time period), or if the number of youth experiencing housing instability has actually remained constant.

Table 1: Annual Incidence of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Number of Youth with a New Episode Beginning in Each Fiscal Year	Under 18	18-21	22-24	Total
FY2013 (10/1/2012 – 9/30/2013)	81	317	300	698
FY2014 (10/1/2013 – 9/30/2014)	86	296	267	649
FY2015 (10/1/2014 – 9/30/2015)	122	269	265	656

Next, the ICH also reviewed three years' worth of PIT data. The number of minor and unaccompanied youth found during the PIT from 2014-2016 is presented below in Table 2.

Again, the totals remain fairly constant over the three-year period, though we do see some fluctuation within categories.

Table 2: Youth Point in Time Count 2014-2016

	January 2014				January 2015				January 2016			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Total	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Total	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Total
Unaccompanied Minor (under 18)	3	2	0	5	7	0	0	7	6	4	0	10
Transition Age Youth (18-24)	117	75	18	210	96	80	17	193	81	87	33	201

As discussed previously, there is a general recognition that the PIT Count undercounts the number of youth experiencing homelessness. When youth shelters are full, instead of accepting placement in adult shelter, youth often find somewhere else to sleep. Generally speaking, this makes

them much more difficult to locate during a survey on a single night. As a result, over the past few years, USICH and other federal partners have recommended other approaches to counting youth, which led to advocacy in the District for the Homeless Youth Census.

⁴¹ Table 1 accounts for youth served in any program in the homeless services system (i.e., youth ages 18-24 may have been served in adult shelter programs). Further, some youth may have had new episodes in more than one year, and therefore there may be some duplication in this table.

Homeless Youth Census

In 2014, the End Youth Homelessness Act was adopted in the District. Among other provisions, the Act requires DHS to conduct an annual Homeless Youth Census (HYC) to obtain a better estimate of the number of youth under age 25 who experience homelessness at a point in time. In addition, the HYC gathers information on the youth’s characteristics, their involvement in other systems, factors that led to homelessness, and their use of (and/or need for) different services to help identify gaps.

The HYC collects information on unaccompanied individuals and heads of family households under age 25 in the following groups:

Groups by age:

- **Unaccompanied Minors:** Youth under the age of 18 experiencing homelessness; this group includes all children under 18 who are living apart from their parents and guardians, excluding those in physical custody of the District.
- **Transition Age Youth:** Youth aged 18 to 24 (+364 days) experiencing homelessness; this group includes all youth who are “economically and emotionally detached from their parents and unstably housed.”

Groups by housing status:

- **Literally Homeless:** Youth who are experiencing homelessness while in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, or otherwise unsheltered situations (living in a place not meant for habitation such as a car or sleeping outside).

- **Housing Insecure:** Unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness while precariously housed and/or living in highly transitory doubled-up situations (also referred to as “couch surfing”).

The HYC methodology differs from the PIT Count methodology in several significant ways. The HYC is conducted over nine days in the late summer/early fall.⁴² It captures information about youth who are housing insecure as well as literally homeless. It also gathers more extensive information through a questionnaire that asks about the youth’s housing status, personal history, pathways into homelessness and non-housing service needs. Care is taken during the administration of the survey to gather enough identifying information so that even if a youth wishes to remain anonymous, we have the ability to de-duplicate data should a youth be encountered by a different surveyor over the course of the nine days.

Key Findings

Data from the first two years of the HYC are shown in Table 3 below. As the data reveals, 42 more youth were identified and surveyed during the 2016 Census – an increase of approximately 8%. Of note, the number of literally homeless unaccompanied minors more than doubled from 12 to 28 (a 133% increase), and nearly half of those youth (46%) were unsheltered. With only two years of data, there is insufficient information to determine if the increase is a result of environmental factors, improvements in the homeless service system (i.e., increased bed capacity, increased access via coordinated entry), or improved counting. It’s likely a combination of these factors. As additional data are gathered, our understanding of the needs in our community will grow clearer.

Table 3: 2015 and 2016 Homeless Youth Census Results

	2015 Unaccompanied Minors	2016 Unaccompanied Minors	2015 Transition Age Youth	2016 Transition Age Youth	2015 TOTAL	2016 TOTAL
Literally Homeless*	12	28	318	357	330	385
*(Unsheltered)	(25%)	(46%)	(21%)	(20%)	(21%)	(22%)
Housing Insecure	46	22	169	180	215	202
TOTAL	58	50	487	537	545	587

⁴² The 2016 Census was conducted September 16-24; the 2015 Census was conducted August 17-25.

Based on the three data sources reviewed, it's clear that our January PIT count – as previously assumed – is an undercount. However, another discrepancy is evident when we compare HMIS data to the HYC. In contrast to the PIT and HYC data, both of which provide a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homeless at a point in time, the HMIS data provides insight into the number of persons accessing the homeless services system over the course of the entire year. In the single adult system, the annualized count (via HMIS) is typically approximately 150% greater than the PIT count. Within the youth system, however, the HMIS count is only 15%-20% higher than the HYC count. Because our HMIS data only reflect those youth being served by our system, it appears that we currently have substantial unmet need in our community.

Based on our first two years of conducting the youth census, the trends in the District look similar to what is reported in national data. Youth experiencing homelessness are a varied group of young people struggling to secure basic needs while also trying to acquire the skills necessary to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The findings of the census confirm some trends already well known to service providers, but also shed new light on the severity of the needs of this population.

According to the 2016 census specifically, 41% of respondents were living with family or friends before becoming literally homeless. Nearly one-quarter (24%) were chronically homeless according to HUD's definition (i.e., were on the streets or in shelter, have a disabling condition, and have been homeless for a year or longer or have had four episodes of homelessness within the past three years).⁴³

The top reasons youth cited as the cause of their homelessness included:

- Conflict with family or friends (37%), including specific conflict related to the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity (5%);
- Economic reasons, such as the lack of a job or affordable housing (15%); and
- Aging out of foster care (6%).⁴⁴

Of those youth experiencing literal homelessness, 17% identified as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, queer, or questioning, and another 7% identified as transgender.⁴⁵

National trends note that youth experiencing homelessness often have prior public system involvement. The District's Census found that, at some point in their lives, 24% were involved with the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), 19% were involved with the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS); and 15% were under Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) supervision.⁴⁶

With regard to education and employment, just half (51%) of the youth age 18 or older had completed high school or obtained a GED, and only 22% were employed. Of the minors identified through the census, approximately 40% indicated they were no longer enrolled in school.

By triangulating multiple data sources, the District is getting progressively better at understanding the size of our population of youth experiencing homelessness and the scope of services needed to serve them. The information collected from the 2015 and 2016 HYC, combined with historical data from the HMIS, have provided a solid foundation for the program modeling and capacity planning included in this plan. Furthermore, the PIT and HYC protocol will continue to be refined over time, and the data will be used to assess our progress and update the modeling each year.

⁴³ These percentage of youth identified as chronically homeless in 2016 (24%) is markedly higher than 2015 (8%), though the numbers are small and likely not statistically significant. We will know more as we continue to collect data in years ahead.

⁴⁴ DC Homeless Youth Census Results (2016).

⁴⁵ This is a marked decrease from 2015 data. We will know more as we capture additional data in the years ahead.

⁴⁶ The survey did not distinguish current system involvement from past system involvement. If the youth believed that the system involvement was a direct cause of his/her homelessness, it was captured by the question regarding "primary reason for homelessness."

YOUTH STORY



It would be nice to have a permanent place to go.

I lived all over DC, moving every three months. Not all experiences were positive. My parents are foreign – from Trinidad & Tobago. My mom, she wanted us to be in a nice house, like every mother would want for their kids. It was just a lot of moving because the financial situation wasn't where we wanted it to be.

As soon as the family found out that I was a lesbian—when I was 17—it was like all family support was out the window, so I didn't get any help with school, clothing, food—none of that. I was just completely cut off. It was like they were shunning me. [They said] “it's not the right life. I'm not going to support that.” And I ended up outside.

Next thing you know five years went by. I became a victim to human trafficking twice. A lot of people have asked me to talk about it because most of these women are like me—who just have terrible living situations or their foster home is not necessarily as safe as they make it seem. I've met a lot a lot of people like that—their foster home wasn't working for them or normal home wasn't working for them.

By the time the trafficking happened, I was outside. I feel like it happens due to situations like that. It just makes it easy for them. If we're already homeless, then half the job is already done. It's like they don't need to search for anyone because we're just walking around. I disappeared twice and survived. It's not nice what I've seen either. It makes you nervous, like you can be here today and gone tomorrow. How they take you and sell you off—this stuff is real and scary.

Right now, I'm couch surfing with friends. It would be nice to have a permanent place to go. The center is helping me transfer into an adult program and permanent housing. They help with transportation, food, clothes, sleep, and showers and hygiene. I'm still trying to finish school. I'd eventually like to study internal medicine or computer technology or maybe get my doctorate in modern natural medicine.

YOUTH STORY



It was good having a support system and people to talk to.

I became homeless when I was 13 when I was with my father. We bounced around family shelters, motels, and family houses. When I got older, at 16, I left my father's house and I was out on the streets with my sisters and brothers. Then I was in high school and I was still homeless. I went to the shelter after I graduated.

I found Sasha Bruce through one of my social workers at school and came over. They helped me find my own apartment and a job. It was good having a support system and people to talk to.

Now I'm stable, in a transitional housing apartment. I'm working for Sasha Bruce as a peer educator in the sexual health education program—going into schools. Now, I'm working, saving, trying to get into school.

I think the biggest need is for more youth shelters. There aren't a lot of them, and with [many shelters], the kids won't go there.



CHAPTER 2: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

Developing the Plan

While the development of the CPEYH was required by the End Youth Homelessness Amendment Act, the approach and vision of the CPEYH comes from Homeward DC. CPEYH was developed by the Youth Subcommittee of the DC Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH), which met frequently between September 2015 and June 2016. Youth Subcommittee membership includes advocates, people with lived experience of homelessness as youth, nonprofit youth service providers, and youth-serving government agency representatives. ICH retained Abt Associates Inc. to provide assistance with data analysis, modeling, and cost analysis.

Using data from the District's HMIS and the 2015 HYC, the Youth Subcommittee reviewed reports on the number of youth experiencing homelessness each year, the types of programs that youth access for services, and the length of time they receive assistance. Nonprofit providers with projects for youth experiencing homelessness provided information on project operating costs as part of the cost modeling of the CPEYH.

As the CPEYH was developed, the Executive Committee of the Interagency Council on Homelessness received regular updates and provided feedback for the Youth Subcommittee to consider. During the planning process, there were opportunities for community input; all information received through these

channels were provided to the Youth Subcommittee for consideration. See Appendix 2: ICH Youth Subcommittee for a list of agencies participating in the ICH Youth Subcommittee, and Appendix 3: CPEYH Planning Process for an overview of the meetings held to develop the CPEYH.

Vision Statement

Ending homelessness for youth does not mean that a youth will never experience housing instability or homelessness again. Rather, it means that our community will have a system in place to prevent homelessness for youth whenever possible and, if literal homelessness cannot be prevented, to ensure that the youth's homelessness is brief and non-recurring. This is the same vision as Homeward DC:

*By 2022, youth homelessness in the District will be a rare, brief, and nonrecurring experience.*⁴⁷

For youth experiencing homelessness, their housing crisis comes at a key point in their development into independent adults. Recognizing this difference between youth and adults, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has developed core outcomes for youth that go beyond resolving the youth's housing crisis to also helping them with building permanent connections, achieving education and employment goals, and developing social-emotional well-being.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ This plan is intended to be a five-year plan, implemented over five full budget cycles (FY2018 – FY2022).

⁴⁸ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness,

<https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/coordinated-community-response-to-youth-homelessness>, September 2015.

Addressing these core outcomes will require partners beyond the usual stakeholders in the homeless system. We will need the engagement of juvenile justice, child welfare, education, employment, and philanthropy to be able to help youth experiencing homelessness grow into adults with the skills and supports needed to reduce their risk of future housing crises. These agencies – as well as partners across the nonprofit, private, and philanthropic sectors – will be crucial in implementing the strategies outlined in Chapter 4 of this plan.



United States Interagency Council on Homelessness: Core Outcomes for Youth

- **Stable housing** includes a safe and reliable place to call home.
- **Permanent connections** include ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks.
- **Education/employment** includes high performance in and completion of educational and training activities, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth.
- **Social-emotional well-being** includes the development of key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that equip a young person to succeed across multiple domains of daily life, including school, work, relationships, and community.



Measuring Our Progress: Topline Measure and Benchmarks

While we will need to develop a performance management plan to measure progress against the specific strategies outlined in Chapter 4, along with interim metrics that guide our progress from year to year, the topline measure used to determine our progress in fulfilling the vision of the CPEYH is as follows:

*By 2022, youth experiencing a housing crisis will have access to stable housing within an average of 60 days or less.*⁴⁹

The benchmarks we will use to assess our progress on this measure include the following:⁵⁰

1. Our community has ended chronic homelessness among youth;
2. Our community has a system in place to identify all youth experiencing homelessness;
3. Our community has the ability to provide immediate access (i.e., without time on a waitlist) to developmentally appropriate emergency shelter for any youth without a safe place to stay;
4. Our community connects youth to stable housing as quickly as possible; and
5. Our community provides Transitional Housing only for youth that prefer it, **and** that Transitional Housing:
 - a. Does not have barriers to entry (i.e., programs will meet youth where they are and not have pre-conditions to access assistance);
 - b. Is stable (allows youth room to make mistakes and grow without concern of losing housing); and
 - c. Has high rates of exit to permanent housing.

Guiding Principles

The CPEYH is based on many of the same principles as Homeward DC, but are tailored to highlight the unique characteristics of youth and the long-lasting impacts homelessness can have on youth.

- **Youth homelessness is unacceptable. All young people deserve a safe place to grow and thrive.** Youth have many developmental challenges to overcome; homelessness should not be one of them.
- **There are no “homeless youth,”** but rather youth who have lost their homes and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We believe in the strengths and assets of youth who are experiencing homelessness and in the value of having their voices at the planning table, and we are committed to supporting each and every youth to fulfill their potential.
- **Youth who are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing have often lost more than just their home.** They have lost critical connections to community, school, work, and other places in life. Therefore, they need more than just housing to achieve lasting stability and success.
- **Youth are, by nature, in transition.** We have to evolve our system to meet young people “where they are at” through the provision of developmentally appropriate services.

⁴⁹ “Stable housing” may be permanent or transitional, as long as the transitional housing meets the benchmarks noted.

⁵⁰ As of the drafting of this plan, the Federal government has not yet established a definition or benchmarks for communities to use to assess their progress on ending homelessness among youth. If/when the Federal government releases such guidance, the ICH will update its metrics accordingly.



- **Youth homelessness is solvable.** We have learned a lot about what works. Our community’s response to youth experiencing homelessness must focus on tested solutions, not old approaches that are ineffective and expensive.
- **Person-Centered Response.** We aim to provide person-centered, trauma-informed care that respects the dignity and ensures the safety of all youth seeking assistance. Progressive engagement that is respectful of participant choice and attuned to participant safety and confidentiality needs will inform data collection efforts, level of services provided, and location/type of housing accessed.
- **Housing First Programming.** We are committed to developing programming that responds to the needs of youth instead of expecting youth to adapt to the programs that exist. Programs should be “low barrier” to ensure youth are not screened out from entering nor removed due to unhealthy or disruptive behaviors that can emerge because of trauma or as a natural part of a youth’s developmental stage.
- **Data-driven decision-making and strategic use of resources are essential** for transforming our homeless services system, including: 1) targeting assistance to ensure that the most intensive interventions are matched to those with the greatest needs; 2) a commitment to measuring our performance and using that information to guide our investment decisions; and 3) examining ways to identify, capture, and reinvest cost savings across the system.
- **Better coordination of mainstream anti-poverty programs** is critical to create a stronger safety net and to prevent youth from losing their housing in the first place, especially at transition points between youth and adult systems of care.
- **There is strength in collaboration; we can make a difference.** Homelessness is not a challenge for the government alone to solve. The government has a significant role, but other partners must be at the table, too. As a community working to end youth homelessness, we need providers to examine how their programming fits into the overall system and whether changes are needed. We need philanthropic funders to align their giving to help meet gaps in the system. We need developers who are willing to develop affordable housing, landlords who are willing to rent to youth that have experienced homelessness, and employers who are willing to hire them. We need faith-based partners and other community groups to consider how they can provide mentoring and moral support to struggling young neighbors. Ending homelessness in our community will require all of us to work together.

Building Blocks for the Plan

The basic foundations of the CPEYH are data and the knowledge of the providers, advocates, and people with lived experience of homelessness when they were youth. As the CPEYH is implemented, we will continue to learn about the most effective approaches for helping youth achieve long-term stability. The program models and assumptions in the CPEYH will be updated regularly with this new information.

The planning process to develop the CPEYH included several “building blocks” that helped the Youth Subcommittee systematically understand the current system, envision the ideal new youth system, model the new system, and begin budget and programmatic transition planning. These building blocks were:

1. Development of program models for the new youth system;
2. Analyzing data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to understand the number of youth experiencing homelessness annually and the current patterns of system utilization by youth experiencing homelessness;
3. Modeling of new inventory needed to meet the needs of all youth experiencing homelessness each year, including developing pathways through the system, estimating the average length of time youth would stay in each program type in a pathway, and projecting what proportion of youth would need each pathway;
4. Contrasting the new inventory developed through system modeling to the current inventory to develop a transition plan; and
5. Examining the cost of the proposed program models to develop an approximate cost of the proposed system.

Program Models

The first major building block of the CPEYH is our program models matrix. The matrix outlines specific components of different program models the Youth Subcommittee envisioned would be needed in the homeless services system to achieve goals related to preventing and ending homelessness among youth. (See Appendix 4: Program Models Matrix, or Table 4 below for a summary.) The matrix has three broad categories of programs:

1. **“Front Porch” services** are provided to youth experiencing a crisis before they reach the front door of the homeless services system with the goal of stabilizing young people in a family setting and preventing youth from needing to enter shelter. The services may be provided to youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
2. **Interim Housing** refers to housing that is time limited in nature (i.e., youth have to move upon conclusion of the assistance). This category includes emergency response programming, the goal of which is to address basic and pressing needs for shelter and food to lessen the immediate impacts of homelessness. This category also includes transitional housing that supports youth developmental needs and prepares youth for independence.
3. **Permanent Housing** is housing where the youth can remain as long as they choose. Assistance from the homeless services system may be short-term or long-term. Program types include Rapid Re-housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, or reunification with family, depending on the youth’s situation and needs.

Table 4: Program Model Summary

“Front Porch” Services	Interim Housing	Permanent Housing
1a. Street Outreach Engagement services to assess and refer youth who are at risk for homelessness or who are literally homeless.	2a. Emergency Shelter Provides shelter and other basic needs in a safe and structured environment, as well as assessment and planning for permanent housing (including family reunification).	3a. Transition Age Youth (TAY) Rapid Re-Housing Time limited rental assistance and services to assist youth and find and maintain housing.
1b. Drop-In Center & Crisis Hotline Service center (with 24-hour hotline) to meet basic needs and provide assessment and referral services for youth who are at risk for homelessness or who are literally homeless.	2b. Transitional Housing Time limited housing and services in a project-based facility or an independent unit while the youth is working on education or employment goals.	3b. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Intensive, wrap-around supportive services and long-term housing subsidy or affordable unit.
1c. Front Door Prevention & Stabilization Services and financial assistance to prevent literal homelessness		3c. Family Reunification with Stabilization Services Services to youth and his/her family, or significant other adult who is willing to provide a home for the youth to stabilize housing.
1d. Upstream Prevention Discharge planning and housing supports for youth exiting or aging out of other systems.		

Through an iterative process, the Youth Subcommittee first identified the universe of program types, and then fleshed out each program type to identify essential program elements, target populations, assistance timeframes, and outcome measures.

Like the CPEYH itself, the matrix is intended to be a living document to guide our planning and implementation efforts. It helps us align our funding towards common goals by ensuring funders understand what to fund and providers understand what they need to deliver. It helps ensure we are measuring outcomes of similar programming in a consistent way. It also

serves as the basis for the modeling work, which allows us to determine how much investment in each program type is needed in future years.

Because systems change does not happen overnight, and because we cannot bring all of the needed components to scale at once, it is important to view implementation of the new program models as a work in progress. Of course, we already have many successful, innovative programs in place that serve vulnerable youth and/or their entire family. So, for some of these program models, like Emergency Shelter and

Transitional Housing, the work ahead will involve scaling to meet the need. Other program models, like TAY Rapid Re-housing, are new for the District's youth homeless services system and will need to be designed/tailored for youth. Still other needs may emerge after we begin implementation; as was the case with Homeward DC, we may identify challenges or gaps in our system that call for programs not yet envisioned.

It is important to note that the essential program elements identified in the matrix are intended to reflect ideal program components that should be included in the program type, especially for any new program that a provider is designing or a funder is supporting. Some of the elements identified are cost neutral (e.g., use of a common assessment tool and practices for how program vacancies are filled), but it is important to acknowledge that other elements are not. In some cases – especially those involving facility size/configuration – existing programs may not be able to incorporate certain program elements. In other cases, providers will not be able to adapt programming unless contracts include the necessary resources (e.g., reducing caseload sizes). For each program model, funders and providers will have to work closely together to examine where changes can be implemented immediately and where time, resources, capacity building, and/or statutory changes will be required.

Data Analysis

To understand how many youth need assistance from the homeless service system each year and what kinds of assistance youth are currently receiving from it, the ICH analyzed the District's HMIS, PIT, and HYC data. The Youth Subcommittee used this information to develop the assumptions that were the basis of the system modeling.

The data analysis focused on three years of HMIS data (FY2013, FY2014 and FY2015) for all single individuals who entered the homeless system before their 25th birthday. The data included information from all homeless assistance programs in the District (versus just youth-serving programs) because youth who are 18 and older can receive services from any provider in the system. These transition age youth often end up in programs that serve adults of all ages because the programs in DC's youth system do not have sufficient capacity.

Annual Number of Youth Needing Assistance

Over the three fiscal years that were analyzed, there was an average of 667 youth, with a range of 649-698 youth per year, under the age of 25 who received services in some part of our homeless system each year. To understand how many youth are housing insecure and might present for services in an improved youth system, data from the 2015 HYC were also

reviewed. The HYC found 200 housing insecure youth who were precariously housed or doubled up, usually with family or friends. The majority of the youth (76%) served in the homeless services system over the three years were 18 or older.

Because the current youth system does not have the capacity to serve all youth experiencing homelessness, and many youth will not enter adult shelters out of concern for their own safety, the Youth Subcommittee thought that the HMIS data did not fully capture the number of unaccompanied youth who were homeless each year. Subcommittee members anticipated that, with the planned expansion and changes to the youth system, more than the 649-698 youth revealed through HMIS analyses would present for services in future years. After extensive discussion, the Subcommittee agreed that a reasonable initial annual estimate for the number of youth with no stable home – who were either literally homeless or precariously housed in an unstable or unsafe situation – was 800.

This number will be adjusted in the future as the CPEYH is implemented and better data becomes available.

Homeless System Utilization Patterns

Using a cohort approach, we looked at the group of youth who received services from our homeless system in the baseline year of FY2013 (10/1/2012-9/30/2013) and what additional services, if any, they received in a two year follow up period. The system utilization factors that were examined included the type of program or combination of programs serving the youth, the number and length of episodes, and returns to homelessness. The data was reported in three age groups (under 18, 18-21, 22-24).

There were 698 single youth under the age of 25 who received services from the homeless system in the baseline year; 81 were under age 18, 317 were ages 18-21, and 300 were ages 22-24. Key findings from this cohort analysis include the following:

- Most of the youth were served in shelter only. Only 6% of youth under the age of 18 and 14% of youth between 18 and 24 were served in a transitional housing program. For youth under 18, almost all of the shelter stays (89%) were in the youth system only. In contrast, older youth were much less likely to be served only in the youth system (16% of 18-21 year olds and 27% of 22-24 year olds).
- Length of stay in shelter varied by age group: youth under 18 years old stayed an average of 27 days, 18-21 year olds stayed an average of 58 days, and 22-24 year olds stayed an average of 78 days. The pattern was different for average length of stay in transitional housing with youth under the age of 18 and 18-21 years olds having similar lengths of stay (263 and 246 days respectively) and youth age 22-24 staying a much shorter time, 147 days.

- For youth whose destination at exit was known, the most common destination at exit was permanent housing with family and friends. However, the destination was “missing, unknown, or refused” for 74% of youth exiting shelter. This is not surprising, giving the large percentage of transition age youth accessing the adult low barrier shelter.⁵¹
- Returns to homelessness were highest in the first follow-up year with 15% of youth who had exited returning to the homeless services system. In the second follow-up year, 11% of youth who had exited in the baseline year returned. Overall, 9% of the youth had new episodes of homelessness in both the first and second follow-up years.

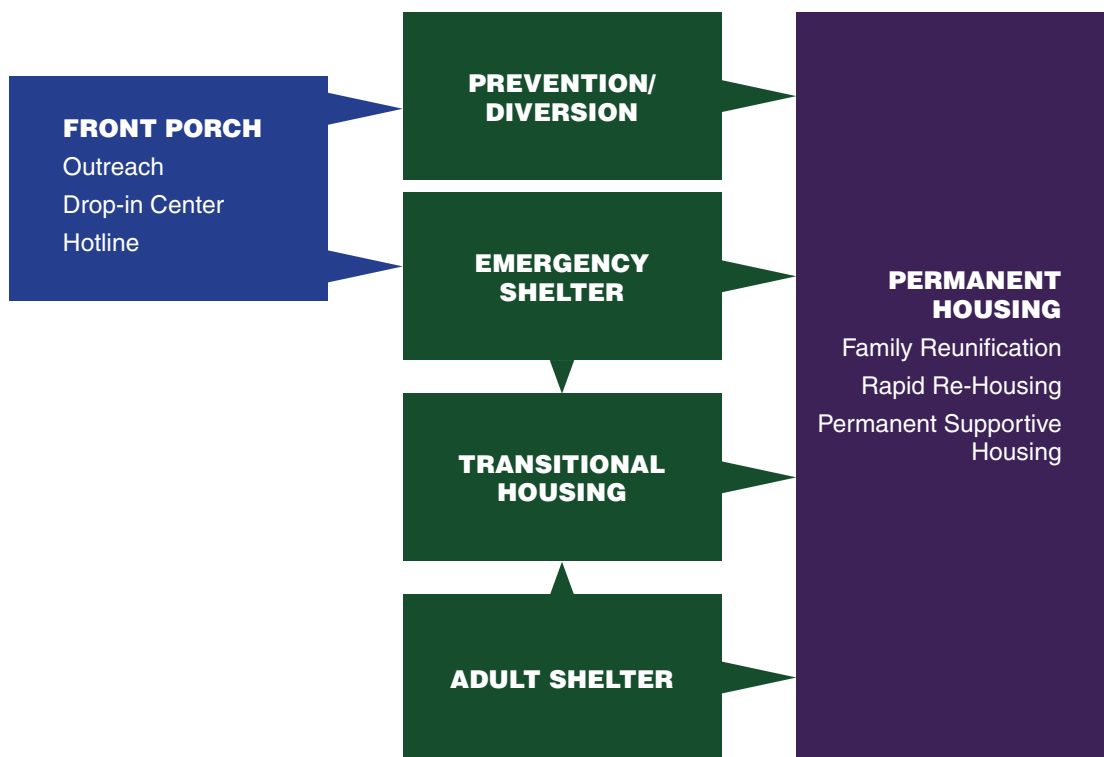
Modeling of a New Inventory

Pathways Development

With an understanding of the program models that should be included in the new system, the number of youth that needed to be served each year, and the current utilization of the homeless system by youth, the Youth Subcommittee focused next on identifying the “pathways” youth would take through the homeless services system to reach permanent housing.

Pathways are formed by linking program models (or interventions) in a series of steps focused on exiting the youth to permanent housing and supporting them in their development into an independent adult. Figure 1: How Programs Interact to Form a System of Care illustrates how youth enter and move through the system to reach permanent housing. The discussion of pathways was an essential part of the planning process because a system that fails to consider the possible paths youth may take and then coordinate its services accordingly is a system that operates inefficiently and will continue to experience youth “falling through the cracks.”

Figure 1: How Programs Interact to Form A System of Care



⁵¹ Because of the volume of clients served at low barrier shelter each evening, and because of the structure of low barrier programming (i.e., overnight shelter only, clients must leave each morning), providers are unable to capture data on where clients go unless they exit low barrier shelter to another program in the continuum. In that case, the client will have a new program entry in another program. However, if clients resolve their homelessness on their own and do not return to shelter, we have no way of knowing the “destination upon exit.”

YOUTH STORY



They truly helped me a lot when I couldn't figure things out for myself.

I was dealing with a whole lot of drama where I came from. My stepdad was bipolar—he'd wake up and start yelling. For years I was never able to say or do anything. So I packed my bag and walked out. I was 18. I inched my way across the northwest part of Iowa. Eventually I started sleeping in a ditch and under a bridge. There was one day when I was just walking around the entire day—I was in pain, I was sunburnt.

I managed to get a bus ticket to DC and left because I needed some time to myself because of everything that happened. I needed to find a way to let go of the trauma and things I was never able to let go of from my past. I thought: You know what...why not try DC?

When I first got to DC I found Eastern Market and slept there for a couple months. I was sleeping by the bike racks next to the Metro station. One night it started raining and then it started hailing, and I was so cold I couldn't stop shaking for over an hour. Everything was just wet—my clothes my books, everything. This was at like 3 or 4 in the morning. [A woman] from LAYC was the first person I talked to. She got up at 5 in the morning to help me. We went to the IHOP and she bought me pancakes.

The Latin American Youth Center helped me get my ID and my birth certificate. They helped me get back in school. They truly helped me a lot when I couldn't figure things out for myself. Now I'm sleeping at the Anacostia men's shelter in the youth program (YTP). It's not a bad program—it's been relaxed and quiet. I'm hopefully going to move back to Minnesota and get back into Job Corps. When I first lived there I was doing industrial painting and started getting into culinary work.



CHAPTER 3: SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

As explained in Chapter 2, the current youth system does not have the capacity to serve all the youth experiencing homelessness each year. Youth end up in the adult system, which can meet basic needs for food and shelter, but do not always have the knowledge or resources to address the youth's developmental needs. CPEYH provides a five-year plan to create a youth system of care that has the capacity to serve all youth experiencing homelessness without referral to adult programming or long waitlists.

It is also important to underscore that the program interventions discussed in this chapter are primarily for older youth, ages 18-24. As discussed in Chapter 2, the number of minors presenting for homeless services each year is relatively small. While it is important to ensure we have a safe place for youth under 18 to stay if and when they present seeking assistance and a parent or other responsible relative cannot immediately be located, the solutions for this age group are very different. As shown in this chapter, while we do plan for some amount of shelter specifically for youth under 18, the intent is that providers work within the boundaries of the law and in the best interests of youth to reunify under 18 youth with family as quickly as possible (or seek the assistance of the Child and Family Services Agency as appropriate).

Therefore, with the exception of emancipated minors (who could be referred for additional programming within the homeless services system), shelter beds and reunification/aftercare services are the key interventions planned for minors, with the other interventions focused on transition age youth.

Developing a Youth System: Understanding the Pathways

Using the data and process described in Chapter 2, the Youth Subcommittee identified pathways, estimated the proportion of the youth population precariously housed or experiencing homelessness that would need each pathway, and created length of stay projections for each intervention along the pathway. Each pathway identified during the planning process is summarized in Table 5: Pathways for Youth in Plan Year 5 on the next page. Altogether, this information allows us to estimate the number of beds, units, or service slots in a right-sized system. It is important to note that while these pathways have been developed for system-wide planning purposes, actual placement decisions are made on a case-by-case basis based on assessment results and consultation with the youth.

Table 5: Pathways for Youth in Plan Year 5

Service Strategies (Pathways)	Overall Estimate (%)	Detailed Estimate (%)
Strategies for People Presenting Each Month		
Prevention	5%	5%
Adult Shelter	0%	0%
Youth Shelter (Under 18)	33%	13%
Youth Shelter (18-24)		20%
TAY Rapid Re-Housing (no YS)	18%	4%
TAY Rapid Re-Housing (through YS)		14%
Transitional Housing (no YS)	22%	5%
Transitional Housing (through YS)		17%
Transitional Housing to TAY RRH (no YS)	17%	4%
Transitional Housing to TAY RRH (through YS)		13%
PSH (unsheltered or identified through AS)	5%	3%
PSH through YS)		2%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Of course, it is not possible to scale a system overnight. Accordingly, once we had identified what the “optimized” (or right-sized) system looked like, it was necessary to identify a strategy for scaling resources over the five-year plan period. Because we will still be developing capacity in the youth system in the first few years of CPEYH, it is inevitable that some youth will continue to be served in adult shelters.⁵² As the youth system develops, this reliance on the adult system will end. Appendix 6: Pathway and Length of Stay Assumptions by Year details how we envision pathways and lengths of stay changing from one year to the next as we scale. It is important to note that this is just one out of many possible scenarios for scaling. As we move into implementation, the plan will need to be updated each year to reflect changes to the landscape (e.g., fewer or greater youth experiencing homelessness), changes to system performance (e.g., shorter or longer lengths of stay), and changes in investments.

Prevention/Stabilization

Precariously housed youth may be able to be stabilized in their current housing or with another family member or caring adult from the youth’s support network. Ideally, this intervention may result in family reunification where safe and appropriate. Once

a housing plan is developed, the homeless services system will provide support to the youth to maintain the housing through conflict resolution, skill development, and referrals to other community resources. This type of intervention does not presently exist within the homeless services system, but Subcommittee members thought that – initially – at least 5% of youth could be diverted from entering homelessness through this type of intervention.

Adult Shelter (AS)

As described at the beginning of this chapter, in the early years of plan implementation (before full capacity is developed), some youth will continue to be served in the adult system. By the fourth year, assuming other programs in the plan are scaled according to the model presented, it is anticipated that we would no longer need the adult shelter system to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness (unless the youth chooses to enter the adult system instead of the youth system). As discussed in Chapter 4, training should be provided to adult system staff on how to engage youth and provide appropriate referrals to help youth access more suitable programming.

⁵² Acknowledging that the District will need to continue using adult shelter as our “overflow” system for older youth until we have fully scaled a youth system, one of the strategies identified in Chapter 4 is to examine ways to make our low barrier shelter services safer and more developmentally appropriate for youth.

Youth Shelter (YS)

Many youth need immediate shelter to meet their basic needs, but their best permanent/long-term housing plan is housing with an adult family member or friend. Supportive services similar to those provided in the prevention/diversion program would be provided to these youth as they are reunified with their family or friends. The cohort analysis found that most youth currently only used shelter, either in the youth or adult system, and based on that information the Subcommittee estimated that at least 33% of youth would only use the emergency shelter and would not go to another program in the youth system. Shelter needs and requirements are different for minors than for transition-age youth, so the plan proposes two versions of emergency shelter.

Transitional Housing (with and without YS and with and without Rapid Re-housing at Exit)

Transitional housing offers up to 24 months of assistance in a residential environment (typically single-site) with case management and supports for the youth to develop greater independence and economic self-sufficiency. While transitional housing has not been shown to be effective or cost efficient for adult populations, HUD has identified transitional housing as an important program type for youth who would benefit from more intensive supervision, communal living environments, and the focus on life skills inherent to the program model. Overall, the Subcommittee viewed transitional housing as the most important intervention in the youth system, with 39% of youth expected to need transitional housing. Some youth – especially those who enter the homeless services system at a very young age and who have very little family support – were expected to need rapid re-housing at exit from transitional housing to further support long-term stability and independence.

Rapid Re-housing (with and without YS)

Rapid re-housing, where the youth is a leaseholder in his/her own unit and receives short- to medium-term rental assistance and support services to maintain housing while working on other goals, is a new program for the youth system in the District. Subcommittee members expect that it will be an appropriate resource for older youth who have more experience being on their own and living in the community. Subcommittee members also felt that this program model needed to be adapted from the adult system to more easily allow for roommates/shared living situations. The initial estimate regarding the percentage of youth who will need rapid rehousing to end their homelessness (18%) is relatively low because of the Subcommittee's uncertainty concerning which youth (and how many youth) will be successful with this model.

Permanent Supportive Housing

A very small proportion of youth are expected to have the extended history of homelessness and the level of disability needed to require permanent supportive housing, which provides a permanent subsidy and deep, wrap-around supportive services to assist the youth to maintain their housing. As discussed in Chapter 1, research suggests that roughly half of all lifetime mental disorders emerge by the mid teens, and three fourths by the mid 20s. As a society, we need to get better at intervening earlier and providing appropriate support to prevent a new generation of chronically homeless adults. The Subcommittee estimated that only 5% of youth would need this level of housing to prevent long-term chronic homelessness.

Inventory Counts

Using the assumptions regarding the percentage of youth needing each pathway and average length of stay for each program type, we were able to estimate the number of units at a point in time that would be needed to serve the approximate 800 youth expected to present to the homeless services system each year (see Table 6: System Conversion). The Youth Subcommittee used that ideal inventory for the last year of the plan and then developed a year-by-year transition plan from the current system to the ideal system. Comparing the current inventory to the inventory for a right-sized system (as denoted in the Year 5 column below), the District may need to create as many as 900 beds, units, or subsidy/service slots over the next five years to develop a system to serve the number youth experiencing homelessness in our community each year.⁵³

Youth System Performance

The inventory recommended for the youth system is very different than the inventory planned for adults in Homeward DC. The current adult system has very long lengths of stay in shelter because there are not enough permanent housing resources to help people exit shelter into housing in the community. Our goal for the adult system is to reduce length of stay to 60 days or less, which will dramatically reduce the number of people homeless at a point in time.

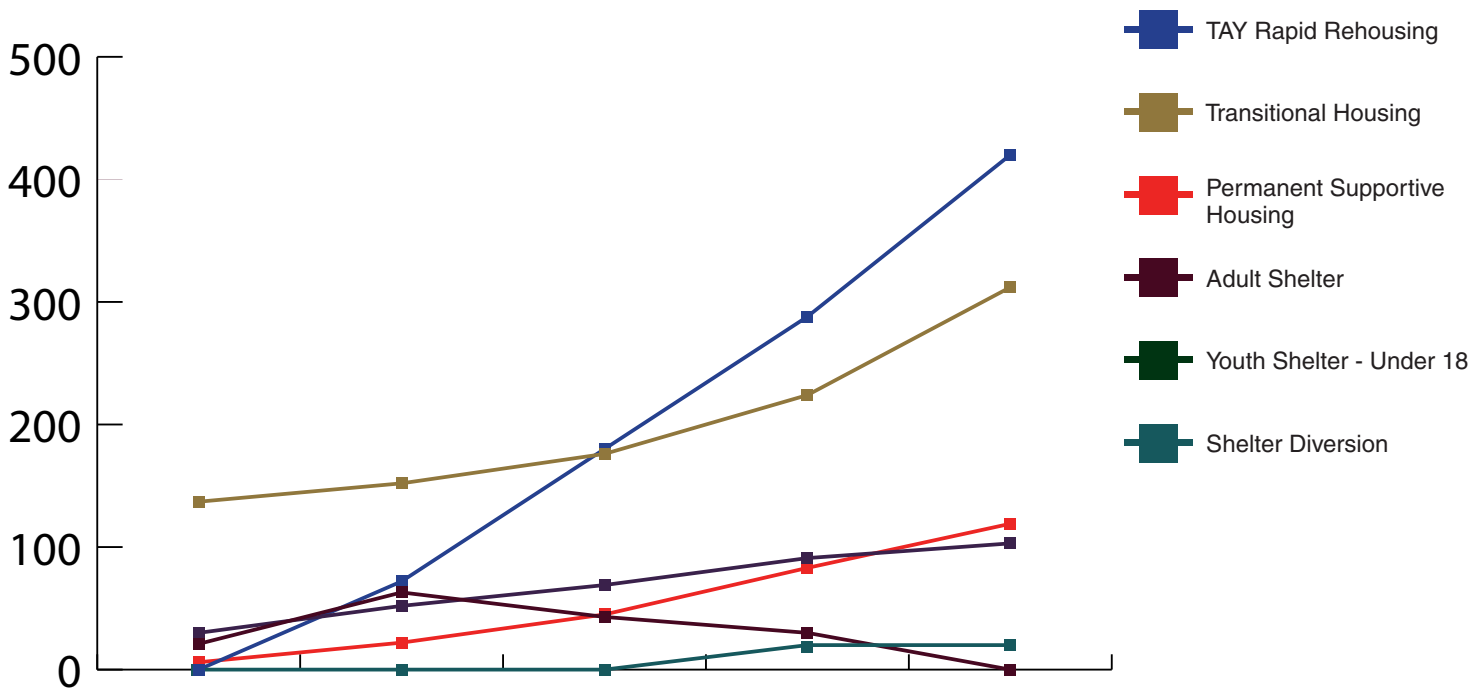
When fully implemented according to the pathway and length of stay projections in CPEYH, the youth system inventory is projected to have an average length of time homeless of seven months, and an average length of time assisted of 17 months.⁵³ These extended timeframes are a result of greater reliance on transitional housing under the youth plan. HUD considers/counts people being assisted in transitional housing programs as homeless because the programs are time limited and people are not in units with a lease agreement where they can remain after the program assistance ends. However, for youth – who have significant need to develop social, educational, and employment skills that go beyond exit to permanent housing – effective transitional housing can be critical to their development into healthy, independent adults.

⁵³ While the model projects that 900 units may need to be created, it is important to note that there are many variables at play and we do not wish to provide a false sense of precision. The model is our best projection based on currently available data, but systems change is not an exact science. If we are unable to meet the length of stay goals in the plan or if annual demand increases beyond the number projected for the plan, the system capacity will need to be greater than the models estimate. Conversely, if there are not as many youth as expected or the youth do not need the pathways that were developed for the plan then there may not need to be as many resources as projected. As stated elsewhere, the plan is a starting point and will be updated regularly as new information is available.

Table 6: System Conversion – Annual Bed/Unit/Subsidy Projections for Youth System Inventory

Program Type	Current System (Dec '16)	Year 1 (Oct '17 - Sept '18)	Year 2 (Oct '18 - Sept '19)	Year 3 (Oct '19 - Sept '20)	Year 4 (Oct '20 - Sept '21)	Year 5 (Oct '21 - Sept '22)	Difference (Current - Year 5)
Prevention/Stabilization	0	0	20	20	20	20	20
Adult Shelter ⁵⁴	--	63	36	22	0	0	--
Youth Shelter (<18)	16	26	25	25	25	26	10
Youth Shelter (18-24)	30	52	69	88	99	102	72
Transitional Housing	137	152	176	224	288	312	175
TAY Rapid Rehousing	0	72	180	264	384	420	420
PSH	21	37	59	88	124	158	137
Reunification/Stabilization	0	62	66	66	66	66	66
TOTAL	204	464	631	797	1,006	1,104	900

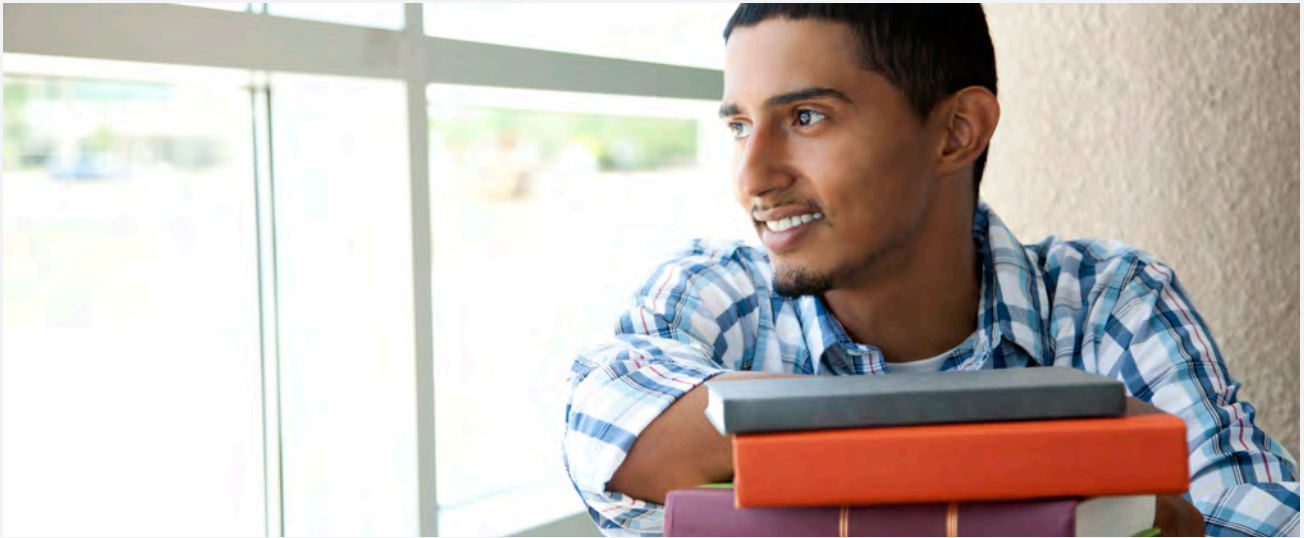
Figure 3: DC - System Conversion (Youth)



⁵⁴ Per Federal guidance, average length of time homeless is calculated based on when a youth is first identified by the homeless services system, and includes time spent on the street, in emergency shelter, or in transitional housing. Average length of time assisted includes the time spent in programs, including emergency shelter or transitional housing, but also including permanent housing programs like rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing.

⁵⁵ Adult Shelter serves as our safety net to make sure we can meet basic needs for food and shelter for youth while we are scaling the youth system. As illustrated in this system, we may need up to 63 beds in the adult shelter system in Year 1 of the plan. By Year 4, we will have enough youth shelter capacity to reduce/eliminate our dependence on the adult system.

YOUTH STORY



When I came here it was like open arms—all the help I needed.

I lived with my mother in Connecticut, and I moved in with my grandmother in DC. But then my grandmother died. When I was 12, I was basically just hustling—making money any way I could. I have a sister...I had a sister. We went different ways. She's a year older than me. I talked to her and she was telling me about this Sasha Bruce thing. And she [said] "just go there—they'll help you." I didn't know what it was, but I thought I'd try it.

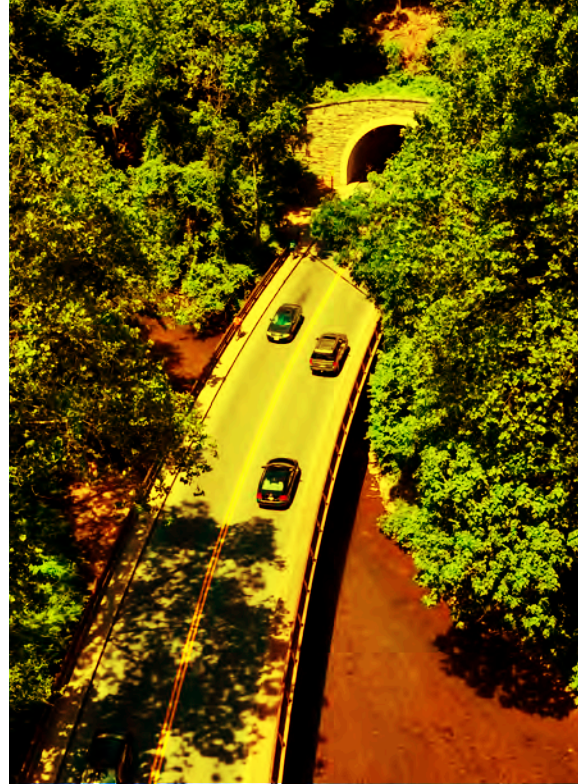
I came [to Sasha Bruce] in November without thinking I'd get anything out of it. But now I'm in an apartment and basically getting a lot of help and guidance. All the stuff I didn't have as a child. The stuff I didn't get on the street, I'm getting it here.

I'm in an apartment now. I signed up for it and they put my name in the system. They said "when you get matched we'll tell you." I think it was February when they told me. I was surprised. I didn't really think I'd ever get it. I'd waited so long, and when I got it, it was like a breath of fresh air. When I got [an apartment] it was like crying time.

Without Sasha Bruce, I would have tried to find a way, but without coming here, I really wouldn't have gotten on my feet. Out on the street—I was out there since 12—I really had nobody, no family or anything like that. When I came here it was like open arms—all the help I needed. It was kind of cool having somebody that's got your back.

Now I'm trying to get back in college so I can study sociology and psychology so I can become a therapist [for homeless youth]. When I was out on the street I had nobody, so I know exactly how they feel.

I'd like to see [more] services (including more food). I guess there should be more activities, social groups, and education because people come in from the streets and they don't have anything to do.



CHAPTER 4: GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE: KEY STRATEGIES & TRANSITION PLANNING

Chapters 2 and 3 of this plan focus on determining the number of beds, units, and services slots needed across the various programs in our youth homeless services continuum to meet our goal given projected levels of need and current utilization patterns. While creating an adequate supply of dedicated units is an essential component of any plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, it cannot be the only component.

As stated in the USICH's Framework to End Youth Homelessness, "An effective plan must account for the specific needs of adolescents and youth transitioning to adulthood and the role families can play in both the reasons for becoming homeless and the potential solutions. These considerations make an approach to ending homelessness for unaccompanied youth distinct from an approach to ending homelessness for adults."⁵⁶ Without a holistic approach that takes into consideration the unique developmental needs of youth, we almost assure ourselves today's vulnerable youth become tomorrow's chronically homeless adults.

This chapter focuses on seven objectives that will be necessary over the five-year plan period to create a comprehensive system of care that not only ensures youth have a safe place to sleep at night, but equally important, that vulnerable youth are supported to overcome barriers that threaten successful transition to adulthood:

- **Objective 1:** Expand/enhance homelessness prevention efforts in systems that work with vulnerable youth before they become homeless.
- **Objective 2:** Expand and enhance outreach to, assessment of, and reunification efforts for youth experiencing housing instability.
- **Objective 3:** Increase the dedicated supply of shelter and housing options for youth experiencing homelessness.
- **Objective 4:** Support vulnerable youth to develop healthy, permanent connections with peers and adults.
- **Objective 5:** Ensure vulnerable youth have opportunities to finish their education and experience early success in the labor market.
- **Objective 6:** Support the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of vulnerable youth.
- **Objective 7:** Build capacity among providers and system partners to scale programs effectively.

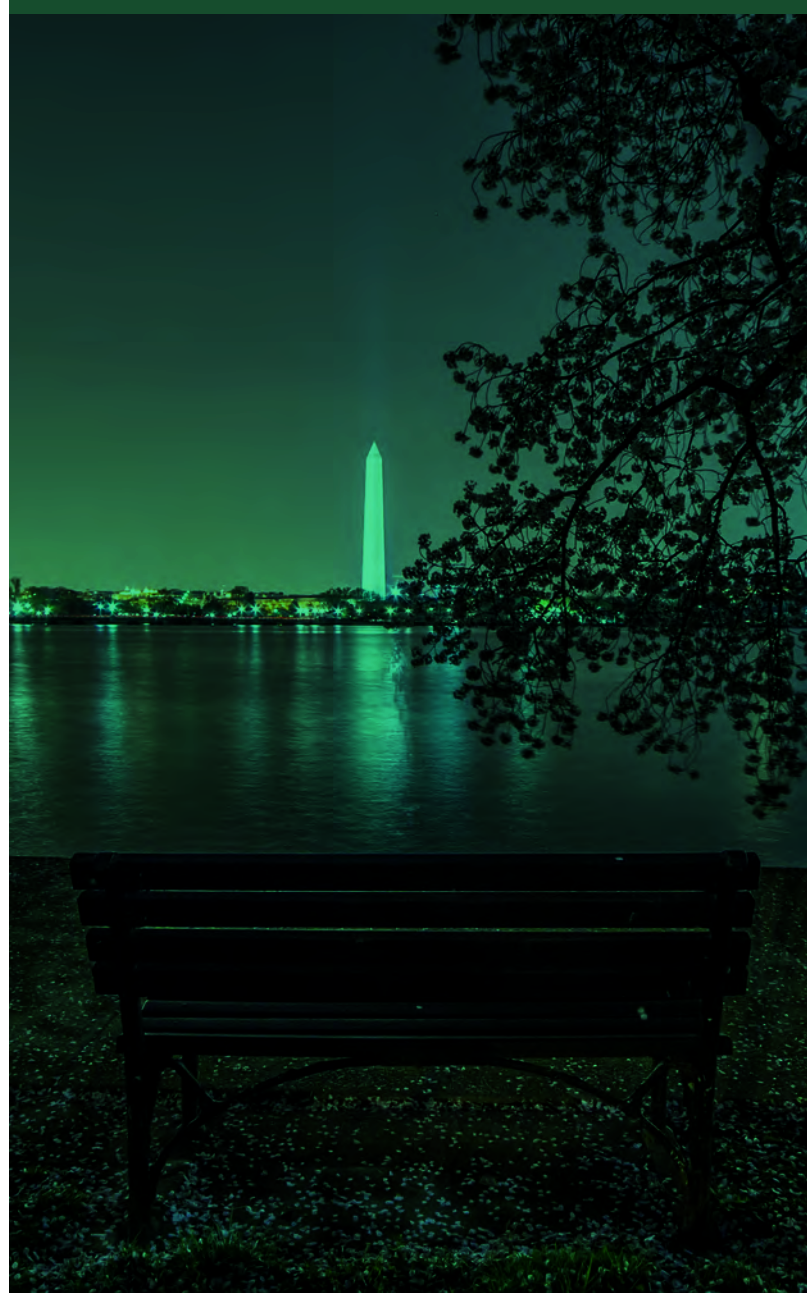
⁵⁶ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action. February 2013, page 2.

For each of the seven objectives identified, we summarize specific strategies and key government agencies. It is assumed that nonprofit service providers working directly with youth are central partners on many/most of these strategies, though government agencies need to create the appropriate policy infrastructure for that work. It is further assumed that the ICH will provide planning, partnership development, and technical support to partners as needed across the 45 strategies.

Service Delivery Tenets

Youth are in their formative years when relationships with adults are important for support and development. Youth experiencing homelessness may have few or no positive relationships with adults in their lives. Staff at agencies serving youth need to be aware of this special role. The following tenets were developed by Youth Services Division of the District's Department of Human Services to guide their work with youth. The ICH Youth Subcommittee felt these tenets should be infused in the work of every youth-serving agency.

- *Every youth is an individual.* We recognize, support, and celebrate their unique needs, values, and strengths in order to respectfully and effectively serve them.
- *Every youth deserves to be part of a family, traditional or non-traditional.* We seek to understand, engage, and support those closest to them.
- *Youth deserve the opportunity to tell their story without being judged.* We listen to them with an open mind and heart.
- *Youth are growing and changing; they are resilient, and they are not defined by their current circumstances.* We strive to foster an environment for youth that empowers them and allows them to live mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy lives.
- *We support youth through normal developmental behaviors, which includes testing boundaries and making mistakes.* We recognize that testing boundaries, rules, and laws is a normal part of adolescent development.
- *Childhood experiences have tremendous impact on youths' long-term emotional, mental, and physical health.* We work to build on positive relationships and experiences while simultaneously working to identify and address past trauma and minimize future trauma (including the transmittal of trauma to future generations).
- *Each moment in a youth's life is vitally important.* A sense of urgency, understanding, and care drives all that we do.



1. Expand/Enhance Homelessness Prevention Efforts in Systems That Work with Vulnerable Youth

Risk of homelessness increases for youth who are involved with other systems. As discussed throughout this plan, youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to be involved with the justice system; many struggle with risky behaviors or survival strategies, such as theft, substance use, and sexual risk behaviors. Similarly, youth who are involved with the child welfare system also experience homelessness at a rate higher than their peers – sometimes as part of a family unit, and sometimes by themselves. We must use the data and tools at our disposal to identify which youth are at the intersection of these systems, focus on decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors for these youth, and provide added support to help youth achieve positive outcomes as they transition to adulthood.

Fortunately, we have many innovative programs in the District. Programs like Wayne Place (a transitional housing program targeting vulnerable transition age youth administered in partnership by the Child and Family Services Agency and the Department of Behavioral Health) and Genesis (an intergenerational community for parenting youth transitioning out of foster care and active seniors who provide mutual support to one another) offer great models from which to build.

Likewise, we can expect to see improved outcomes for youth as we scale and improve our delivery of family-focused homelessness prevention and stabilization services, a key strategy under the Homeward DC plan. The best thing we can do for youth is provide support aimed at keeping the entire family unit together and functioning in a healthy manner.

Strategies	Key Agencies/Partners
1.1 Align goals between youth homeless services system, CFSA, DYRS, CSS, DHS, DBH, OSSE, and DCPS to ensure goals are complementary, focus on increasing protective factors, and are designed to create a comprehensive, well-coordinated system of care.	All youth-serving agencies
1.2 Conduct data match of youth in the homeless services system with those served by CFSA, DYRS, DBH, and DHS to understand the youth at the intersection of these systems and how to better target services.	DHS, CFSA, DYRS, CSS, DBH, TCP
1.3 Design and implement more appropriate, better-coordinated interventions for multiple system-involved youth (as identified under item 1.2 above). Identify lead entity within the District government to develop protocol and coordinate this multi-agency stabilization support.	DHS, CFSA, DYRS, CSS, DBH
1.4 Develop a discharge-planning protocol for youth receiving long-term services from or in the custody of CFSA and/or DYRS to ensure youth do not get discharged to streets or to the homeless service system. Train all front-line staff on protocol.	DHS, CFSA, DYRS, CSS
1.5 Identify performance metrics to regularly assess progress on increasing housing stability for multiple system-involved youth and to reduce discharge into homelessness.	DHS, CFSA, DYRS, CSS, DBH, TCP
1.6 Further expand Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE) program, an evidence-informed and highly successful program, to prevent greater numbers of youth from entering the juvenile justice system.	DHS, OAG
1.7 Develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between police, schools, and youth-serving agencies to outline data sharing, referral and reporting protocols while working with vulnerable minors.	MPD, OSSE, DCPS, CFSA, DYRS, DBH, DHS
1.8 Continue assessment and evaluation of innovative program models in DC (e.g., Wayne Place, Genesis) and around the country to identify emerging best practices.	DHS, CFSA, DYRS, CSS, DBH
1.9 Develop/issue guidance to clarify eligibility for services based on different Federal definitions used by different District agencies.	All youth-serving agencies
1.10 Given disproportionate reputation of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, initiate additional research to determine causes and identify targeted solutions for homelessness prevention.	Research/advocacy community

2. Expand/Improve Outreach, Assessment, and Reunification Efforts

A key trademark of an effective system of care is clear and easy access to the system and navigation through the system. This is particularly true for unaccompanied youth, who may not have positive experience with government systems and who may not have a support network to help them understand where to go or what to do. System access includes proactive marketing so youth can find the services they need, and it also means proactive outreach to youth who may not be looking for help or be aware that help is available.

In addition to expanding outreach efforts to identify vulnerable youth, a trauma-informed approach to assessing and understanding a youth’s needs and circumstances is critical. Our coordinated entry system (CES) for youth will be an important tool for ensuring that we can match youth to the most appropriate services to meet their needs, including determining when connection back to family or a caring adult can be accomplished, and when homeless services are needed.⁵⁷

Strategies	Lead Agencies/Partners
2.1 Expand drop-in and hotline services to operate on a 24-7 basis, to ensure youth always have a safe place to turn.	DHS
2.2 Pilot (and scale, as appropriate) the use of staff with behavioral health expertise for engagement and education at “front door” locations (e.g., integration with street outreach, at drop-in centers). Explore options for using Medicaid to pay for those services.	DBH, DHS, DHCF
2.3 Expand targeted youth outreach services (since high traffic areas for youth are often different than for unsheltered adults); increase the use of near-peers in outreach services.	DHS, DBH
2.4 Conduct more cross-training on youth needs and protocol for serving youth with adult outreach teams.	DHS, DBH
2.5 Conduct a review of our CES to determine how to better use the assessment process to identify youth with the greatest service needs and make more appropriate referrals to available interventions and services (i.e., family reunification support versus homeless assistance services).	TCP, DHS
2.6 Examine feasibility of expanding the Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS) Program, an evidence-informed and highly successful program, to ensure more youth (including transition age youth) can be successfully reunified with family and supported to achieve their goals from a home setting.	DHS
2.7 Conduct multi-lingual outreach campaigns – leveraging technology and social media as well as more traditional mediums – to ensure vulnerable youth know where and how to access services.	All youth-serving agencies
2.8 Increase cross-training for all youth providers on all priority populations identified in this plan.	All youth-serving agencies

⁵⁷ As acknowledged throughout this plan, youth homelessness manifests differently than adult homelessness, and likewise, the youth system will necessarily function a bit differently than the adult system. Our CES for single adults is focused on assessing vulnerability and prioritizing access for those with the greatest needs to the most intensive housing interventions. Because there is typically not a shortage of shelter beds in our low barrier system, there is an assumption that adults are navigating the system on their own based on their needs and preferences to manage their immediate need for shelter. For youth, however, the CES has been designed to help manage access to both shelter beds and longer-term transitional and permanent supportive housing resources. Because of their age and developmental stage, we have a greater chance at helping youth reunify with family members, and therefore, we want to reserve beds in the system for youth who truly have no safe place to stay. A higher vulnerability score does not automatically translate to a higher priority for a shelter bed if that youth has a safe place to stay in the short term (e.g., with a friend). Instead, we may find that the youth needs to be prioritized for intensive services that help him/her successfully return to the family unit and maintain ties to his/her support network. Coordinated entry for youth is still very new in the District and across the country, and it will be important that we commit to a regular review of our efforts so that we may continue to improve and refine our approach as we move forward.

3. Increase Dedicated Supply of Shelter and Housing Options

Increasing the supply of housing options is, of course, central to our efforts to end homelessness among youth. As discussed throughout this plan, different youth have different

needs, so we will need to develop the continuum of housing options and interventions to meet those varied needs. Further, we will need strategies to ensure our current adult shelter system can better meet the needs of this population while we are scaling our youth programming.

Strategies	Lead Agencies/Partners
3.1 Scale programs according to modeling presented in Chapter 3, as funding permits.	All youth-serving agencies
3.2 Conduct annual needs assessment (analyzing results of youth census, coordinated entry data, HMIS data, etc.) to determine extent to which set-asides or preferences for specific sub-populations is needed (e.g., LGBTQ, non-English speaking, victims of household violence or human trafficking). ⁵⁸	DHS, TCP
3.3 Design/tailor program models new to the youth continuum (e.g., TAY RRH) to ensure we are positioned to quickly use funds once appropriated.	DHS, TCP
3.4 Realign program rules for Permanent Supportive Housing for youth to allow for reassessment when youth turn age 25 and transfer (as appropriate) to adult programming. ⁵⁹	DHS, TCP
3.5 Identify/implement strategies to ensure adult shelter acting as “overflow” for transition age youth in early years of plan implementation are safe and culturally and developmentally appropriate.	DHS, TCP

4. Support Youth to Develop Healthy, Permanent Connections

Family can be both the cause of a youth’s homelessness as well as the solution. Many vulnerable youth have had little experience with successful, long-lasting relationships. In particular, youth who were in foster care have often

been traumatized by past relationships and may have little experience with people who are not paid to care for them. They often crave connections to people, and this can make them highly susceptible to exploitation. The creation, or re-creation, of relationships with family or other caring adults is necessary to prevent and end homelessness among youth.

Strategies	Lead Agencies/Partners
4.1 Expand PASS program (see item 2.5 above).	DHS
4.2 Conduct data match with OSSE to identify schools where the majority of youth touching the homeless services systems are/were enrolled. Develop targeted youth mentoring programs in these schools and/or other neighborhood locations to help vulnerable youth develop healthy, permanent connections with trusted near-peers and adults.	DHS, TCP, OSSE, DCPS, charter schools, Public Charter School Board
4.3 Implement/scale “alumni programs” to offer positive role models and provide support for youth enrolled in longer-term programs (including transitional housing, TAY RRH, and PSH).	All partners providing direct services
4.4 Examine the District’s Host Home programs to understand what works well about the model, what could be improved, and what percentage of youth have a preference for this type of setting.	Research partners
4.5 Strengthen family stabilization programming across all systems: engage private sector research partners to review family stabilization services in the District, identify best practices (locally and nationally), and issue recommendations.	Research partners
4.6 Train providers on “social mapping” technique to help youth identify natural supportive relationships that can be cultivated or strengthened with services.	All partners providing direct services

5. Ensure Vulnerable Youth Have Opportunities to Finish Education and Experience Job Success

As discussed in Chapter 2, homelessness has negative effects on academic performance. Youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to have mental health problems, poor attendance, and poor academic outcomes than students in stable housing. Likewise, for older youth, lack of stable housing

makes it very difficult to obtain or maintain employment. Therefore, any plan to address homelessness among youth must include strategies focused on improving access to and performance in education, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth. Achievements in education and employment increase a youth's capacity to support himself or herself and avoid future homelessness.

Strategies	Lead Agencies/Partners
5.1 Conduct review of system- and school- level policy and procedural barriers which limit the ability of youth experiencing homelessness to remain enrolled in school. Develop an action plan to remediate these barriers.	OSSE, DCPS
5.2 Conduct analysis to determine resource needs for state education coordinators and local liaisons to ensure the District can fully comply with provisions under the McKinney-Vento/Every Student Succeeds Act.	OSSE, DCPS
5.3 Coordinate with the family homeless services system to ensure families with school-aged children are prioritized for overflow shelter placements within the District (and as close to their school as possible).	DHS
5.4 Develop relationships with DC-sponsored and other internship/mentorship programs targeting transition age youth with the goal of preparing youth for financial independence. Youth will be paired with private sector partners to expand internship/mentorship and paid opportunities to learn on the job.	DHS, DOES
5.5 Conduct options analysis to explore cost feasibility of different strategies to expand transportation access to all locations where homeless students temporarily reside.	CFSA, DYRS
5.6 Work with the Office of Human Rights (OHR) to conduct testing, education, and enforcement activities to combat discrimination in hiring, particular among transgender individuals.	OHR
5.7 Identify potential funding opportunities and partners to supplement job readiness/placement programs with transportation stipends, work attire, etc.	WIC, DOES, DHS
5.8 Develop/launch a pilot program in conjunction with the youth homeless services system designed to help vulnerable youth apply for, prepare for, and manage the transition to college.	ICH, local universities, private sector partners

⁵⁸ The modeling in this plan does not identify the number of units needed by subpopulation. Establishing 100% dedicated programs can lead to a rigid, difficult-to-manage system since needs change and we see shifts in subpopulations over time. Further, youth may cut across multiple subpopulations (e.g., an LGBTQ youth may also have limited or no English proficiency) or may prefer one location in the city over another to remain close to school, work, or support networks. Consequently, our expectation is that all providers should be culturally competent and able to serve any youth that presents in an effective manner. At the same time, different providers may have areas of expertise (which we can and should consider as part of our CES process when we are matching youth to a program or facility). Further, when we see certain groups so over-represented in the population (as is currently the case with LGBTQ youth), it may make sense to create preferences at different facilities or in different programs, but these preferences should be flexible such that they can be modified over time as needed.

⁵⁹ Many of our youth programs are in single-site (versus scattered site) settings. Because PSH is the only youth program model where the subsidy and services are intended to be permanent, it's important for the system to have the ability to reassess youth for the ongoing need for PSH assistance as they grow/develop, and to transfer older clients (as appropriate) to a different setting to preserve limited youth PSH units for the young people they are intended to serve.

6. Support Social, Emotional, and Physical Wellbeing

The causes of homelessness among youth may vary, but the prevalence of acute and chronic trauma both prior to becoming homeless and while experiencing homelessness is a common

theme across all subpopulations. Given the significant body of research that exists on the impact of trauma on the developing brain, a key strategy within the work to address youth homelessness must be on reducing the impacts of trauma and supporting social, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing.

Strategies		Lead Agencies/Partners
6.1	Ensure vulnerable youth are enrolled in healthcare and receive (as needed) assistance selecting providers, making appointments, etc.	All youth-serving agencies
6.2	Create alternate, non-traditional settings for behavioral health engagement and services (related to item 2.1 above); coordinate with DHCF to identify/leverage opportunities to ensure services are Medicaid billable.	DBH, DHCF
6.3	Ensure better continuity of services for youth aging out of the child mental health system by scaling DBH TAY Transition Specialists (currently being piloted under a grant from SAMHSA) and co-locating services within the homeless services system.	DBH
6.4	Coordinate with homeless service system partners on the implementation of the District's Youth Sexual Health Plan, 2016-2020. Conduct analysis of plan strategies and tactics to identify areas for cross system collaboration.	DOH
6.5	Conduct analysis of changes needed within family homeless services system to provide more developmentally appropriate services to youth-headed households.	DHS

7. Build Capacity Among Providers and System Partners to Scale Programs

As the District began implementation of the Homeward DC plan, an important lesson learned quickly surfaced: it does not matter how much funding is appropriated to the goal of ending homelessness if we do not have the capacity across system partners to quickly and effectively scale our programs. Production of new shelter and housing facilities is limited by the realities of our real estate market and how quickly we can locate and acquire property and renovate or construct those facilities. Expansion of rental subsidy programs is limited by the number of affordable units in the city that meet Fair Market Rent standards and also by the number of landlords willing to rent to our clients. Expansion of programs is also limited by the extent to which service providers can (and are willing

to) grow. In some cases, available office space may limit a providers' ability to hire additional staff in the short term, and in the longer term, growth may be limited by the amount of risk nonprofit boards are willing to assume (i.e., larger programs typically require greater cash flow).

Because of these limitations, scaling programs too quickly can result in having to expand to a larger pool of providers that may not be as skilled at working with the target population, delivering the particular set of services expected under a given program model, or delivering services using evidence-based practices such as trauma-informed care and positive youth development. Consequently, we must think strategically about the pace at which we scale over the five-year plan period, as well how we build capacity of providers in anticipation of expansion so we are better prepared when new funds become available.

Action items		Lead Agencies/Partners
7.1	Create partnerships to leverage community experts and create ongoing training opportunities on topics such as Trauma Informed Care, Positive Youth Development, Motivational Interviewing, Assertive Engagement, and Cultural Competency (particularly for LGBTQ youth) for front-line service staff.	Philanthropic, private sector, and advocacy partners
7.2	Ensure training requirements and service delivery expectations are codified in contracts.	All youth-serving agencies
7.3	Partner with local organizations to assist nonprofits with one-on-one organizational development and capacity building support on topics likes financial management, fundraising, strategic planning, board development, and human resources.	Philanthropic, private sector, and advocacy partners
7.4	Implement strong monitoring mechanisms, including the use of a "secret shopper" program, to ensure the system is safe for all youth. Developing marketing materials to ensure youth understand how to report concerns/complaints and seek assistance if they are experiencing barriers within a program.	DHS, TCP
7.5	Ensure youth voice/representation on the ICH and youth-serving agency boards.	All youth-serving agencies

Performance Management

The theory of change underlying this plan is that by using the modeling described in Chapter 3 to guide our investment choices, and the strategies described in this chapter to optimize those investments, we will be able to achieve the vision of making homelessness among youth rare, brief, and nonrecurring, while at the same time preventing a future generation of chronically homeless adults.

Of course, we will need a much more detailed performance management strategy to measure our progress and guide our efforts. Much of the data we will need is contained within our HMIS, but some of it is maintained by other District agencies in their administrative databases. Just as no one agency is responsible for addressing homelessness on its own, no one agency is independently responsible for providing the data necessary to assess progress. Following launch of the plan, ICH – with support from the Youth Subcommittee – will focus on identifying key outcome measures for the program models identified in this plan, generating baseline data, and creating a performance management infrastructure that allows us to regularly review the performance of individual providers as well as the youth system as a whole.

Next Steps

ICH will turn immediately from development of this plan to implementation, using the existing committee structure to manage the work and coordinate the efforts of partners. We will organize plan briefings with community stakeholder groups to ensure partners understand the vision and strategies in the plan, as well as the roles they are being asked to play. With 45 different strategies identified in this chapter, we will need to prioritize tasks and identify specific staff within agencies who can champion the work for their agencies. As mentioned above, we will move immediately to develop a performance management infrastructure, including not only generating and sharing performance data, but acting on that data through technical assistance and training activities to help providers improve the quality of their services. Lastly, we are committed to making this plan a living document, incorporating feedback and new ideas as they emerge, revisiting our assumptions against new data as it becomes available, and updating the models and strategies on an annual basis.



Conclusion

Our understanding of the scope and dynamics of homelessness among youth is growing. While we have more to learn about the interventions that work best for this population, youth homelessness is too urgent a cause to wait for perfect data or perfect solutions. Without a safe, stable space to call home, many youth are unable to master critical skills crucial to development, thereby limiting their ability to successfully transition to adulthood. The long-term costs are significant – both for youth that experiences homelessness, and for our community as a whole.

Because of their developmental stage, addressing homelessness among youth is about more than just stabilizing the immediate crisis and providing a quick connection to permanent housing. It's also about helping youth to develop healthy relationships with trusted adults, addressing emerging physical and behavioral health conditions, building independent living skills and confidence, and helping youth get on a path towards economic self-sufficiency. Implementation of the CPEYH will require unprecedented collaboration across our youth-serving agencies, nonprofit partners, and the private sector. However, we know that homelessness is solvable when we have a common vision, when partners understand their roles in the system and have the capacity to fulfill those roles, when we keep a laser-like focus on outcomes, and when we have the resources to get the job done. Together, we can ensure that every youth has a safe, stable place to call home.



**District of Columbia Interagency
Council on Homelessness**

Kristy Greenwalt, Executive Director
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 223
Washington, DC 20004



(202) 727-7973



ich.info@dc.gov