

Into the Spotlight

Hampden County's Coordinated Community Plan to
Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult
Homelessness

Acknowledgments

[To be completed with final draft of plan]

Welcome Letter

[To be completed with final draft of plan]

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Executive Summary

[To be completed with final draft of plan]

Introduction

Into the Spotlight is a coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness in Hampden County, Massachusetts. It is the work of stakeholders from across our community—from the worlds of homelessness, government, child welfare, education, workforce development, business, justice, affordable housing, advocacy, and out of school time activities—whose commitment will determine its successes and failures. Led by a Planning Committee of core partners, including young people with lived homelessness experience and their adult allies, these stakeholders met regularly, participated in both short and day-long convenings, and consistently stepped up with their time and energy. They supported an effort that clarified our needs and prioritized the actions that we believe will ensure that experiences of homelessness among YYAs in Hampden County are rare, brief, and one-time.

Our plan begins with a [Vision](#) of Hampden County without YYA homelessness and the [Goals](#) that we must meet to make that vision a reality. It includes a [Statement of Need](#) that highlights key elements of the challenge that we face and the [Guiding Principles](#), [Governance Structure](#), and [Decision-Making Framework](#) that we used to prioritize and respond to them. The plan then describes the [Objective and Actions](#) that we believe will lead us most effectively to preventing and ending YYA homelessness.

In August 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected Hampden County to participate in the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). This prestigious opportunity provided us with \$2.4 million in project funding and significant technical assistance supports, but required us to complete a coordinated community plan according to [HUD's program standards](#). With that in mind, the Planning Team has designed this document to meet both the needs of our community and our HUD partners.

Into the Spotlight is in effect as of the publication date of this document. We believe that the strategy laid out in this plan includes the action steps most likely to lead us to our vision and goals. It is a living document that we intend to update and adapt regularly in response to feedback and change as part of a [Continuous Improvement Strategy](#) and includes the full commitment of our Planning Committee as represented by their names on our [Signature Page](#). We invite you to read through the plan and see yourself in it. Only with the full participation of our community, from Tolland to Holland, Chester to Palmer, Southwick to Holyoke, and our center in Springfield, will we prevent and end YYA homelessness for good.

Vision and Goals

Our vision, which was developed through a facilitated community dialogue, is the bedrock of our work. It has rooted us in identifying our goals, drafting our statement of need, and articulating strategies, and it reminds us where we are trying to go. We consider it our ideal regarding YYA homelessness.

The Planning Committee envisions a world in which...

“Youth and young adults in Hampden County have a safe and stable home, community, resources, and opportunities to live harmoniously and thrive.”

Our goals focus on the high-level outcomes we are trying to accomplish in pursuit of our vision. They are grounded in a holistic vision of success for YYAs at risk of and experiencing homelessness, and believe that we must achieve all of the following if we are going to prevent and end YYA homelessness in Hampden County.

YYAs experiencing homelessness, at risk of experiencing homelessness, and leaving systems of care will have...

1. **System Access.** Access to a broad spectrum of services and opportunities through a coordinated system that is well-known, effective, caring, and prioritizes their choice.
2. **Stable Housing.** Access to well-maintained and affordable housing in safe, welcoming neighborhoods.
3. **Health and Wellbeing.** Access to resources to help promote and maintain health and wellbeing at home, school, work, and in the community.
4. **Education and Employment.** Access without barriers to a variety of education and employment opportunities to achieve the personal and financial stability necessary to thrive.
5. **Permanent Connections.** A consistent, self-identified person or people who can respectfully guide, support, and advocate with YYA to get their needs met.

Statement of Need

YYAs experience homelessness in every community across Hampden County. They represent our most vulnerable and marginalized neighbors, and their pathways in and out of housing instability match their diversity. In August 2019, we published *Under the Radar: An Assessment of Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in Hampden County, Massachusetts*.¹ An updated version of this needs assessment can be found in Appendix G, including additional quantitative data and expert opinion from stakeholders during the YHDP planning process. We designed and prioritized the solutions in this plan to respond directly to that assessment, acknowledging the uniqueness of YYA homelessness in Hampden County and our most urgent and identifiable system challenges.

Number of YYA Experiencing Homelessness

Needs:

- YYA-specific housing for those we estimate will not leave homelessness without subsidized housing (see Appendix D)
- YYA-specific crisis housing and supports for those who will leave without subsidized housing
- YYA-specific capacity for those experiencing a housing crisis but not currently in our system
- Better identification methods to account for those not identified in the system
- Collaborations with schools, cultural awareness campaigns, and low barrier access points.

Evidence: At least 100 YYAs and 116 children of 73 YYAs parents sleep on the streets, in shelters, or in Transitional Housing (TH) every night. The homelessness service system served 377 YYAs and 284 children of 201 YYA parents in FY 2019. Stakeholders frequently remind us that YYAs steer away from adult services. HMIS includes only 23 YYAs under 18, but Hampden County schools identified 103 unaccompanied students out of 3,271 total experiencing homelessness. An upward limit of 6,700 YYAs (10-24 yrs old) experience homelessness in Hampden County over the course of a year, including couch-surfing.

The Age of YYAs Experiencing Homelessness and Its Effects

Needs:

- Better identification of younger YYAs
- Outreach and awareness that combat stigma and increase the likelihood that YYAs under 18 will present for help

¹ To download the full report, go to <https://www.undertheradarspringfield.org/home>

- Solutions designed specifically for younger YYAs, including family engagement and the mitigation of cliff effects
- Protocols for older adult providers to whom younger YYAs approach for support.

Evidence: The average age first homelessness experiences is 17.4, but only 2 to 5% of YYAs in our homelessness systems are under 18. An estimated 1 in 30 13 to 17-year-olds experience homelessness each year. Stakeholders frequently describe the negative impact of cliff effects on YYAs' ability to access the resources they need.

Racial Disparity in YYA Experiences of Homelessness

Needs:

- Target solutions to minority YYAs, specifically Latinx and Black YYAs
- Cultural competency among provider and community organizations
- Wrap-around supports that address segregation, income, parenting supports, and address ability of Latinx YYAs to return home

Evidence: The majority of YYAs experiencing homelessness in Hampden County are Latinx (65%) and Black (21%) YYA or multi-racial (14%) and they are significantly overrepresented (34% and 10.5% of the general population). Hampden County has the highest Latinx-White segregation in the nation and stakeholders consistently acknowledge that it is largely black and brown YYAs experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The disparity is larger for parenting YYAs; up to 87% Latinx. Latinx unemployment is 21.5%, their average income is \$23,911 and the poverty rate is 40%. The Black poverty rate is 22%. But that does not explain the disparities. The majority of the Latinx population is Puerto Rican, but stakeholders identified fears about citizenship and false targeting as barriers. According to our BNL Latinx YYAs are underrepresented among those who "Returned to Family"—33% compared to 52%.

YYA Homelessness, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Needs:

- Affirming housing and supports for LGBTQ YYA experiencing homelessness
- Improved understanding of LGBTQ YYA homelessness specifically in Hampden County
- Culturally competent family acceptance and support strategies
- Strategies to support unsheltered and unaccompanied male-identified YYA

Evidence: Data sources vary significantly in gender among YYAs experiencing homelessness. Male-identified YYAs may experience unsheltered homelessness at higher rates than female-identified YYAs despite more females than males in the system overall. Fewer than 1% identified as gender-non-conforming. 13% of YYAs experiencing homelessness identified as LGBTQ but 20% to 40% is the consistent national range. LGBTQ YYAs at 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness, their reasons for leaving home are significantly different, and they experience homelessness more severely, with higher rates of sexual exploitation, violence, and

suicidality. Major themes from stakeholders include unsupportive families, particularly for LGBTQ+ people, and homophobia and transphobia in families, communities, and services.

The Impact of Parenting on YYA Homelessness

Needs:

- To model the number of units needed to permanently house parenting YYA quickly
- To reduce their average length of stay in shelter
- To improve exit outcomes; To improve data on “unknown exits”
- To incorporate or collaborate more closely with Teen Parenting Programs
- Culturally competent programming, with a focus on Latina YYAs
- Programming that addresses barriers to education and employment for parenting YYAs
- Awareness of the impact of intimate partner violence, gang involvement, and trauma on YYA parenting experiencing homelessness

Evidence: The 2019 PIT identified 73 parenting YYAs in Hampden County. The system served 201 parenting YYAs in emergency shelter in FY 2019 (168 households with 284 children). Their average length of stay was 219 days. 51% exited to permanent housing; 27% exited to temporary destinations; and 22% exited to unknown destinations. 32 pregnant or parenting YYAs live in 3 Teen Pregnancy Program (TPP) homes, but they are not included in PIT or HMIS and do not require homelessness for entry. Massachusetts is a “right to shelter state,” provides emergency shelter to all eligible families, and has the third-highest number of sheltered homeless families in the U.S. 74% of parenting YYAs 18-24 identify as Latinx in HMIS and PIT. Providers note that YYA parents appear to have higher rates of intimate partner violence than older families, very low rates of high-school completion, high levels of trauma experience, appear unmotivated to go to school, to work, or move out of shelter, engage in lots of marijuana use, and may have partner or gang issues that interfere with their ability to thrive.

Homelessness System Experience and Pathways for YYAs

Needs:

- Diversion and rapid exit resources and protocols for those engaging for the first time
- A targeted long-stayer responses for both parenting and non-parenting YYAs
- To dramatically improve rates of exit to PH for shelter and TH
- To improve exit survey collection and tracking to account for unknown exit outcomes

Evidence: 76% of young adult parents engaged homelessness services for the first time in 2019. 24% had a previous experience. 51% exit shelter or TH exit to PH (25% with a long-term subsidy; 18% without a subsidy; 4% with family; 3% with a short-term subsidy; 1% to PSH). 28% exit to temporary destinations (another shelter, TH, or a temporary stay with family or friends). No data is collected for 22% of households. 91.3% (23) in PSH remain housed or exit to other PH.

70% of non-parenting young adults engaged homelessness services for the first time in 2019. 30% had a previous experience. 28% exit shelter, SH, or TH to PH (14% with no subsidy, 7% with a subsidy, 4% with family, and 2% with friends). 11% go to temporary destinations (family, friends, emergency shelter, TH or incarceration). 61% exited without completing an interview.

83% of under 18-year-olds engaged homelessness services for the first time in 2019. 17% had a previous experience. 64% exit shelter to PH. There is no CoC-funded PH for this population.

3% of non-parenting YYAs in HMIS are long term stayers (90 days or longer), and 2% (3) are chronically homeless. Parenting YYAs are more likely to be long-stayers and chronically homeless: 78% are long-stayers and 7% (19) are chronically homeless. Among all YYAs, the numbers are 50% and 5%.

Health Impact on YYA Homelessness Experiences

Needs:

- Harm reduction and trauma informed care throughout YYA-homelessness services
- Low-barrier access to an array of mental health services, including for under 18-year-olds and 18-24-year-olds
- Access to YYA-specific substance use treatment
- Coordination with the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

Evidence: 37% of YYAs in HMIS report a disabling condition: 70% for non-parenting minors; 49% for non-parenting young adults; 26% for parenting YYAs. Stakeholders consistently identified the impact of trauma and reported high rates of behavioral health issues. 30% of YYAs in HMIS report mental health as a disabling condition: 18% of parenting YYAs; 35% non-parenting young adults; 50% of non-parenting minors. 9% overall expect their mental health condition to be “long, continued indefinite duration and substantially impairs ability to live independently.” 69% of YYAs nationally indicate having mental health difficulties. 6% of YYA in HMIS report substance “abuse” and 2% expect the condition to be “long, continued indefinite...” MA DPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services identified 203 Hampden County YYAs ages 14-24 in their treatment system who self-identified as “homeless” (25% of identifiable enrollments), and 344 as either “missing” or “unable to determine.” Providers report that parenting youth are reluctant to acknowledge substance use due to fear of child welfare.

Education for YYAs Experiencing Homelessness

Needs:

- Increased capacity for schools and YYA shelters to support the educational outcomes of YYAs experiencing homelessness
- Better data and data coordination on their educational progress

- Housing and school support strategy specifically for community college students, including awareness among school staff

Evidence: 74% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in Hampden County report being in school or having a diploma or HiSET. HMIS grade level completion data from only 1% of YYAs. Lack of a diploma or GED equivalent is associated with a 346% higher risk of homelessness nationally.

For 2-year community colleges in Western Massachusetts, 13% of students experience homelessness, 47% housing insecurity, and 43% food insecurity. For 4-year institutions, 8% of students experience homelessness, 34% housing insecurity, and 37% food insecurity. For Holyoke Community College, 7.3% of the 386 students experienced homelessness during the survey, 16% at some point during the previous year, and 46% indicated housing insecurity.

Employment for YYAs Experiencing Homelessness

Needs:

- Employment strategies built into homelessness programs
- Improved assistance program enrollment rates
- Improved employment status data capture in HMIS
- Workforce development and employment opportunities specifically for YYA experiencing homelessness

Evidence: 31% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in the County report active employment compared to 54% for all 16- to 24-year-olds. 17% report part time work, 15% full-time work, and 4% “under the table.” 43% receive cash assistance, 14% Social Security/disability and 6% income from family. 52% of YYAs report income when entering the homelessness system; 20% earned income. HMIS only captured “Employment Status” for 5% of YYAs in FY 2019. Nationally, incomes below \$24,000 are associated with a 162% higher risk of homelessness.

Prior Systems Involvement of YYAs Experiencing Homelessness

Needs:

- Improved data and coordination regarding criminal justice involvement
- Improved transition planning, supports, and long-term follow-up for systems involved YYAs
- Support for YYAs to overcome collateral consequences related to past system involvement, particularly with the criminal justice system, including background screening for housing and services

Evidence: 31% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in the County report foster care experience and 17% involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice system (stakeholders believe that our systems of identification and support may be undercounting this population).

Commercial and Sexual Exploitation and YYA Homelessness

Needs:

- Training to identify and engage YYAs in conversations about trafficking
- Higher data completion rates for CSE elements in HMIS
- Coordination with non-homelessness CSE partners and a system-wide CSE and YYA homelessness strategy

Evidence: We know little about the connections between sex trafficking and YYA homelessness in the County, however, stakeholders frequently identify it as an issue. No YYAs self-reported “sex work” in 2018, and 4% having ever exchanged sex for money or housing. HMIS captured “Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Sex Trafficking” data for 7% of participating YYAs in FY 2019 and zero reported exploitation or trafficking. 21% report being survivors of domestic violence, which may include sexual trafficking and exploitation, but more often refers to intimate partner or family violence. According to one national estimate, 15% of YYAs experiencing homelessness had been trafficked for sex and 32% had been involved in the sex trade. The region is at a major east-west and north-south crossroads and accessible to New York, Boston and New England, placing it along routes used for drug and human trafficking. The new casino in downtown Springfield may also be a magnet for such activities.

Where YYAs Experiencing Homelessness Sleep at Night

Needs:

- An effective diversion and shelter strategy for YYAs
- Systems designed to identify and support YYAs living a variety of places and moving along non-linear pathways in and out of homelessness
- To educate YYAs and allies when they qualify and should present for support

Evidence: 88% of YYAs in the 2018 PIT were in emergency shelter, 10 in TH or SH, and 2 in unsheltered situations. 75 YYAs in shelter in the youth count, 14 doubled-up or couch-surfing situation, 7 in TH, 2 sleeping outside, 1 in a hotel, and 1 in a car. 9% of YYAs entered the homelessness services system from the street in FY 2018.

Homelessness Risk Factors

Needs:

- Capacity to coordinate a YYA homelessness response across multiple systems

Evidence: Stakeholders identified the many “interlocking problems” that lead to homelessness.

Need:

- Broad housing policy changes that make it less likely for these families and YYAs to lose their homes
- Family conflict resolution prevention strategies, including based on abuse, beliefs, and identity
- Flexible housing and supports for families who would keep their YYAs at home but for housing or financial constraints

Evidence: Top self-reported reasons for homelessness included: 70% family or friends; 43% an unhealthy or abusive relationship; 29% violence at home; 16% ran away from family, a group home or a foster home; 9% differences in religious or cultural beliefs; 7% conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation. Separately, 26% responded that their house was too small, 20% fighting with parents, 20% told to leave, 19% wanted to leave, 12% left foster care, 11% had to leave due to pregnancy, 11% families lost their homes, 9% that home was not safe, and 8% left due to abuse and neglect. 25% claim they previously lost housing due to a mental health condition, 21% due to a learning disability, and 9% due to a head injury.

Need:

- Solutions that address poverty as a root cause of YYA homelessness
- More affordable housing in every city and town that matches the average renter's ability to pay
- Landlord and developer engagement strategies; Increased wages that allow for lower than 30% spent on housing

Evidence: Hampden County has a higher rate of poverty (17.2%) than the national average (12.3%). It is over 28% for Springfield and Holyoke, 23% for YYAs between 12 and 24, and over 18,000 young adults 18-24 live in poverty. Fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Hampden County is \$1,061, yet renters earn an average wage of \$11.18 per hour and can only afford up to \$581 per month. Actual rent varies across the county, with variations between urban centers, wealthy suburbs, and rural areas. The average rent in Hampden County is 34.6% of area median income.

Need:

- Wealth building programs that address intergenerational poverty, particularly among the Latinx population
- Culturally competent employment programs that target Latinx YYAs
- Desegregation-oriented policies that remove barriers for Latinx and Black residents to move to wealthy cities and towns in the county

Evidence: Springfield has one of the largest disparities in unemployment between Hispanic and White community members in the US (21.5% to 6.3%) and in income equality (\$23,911 to \$60,105). The Springfield, Massachusetts Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was first in the nation for Hispanic-White segregation and 22nd for Black-White segregation in 2010. People of color are concentrated in Springfield and Holyoke—74.7% of the region's African-Americans

and 73.0% of the region's Latinx—majority-minority cities bordered by predominantly White towns.

Need:

- Teen pregnancy strategies and services, including those that target Latina YYAs

Evidence: Teen birth rates are very high, especially among Latinas: 31.9 (38.8) in Holyoke, 25.2 (43) in Springfield, and 13.8 (28.8) in Chicopee births per 1,000 women ages 15-19 (Latina).

Need:

- Reengagement efforts for continuing education and employment
- Attractive workforce development programs that lead to living wages
- Targeted employment and continuing education efforts for male-identifying YYAs 20-24 in Springfield and other urban centers.

Evidence: About 17% (8,056) of YYAs aged 16-24 in Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield and Westfield are either not enrolled in school **and** not working (2,740), or hold low-wage jobs **and** are not continuing their education (5,316). 56% (4,490) are in Springfield, (58%) (4,699) are male, and 78% (6,264) are 20-24. Unemployment is only 3.4% and regional employers, particularly those in precision manufacturing, continue to report difficulty filling positions.

Need:

- Efforts to track and support children in the family homelessness system so that they do not end up unaccompanied in the YYA homelessness system

Evidence: 6% of YYAs in the homelessness system in FY2019 engaged family homelessness services as minors. 3% Non-parenting and 6% parenting 18-24 year olds reported family homelessness experiences, but 30% of YYAs under 18 experiencing homelessness report family homelessness experiences.

Need:

- Targeted long term prevention efforts for YYAs aging out and leaving both continuing DCF services and DYS custody
- Successful transition planning efforts that start early, build strong community connections to prevent homelessness after exit, and always end in stable housing

Evidence: Hampden County has 7% of the state's population, but 14% of the youth in foster care. At the end of 2018, 2,595 12 to 24 year olds actively engaged with child welfare; 2,381 12 to 17 year olds and 214 over 18. 23% were "in placement" and 77% "out of placement." 70% of "in placement" and over 18 had a "Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement" (APPLA) permanency plan and 2% an "unspecified" plan. 37% of "out of placement" and over 18 had an APPLA permanency plan and 23% of all ages had an "unspecified" plan. Hispanic YYAs represent 48% of all YYAs in foster care. Black YYAs represent 11%. 74 YYAs age out

each year, and 39 (53%) do not receive continuing services. Of those who continue services, 53 stop after 21 and 8 stop services after age 23: ~100 at high risk each year after leaving DCF. DYS reported 107 youth “in treatment” in June 2019—80 in Springfield and 27 in Holyoke (includes Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin County youth). DYS discharged 7 to unstable housing in 2018 (6 connected to the Springfield office and 1 to the Holyoke office). Stakeholders identified the false choice facing YYAs between uncaring and unsupportive systems and living on your own, and their tremendous risk for exploitation and homelessness.

Geography and Transportation

Need:

- A countywide strategy that addresses rural and urban communities and their local governments and decision-makers
- A transportation strategy that connects people to resources

Evidence: Hampden County is partially urban with a population of 463,490; but the county includes 7 cities and 22 towns ranging from urban to rural. There is no county government and so functions are either state or local. Springfield, population 154,758, is the economic center. Many stakeholders identified regional transportation as a significant challenge. There is little public transportation infrastructure requiring personal transportation particularly for rural YYAs.

The YYA Homelessness System and Current Resources

Needs:

- An inclusive governance and decision-making structure that is well resourced, leverages YYA and provider expertise, connects partners and resources from different sectors, and is transparent and accountable to its constituents

Evidence: Community leaders describe the YYA homelessness system from “forward-thinking” to “uncoordinated, broken.” Some describe it as “difficult to navigate” and “unsafe,” recognizing a “disconnect between system and youth perceptions.”

Housing Inventory

Needs:

- More YYA-dedicated PH options across a broad range of communities
- Flexible housing resources for a number of subpopulations and both urban and rural areas
- Limited wait time and change from waitlists to by-name-lists
- Housing navigators, accessible navigation information, and basic resource support to access housing
- A regularly updated housing model to predict future housing needs

- A landlord engagement, education, and retention strategy for YYAs

Evidence: There are 5 programs and 67 beds dedicated to YYAs experiencing homelessness. 84% of units are for PH (84%)—26 beds for RRH, 20 beds for PSH, and 10 beds for other PH. The community has 1 TH program with 5 beds and has 1 YYA shelter with 6 beds. The county also has a host home program for minors with six active host sites. 55% of current YYA beds are scattered site. A PSH program is in Holyoke and another PH program is in Westfield. The YYA shelter is in Springfield but there is no YYA PSH in Springfield. A major theme from focus groups has been long waitlists for housing and services. The Host Home model serves 14 to 18 year olds; the TH program serves 17 to 22-year-olds; the PSH program in Holyoke serves YYA-led families with disabilities; the RRH program serves non-parenting YYAs; and the PH program in Westfield serves YYAs 18 to 24-year-olds.

Other Resources

Needs:

- YYA programs with the capacity to support YYAs experiencing homelessness
- Collaboration between YYA programs and YYA homelessness system partners
- Improved outreach and medical support
- Capacity to support basic needs, childcare, trafficking and commercial sex work survivors, immigration needs, benefits enrollment, disability needs, domestic violence survivors, early childhood education, documentation and ID challenges, and legal issues
- Access to non-housing supports for suburban and rural communities

Evidence: There are two YYA street outreach programs a dedicated medical and dental service for YYAs doubled up or experiencing homelessness and 12 other homelessness programs that YYAs can access, including additional outreach, healthcare, basic needs support, benefits enrollment, and case management, but they do not have special capacity to serve YYAs. The community identified 185+ programs with which YYAs experiencing homelessness might engage and 82 dedicated to YYAs: 28 positive outlet or hobby programs; 9 mental health services; 8 employment and training services; and 7 pregnancy and parenting services. There are few basic needs programs; childcare services; trafficking and commercial sex work programs; immigration services; benefits enrollment; disability services; domestic violence supports; early childhood education; documentation and ID support; and legal services. Most YYA resources are located near urban centers: 64 out of 82 YYA resources are in Springfield or Holyoke, and 3 are in West Springfield and Chicopee. 12 cover all of Hampden County, but may have an urban core bias. 2 in Westfield and 1 in Palmer.

Solution Strategy

Guiding Principles

To ground the work of preventing and ending YYA homelessness in Hampden County, the Planning Committee developed and agreed upon a set of guiding principles:

1. Leadership by YYAs
2. Collaboration between YYAs and their older adult allies
3. Data-informed decision making and evaluation
4. Centering equity in all policy and programs
5. Relentless commitment to transparency, positive outcomes, and innovative and sustainable solutions

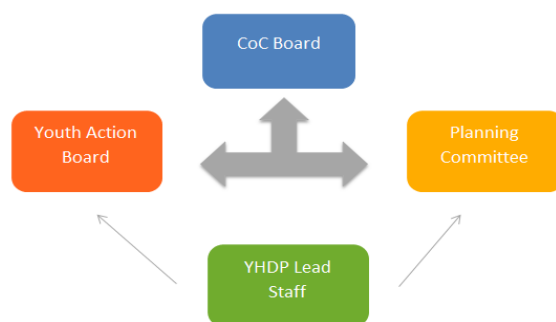
These principles work together to elevate the voice of YYAs, address racism and other inequities, and create a community commitment to long-term solutions. They also serve as cross-cutting themes that support each of the strategic areas outlined below .

Governance and Decision-Making

The **YHDP Lead staff** developed the initial framework for the planning process, prepared agendas and materials for meetings, facilitated conversations and actions between stakeholders, and consolidated content generated by community members. They led the drafting of the plan but did not act independently as decision-makers. The **Youth Action Board (YAB)** and **Planning Committee** acted as the primary decision-making bodies. They reviewed and approved the plan and then presented it to the **CoC Board** of Directors for their signature. The Board approved the plan by consensus on April 30, 2020.

The Planning Committee made decisions by consensus: nothing was included in the plan unless **all** members were at least **80%** comfortable. They also agreed to the following rules:

1. At least 3 YAB members must be present for a decision to be made;
2. Planning Committee YAB members represent the full YAB's perspective but may need to take a decision back to the full YAB before a decision can be made, at their discretion;
3. Ensure every voice is heard by listening actively, using respectful disagreement, and following our meeting agreements.



When YAB members on the Planning Committee brought decisions to the full YAB, the decisions were presented for a vote. Final votes at the YAB level were made by majority vote of YAB members present, with the vote taken anonymously. The YAB worked in close partnership with the Planning Committee throughout the planning process.

Objectives and Actions

Into the Spotlight is all about **doing something**. In this section, we outline the **objectives and actions** our community will undertake to prevent and end YYA homelessness. They are in direct response to our **statement of need** and under the direction of our **governance and decision-making structure**. We have organized them around five strategic areas:

1. System Access
2. Housing
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Education and Employment
5. Permanent Connections

These areas parallel the plan's overall goals and emerged from a series of community meetings held between November 8 and December 18, 2019. The sessions included partners from across multiple sectors (e.g., homeless service and housing providers, education, workforce development, behavioral health, child welfare, city and state agencies, and others). Each meeting included substantial representation of YYAs with lived experience; in one meeting, YYAs comprised the majority of attendees, while in others, they represented at least 25% of those in attendance.

The table below suggests potential strategies and activities that came out of the community meetings. These specific activities listed below are not comprehensive, and they have not yet been prioritized—a step that will occur in early 2020 to narrow down the range of projects that will be funded under YHDP. We present the possible directions here to illustrate the range of input offered by the community up to this point in the process.

Strategic Area	Potential Activities
System Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increase YYA outreach and engagement (including through peer outreach workers) to YYAs experiencing homelessness● Provide funding for a range of transportation options for YYAs to access jobs, housing, and education● Increase transparency in decision-making process by including YAB in decisions around funding and program priorities● Improve coordination and communication across sectors--homelessness and housing service providers, workforce boards, landlords and employers, health and behavioral health, state agencies (DFC, DYS, DTA, DMH), schools/colleges.● Conduct public awareness activities around YYA homelessness
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increase access to crisis housing and emergency shelter for YYAs, including making the adult shelters more YYA- and LGBTQ-friendly● Fund a range of medium-term housing options, including host homes, dorm-style housing, transitional living programs, and rooms for rent in people's homes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create permanent housing opportunities by increasing funding for subsidies and developing new affordable housing units dedicated to YYAs experiencing homelessness • Focus housing programs on specific populations, such as LGBTQ YYAs • Partner with and educate landlords to reduce stigma • Create/expand flexible funding pool to cover first/last month's rent, security deposit, etc.
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate more closely with health care providers, emergency rooms, and hospitals to identify and engage YYAs at risk of homelessness • Develop/expand residential drug/alcohol treatment programs for YYAs • Create a transitional program for 14-17 year-olds in recovery
Education and Employment	<p><i>Early Childhood:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect families with NEFWC, DTA, Mass Health, Health New England • Train educators on YYA homelessness • Provide on-campus childcare • Increase 2nd and 3rd shift childcare • Expand after school program/hours • Build in more behavioral and emotional support onsite • Improve transportation for parents with young children <p><i>K-12:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of homeless liaisons/outreach social workers in public schools • Increase communication between first responders and schools • Create program for graduation coaches • Increase vocational opportunities connected to high schools for YYAs experiencing homelessness <p><i>Post-Secondary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure FAFSA support for YYAs experiencing homelessness • Conduct college readiness activities focused on this population while they are in high school • Increase access to childcare for parents who want to go to college • Offer homeless liaisons on campus • Increase opportunities for vocational training • Provide peer-to-peer mentoring at enrollment to ensure college retention <p><i>Workforce Development:</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect more YYAs experiencing homelessness with Job Corps, Youthbuild, and ROCA • Create navigators to help YYAs prepare for work • Utilize social media to engage YYAs around employment-related topics <p><i>Employment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create employment hubs that are easily accessible in high schools • Focus on job opportunities for high school students and recent graduates • Offer mentoring programs with stipend, as well as work-study jobs for YYAs experiencing homelessness • Offer information sessions about job experiences and qualifications • Provide greater access to transportation • Educate employers about homelessness/barriers faced by YYAs
Permanent Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create/expand peer mentoring programs/focus on support navigating housing, education, health, and other systems • Develop job mentoring programs • Create volunteer program to help YYAs understand finances, credit, banking, savings, etc.

We understand that these activities still require further refinement and prioritization. These steps will occur beginning in January of 2020 and will shape the request for proposals to be issued by the City of Springfield for specific YHDP projects. In this process, we plan to use the following framework for action to group activities:

1. **Connect** existing efforts.
2. **Build in** new activities into current programs that improve outcomes for YYAs
3. **Build out** approaches that are working well, in order to scale them up
4. **Build new** programs and interventions that do not currently exist

Continuous Improvement Strategy

To ensure the effectiveness of the effort over time, and to adapt as we learn and circumstances change, we will continue to engage the YAB and the YHDP planning group to guide all YHDP activities. Concurrent with our work to prioritize YHDP programs, we will develop a formal process for continuous quality improvement, which will be included in the final Coordinated Community Plan in April 2020.

Signature Page

- We approve this strategy
- Recommend that you have it signed by as many committee members as possible - well beyond the required number (i.e., DCF, CoC, Local Gov, YAB Reps)

Appendix A: Planning Background

This coordinated community plan is a year and a half in the making. During the spring and summer of 2019, the Hampden County CoC, led by the City of Springfield Office of Housing, conducted a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) as part of its Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) youth homeless grant. Over the course of six months, the CoC worked with a consulting team to gather quantitative data, conduct stakeholder interviews, facilitate focus groups, lead community presentations, and help the community apply for the YHDP. That effort produced [Under The Radar: An Assessment of Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in Hampden County, Massachusetts](#). It also prepared the community for a YYA homelessness planning effort that would use the CNA to build an effective YYA homelessness response.

The CoC intentionally designed its CNA and planning process to mirror the expectations of HUDs YHDP, including the development of a new YAB. When HUD selected Hampden County as a YHDP community in August 2019, the CoC had already identified several lead partners and begun to collaborate with local and state agencies. The planning process was led by a newly formed Planning Committee, which was made up of five YAB members, two other YYAs who had been involved in foster care planning, DCF, members of the CoC Board of Directors, and other stakeholders. The Planning Committee met regularly, at least twice a month, from September 2019 through April 2020. The work of the Planning Committee was supported by the YHDP Lead Staff, the HUD-provided technical assistance provider, and our own consulting team.





From September to December 2019, the Planning Committee defined its vision, guiding principles, decision-making structure, and goals. As this work progressed, a separate track worked on each of the core plan areas of housing, permanent connections, education and employment, and social-emotional well-being.

The tracks started with facilitated conversations with the YAB to identify needs and barriers, and moved into half-day design sessions with a broader set of stakeholders. These design sessions included YAB members, additional YYAs, Planning Committee members, and subject-matter experts, who worked together to explore issues more deeply and create potential solutions.

The work generated in the design sessions produced a very rough first draft of strategies and action steps. Staff organized this material to serve as the information base for the YAB and the Planning Committee to use to analyze, prioritize, and make decisions.

Appendix B: Planning Team Roster

(In alphabetical order)

Aisha Pizarro | *YWCA of Greater Springfield*

Amy Schneider | *Hopewell*

Caitlin Julius | *Youth*

Christopher Corburn | *Youth Action Board*

Cheryl LaChance | *Way Finders, Inc.*

Cierra Singletary | *Youth Action Board*

Dawn Distefano | *Square One*

Emily English | *Gandara Center*

Eryn Tobin | *Massachusetts Department of Children and Families*

Gerry McCafferty | *City of Springfield*

Jacon Chacon | *Youth Action Board*

Janice Humason | *Clinical Support Options/Friends of the Homeless*

Jennifer Sunderland | *Springfield Public Schools*

Kathryn Kirby | *MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board*

Kermit Dunkelberg | *Holyoke Community College*

Laurie Bobe | *Massachusetts Department of Youth Services*

Leslie Garcia | *Youth Action Board*

Nathan Vargas | *Youth*

Pamela Schwartz | *Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness*

Peter Sylver | *Center for Human Development*

Taina Lopez | *Youth Action Board*

Tyrese Tillman | *Center for Human Development*

Appendix C: Full List of Partners

Partners	Partner's name	Involvement
a. CoC Board	Springfield-Hampden County Continuum of Care - Board of Directors	Review and approval of all components of plan; provision of HMIS data; participation of multiple board members in planning and working sessions; provision of planning funds
b. Youth Advisory Boards	Youth Action Board (YAB)	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in all planning groups/sessions, decision-making authority exercised by YAB approval of all parts of the plan and through its representation on the CoC Board of Directors
c. Local and State Government	City of Springfield	Staff support for planning; lead and participate in planning activities; review and approval of all components of plan
	Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)	Funding support for YAB; provision of state agency data
d. Public Child Welfare Agencies	Massachusetts Department of Children and Families	Member of stakeholder planning group; and participation in all planning groups/sessions; review and approval of all components of pla; assistance in transporting and assisting foster care youth to attend planning and YAB meetings
e. ESG Program Recipients	YWCA of Western Massachusetts	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Education/Employment planning
	Clinical and Support Options-Friends of the Homeless	Member of stakeholder planning group;
f. Local and State Law Enforcement and Judges	Hampden County Sheriff's Department	Provision of data
	Springfield Police Department	Provision of data
g. Early Childhood Development and Child Care providers	Square One	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Education/Employment planning
h. Local and State Educational Agencies	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Participation in Education/Employment planning
	Springfield Public Schools	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Education/Employment planning

	Chicopee Public Schools	Participation in Education/Employment planning
	West Springfield Public Schools	Participation in Education/Employment planning
i. Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Providers	Center for Human Development - Safety Zone	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in all planning groups/sessions; provision of staff for ongoing YAB facilitation
j. Non-Profit Youth Organizations	Hopewell, Inc.	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Permanent Connections and Education/Employment planning
	Youth Villages	Participation in Permanent Connection and Education/Employment planning
	Friends of Children - Focus Program	Participation in Permanent Connections planning
k. Juvenile and Adult Corrections and Probation	Massachusetts Department of Youth Services	Member of stakeholder planning group; provision of data
	Hampden County Sheriff's Department	Provision of data
l. Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Agencies	Gandara Center	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in all planning groups/sessions; provision of staff for ongoing YAB facilitation; provision of meeting space, food and supplies for the YAB
	Mental Health Association	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Permanent Connections and Education/Employment planning
m. WIOA Boards and Employment Agencies	MassHire Hampden County	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Education/Employment planning
n. Landlords		
o. Public Housing Authorities	Springfield Housing Authority	
	Holyoke Housing Authority	
p. Institutions of Higher Education	Holyoke Community College	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Education/Employment planning
	Westfield State College	Participation in Education/Employment planning
q. Community Development Corporations	New North Citizens Council	Participation in Education/Employment planning

r. Affordable Housing Developers	Way Finders, Inc.	Member of stakeholder planning group; participation in Education/Employment planning
s. Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	Davis Foundation	Funding for YAB
	Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	Funding for YAB
	United Way of Hampden County	Funding for YAB: participation in Permanent Connections planning
	Treehouse Foundation	Participation in Permanent Connections planning
t. Privately Funded Homeless Organizations		
Additional Organizations	Springfield Works	Participation in Education/Employment planning
	Massachusetts Mentoring Partnership	Participation in Permanent Connections planning
	Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness	Member of stakeholder planning group; Participation in Housing, Permanent Connections, Education/Employment planning
	Springfield Public Library	Participation in Permanent Connections planning
	Gardening the Community	Participation in Permanent Connections and Education/Employment planning

Appendix D: Detailed Action Steps

Appendix E: Housing Model

This housing model estimates the number of new units that the Hampden County will need to end homelessness among unaccompanied YYA. The model is highly simplified and targeted towards a specific subset of young people and resources. It does not address the housing needs of *parenting* YYA. It makes the following general assumptions:

- There are no other changes to the YYA homelessness system – i.e., no effect from increased collaboration, prevention, or efforts to improve the other four outcomes
- All new units are designed to serve YYAs with staff and resource capacity to serve them well
- The only YYAs currently included are those who are currently interacting with HMIS
- The impact of the model depends on the type and number of each resource the community expects to develop and when they become operational
- New resources are operational for the entire year they are added and are geography neutral.

The model can accommodate additional or refined variables as they become relevant and available, but it is at first designed to provide simple guideposts. It should be used together with other data and the input of community members.

We used the following data for the first model iteration projecting to 2023. Our goal was to reduce the number of YYAs who need a subsidized housing solution to 0 as quickly as possible:

Characteristics of Current YYA Population in HMIS	
YYAs who experienced homelessness in 2018	216
% of YYAs who did not get a housing resource, self-resolve, or disappear in 2018	17%
YYAs entering homelessness in 2018	179
% of YYAs who may need a housing intervention	30%

Existing Housing Resources			New Housing Recommendations					
	Inventory	Annual Turnover		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
PSH	30	15%	New shelter beds	6	0	0	0	0
RRH	26	75%	New Host Home units	0	10	5	0	0
TH (incl. Host Homes)	12	75%	New RRH units	0	8	5	1	0
Shelter	0	600%	New PSH units	0	5	0	0	0
			New TAY-RA	0	7	5	1	0
			New TH-RRH	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix F: YAB Vision, Mission, and Goals

Appendix G: Updated Community Needs Assessment

YYA experience homelessness in every community across Hampden County. They are youth in their teens and young adults in their early 20s. They are unaccompanied and they are parents, they overwhelmingly represent the Latinx, Black, and LGBTQ+ communities, and they have deep involvement with our local and state systems of care. Their pathways are unique and non-linear, moving between experiences on the street, in shelters, on couches, in institutions, and in homes. And the community has not provided the resources and supports that these YYA want and need to thrive in our community. In August, 2019, we published [Under the Radar: An Assessment of Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in Hampden County, Massachusetts.](#)² This statement of need builds off of that substantial work and updates it with additional data that we have collected and analyzed over the intervening months.

Number of YYA Experiencing Homelessness

The CoC identified 100 YYA and 116 young children of YYA parents on the streets, in emergency shelters, or in Transitional Housing (TH) during the January 2019 Point In Time (PIT) count. These numbers provide a minimum baseline for YYA homelessness in the county. However, current PIT counting methods capture only a portion of the total number of YYA experiencing homelessness. PIT data do not include YYA fleeing dangerous living arrangements, those who are sleeping night-to-night between different homes and apartments (i.e., couchsurfing), those sleeping consistently in spaces too small or inappropriately configured to meet basic needs (i.e., doubled up), and those who do not want to be, or cannot be, identified by volunteers during the City's annual count.

Annual estimates are more likely than PIT estimates to include individuals experiencing episodic homelessness, which research shows is much more likely for YYA than chronic homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012). In FY 2019, the CoC's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) included 377 YYA served in Emergency Shelter (ES), TH, and Safe Haven (SH) programs or contacted by a street outreach team (HMIS, 2019). HMIS included an additional 284 children in YYA-headed households during the same period.

Annual estimates only capture YYA who interact with our homelessness resources and are therefore constrained by the current system's limitations, including an orientation towards older adults. As one provider identified, "Young people steer far away from adult services. They don't want to be in a wet shelter where everyone is drunk and selling drugs." The CoC's HMIS for FY 2019 includes only 23 unaccompanied YYA under 18, and yet Hampden County school districts identified 103 students experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian out of 3,271 total students experiencing homelessness (DESE, 2018). The school's method for identification is itself imperfect, generally requiring that young people self-report to a homelessness liaison or

² To download the full report, go to <https://www.undertheradarspringfield.org/home>

counselor, which may significantly suppress the number of YYA actually experiencing homelessness.

Using a national rule of thumb that one in ten YYA who are 18-24 and one in 30 YYA who are under 18 experience some form of homelessness during the year (Morton, 2017), we would expect an upward limit of 6,700 YYA (10-24 yrs old) having an experience of homelessness in Hampden County over the course of a year (Census, 2017), including couchsurfing. That represents a significant delta over the 377 YYA that we see, and national data should also be viewed as a guide and not an answer, but it does invite us to question whether we are identifying all of the YYA who are experiencing homelessness in our region. As one young person put it, “Young people experiencing homelessness fly under the radar.” Another remarked that “Many YYAs are couch-surfing and not accessing services.” Regardless, the experience of homelessness, in all its forms, is both an urgent challenge and small enough that we should feel empowered that we can actually do something about it.

The Age of YYA Experiencing Homelessness and Its Effects

According to YYAs, the average age of their first experience with homelessness is 17.4 years old (Mass.gov, 2018), but only 2 to 5% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in our homelessness systems are under the age of 18 (HUD, 2018; HMIS, 2018; Mass.gov, 2018). This suggests that homelessness begins, on average, when YYA are still minors, although our systems might not identify them until after they turn 18.

Homelessness in Hampden County impacts “youth”—under 18—and “young adults”—between 18 and 24—differently. Their age defines how they enter, interact with, and leave systems of care, impacts the services available to them, determines the community and system rules that they must follow, and correlates with their preparedness for the programs, resources, and relationships with which they will interact. What’s more, young people experience significant cliff effects as they transition between youth and young adulthood.³ One provider commented, “The young people that come in are in unstable housing for one reason or another. We’ve got 10-12 people coming regularly, weekly. Half of them are in group homes and are getting ready to age out. Our current concern is where they are going to go. There is just not a lot to do for folks [this age].”

Racial Disparity in YYA Experiences of Homelessness

Latinx and Black YYA make up the majority of YYA experiencing homelessness in Hampden County and they are significantly overrepresented relative to their percentage of the general YYA population. Similarly, participants in our focus groups consistently acknowledge that it is largely black and brown YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the area. The CoC has made efforts over the past few years to better account for these disparities,

³ A “cliff effect” refers to the sudden and complete ineligibility for supportive services, generally associated with age (17, 18, or 21), length of time in a program, and income.

however, the quantitative and qualitative data make clear that more must be done to better understand the factors leading to their housing instability, their experiences with homelessness, and barriers to their successful exits from homelessness.

Latinx YYA are significantly overrepresented among YYA experiencing homelessness in Hampden County: up to 65% of YYA identify as Hispanic or Latinx (HMIS, 2019), compared to 34% of the total Hampden County population between the ages of 15 and 24 (Census, 2017). This disparity is even more pronounced among parenting YYA; by one estimate, 87% of pregnant or parenting YYA experiencing homelessness identify as Latinx (Mass.gov, 2018). The data also shows a disparity—but one which is less pronounced—among Black YYA: up to 21% of the total YYA population experiencing homelessness identify as Black (HMIS, 2019), compared to only 10.5% of the Hampden County population between the ages of 15 and 24 (Mass.gov, 2018). Additionally, up to 14% of YYA experiencing homelessness in Hampden County identify as multiracial (Mass.gov, 2018) and only 13% of them identify as white, reinforcing that preventing and ending YYA homelessness must intentionally target solutions to minority YYA.

The significant Latinx-White unemployment gap (21.5%, compared to 6.3%), income gap (\$23,911, compared to \$60,105), and the poverty rate among Latinx residents (40%) may explain some of the disparity experienced by Latinx YYA. Similarly, the Black poverty rate in Hampden County (22%) may explain some of the disparity experienced by Black YYA. But other system barriers (including those based in language, racism, and culture) need to be explored and targeted. Communities throughout the United States are looking at their data and finding that people of color are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, but we suspect that the disparity for the Latinx population in particular may be related to the fact that the Springfield metropolitan area has been identified as having the highest level of Latinx-White segregation in the nation. The majority of the Latinx population in Hampden County is Puerto Rican, and so it is unlikely that lack of citizenship status is a significant contributing factor—although fears about citizenship and false targeting by immigration authorities may not be ruled out.

The CoC uses its By-Name List (BNL) to track the interactions with and outcomes for YYA experiencing homelessness across race and ethnicity; and 2018 BNL data for 18-to-24-year-olds corroborates the racial and ethnic disparities described above. However, the data also shows no significant differences between the total percentage of the population for each tracked group (White, Black, Latino, American Indian, and Hawaiian) and the percentage “Assessed,” “Housed PSH/RRH” or “Inactive/Unknown” (White YYAs are slightly underrepresented among those “Assessed” and those “Housed PSH/RRH”). Latinx YYAs are significantly underrepresented among those who “Returned to Family”—33% compared to 52% of all YYAs on the BNL. Although the number of YYAs on the BNL for whom we have assessment data is currently small—40 YYAs or 24% of all BNL participants—this represents a powerful way to actively track system racial and ethnic disparities.

YYA Homelessness, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Data sources report significant variability in gender among YYAs experiencing homelessness, although in all cases the vast majority of YYAs identified as female: 63% to 80% of YYA experiencing homelessness identified as female, 20% to 36% identified as male, and fewer than 1% of YYAs identified as either transgender, intersex, genderqueer, or other genders (Mass.gov 2018; HMIS, 2019). The gender disparity between male and female identified YYA in these data may be accounted for by the number of young mothers in a system that guarantees shelter for families. In the 2019 PIT, for example, 71 out of 82 female identified YYA were parenting and sheltered, while 14 out of 25 unsheltered YYA were male identified. This suggests that male-identified YYA may be experiencing unsheltered homelessness at higher rates than female identified YYA despite the fact that our systems engage with more females than males. It may also suggest an outsized impact of homelessness on YYA mothers with children.

13% of YYAs experiencing homelessness identified as LGBTQ (Mass.gov, 2018), which is well below state and national averages. For comparison, 12.5% of Massachusetts high school students identify as LGBTQ, 15.5% of 18- to 24-year-olds in Massachusetts identify as LGBTQ (Cahill, 2018), and communities across the country consistently find that between 20% and 40% of YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ. Percentages of YYA who identify as non-cisgender (anything other than male or female as assigned at birth) have been estimated by studies at between 0.5% and 3%. Research consistently finds that LGBTQ YYAs are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness, that their reasons for leaving home are significantly different, on average, from their cisgender-straight peers, and that they experience homelessness more severely, with higher rates of sexual exploitation, violence, and suicidality (MA Coalition, 2019). Major themes from focus group work with the community included unsupportive families, particularly for LGBTQ+ people, and homophobia and transphobia in families, communities, and services.

The Impact of Parenting on YYA Homelessness

The 2019 PIT count identified 73 pregnant and parenting YYA in Hampden County, all of whom were in shelter and 18-24 years old. During federal fiscal year 2019, 201 pregnant and parenting YYA were served in emergency shelter. The 168 households headed by young adults included 284 minor children. The average length of stay in shelter for parenting young adults was 219 days. 51% exited to permanent housing destinations; 27% exited to temporary destinations; and 22% exited to unknown destinations.

Hampden County also includes three Teen Pregnancy Program (TPP) homes, which are structured living settings for parenting teens 13-20. These homes have capacity for 32 pregnant and parenting young parents, and are generally full. Because they are closed referral and do not require homelessness for entry, parenting youth in these homes are not included in PIT or HMIS

annual counts. These youth may themselves be in DCF custody or otherwise do not have a responsible adult 20 years old or older to live with.

Cities in Hampden County have very high teen birth rates. In 2016, the Massachusetts teen birth rate was 8.5 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19. Hampden County rates for the same year were 31.9 in Holyoke, 25.2 in Springfield, and 13.8 in Chicopee. The rates were particularly high among Latinas: 38.8 in Holyoke, 43.0 in Springfield, and 28.8 in Chicopee.⁴

The state of Massachusetts has been a “right to shelter state” since 1983 and provides emergency shelter to all eligible families. As a result, the state has the third-highest number of sheltered homeless families in the country, after New York and California.⁵ The Springfield-Hampden County CoC had the nation’s 4th-highest number of homeless families among largely suburban CoCs in the 2018 point-in-time count.⁶

As previously mentioned, young parents in the family shelter system are overwhelmingly Latinx. According to both HMIS and PIT, 74% of pregnant or parenting YYA between 18-24 identify as Latinx (HMIS, 2019; HUD, 2018). Providers have also noted that YYA parents in their systems appear to have higher rates of intimate partner violence than older families and very low rates of high-school completion. They observe that YYA parents have experienced high levels of trauma, appear unmotivated to go to school, go to work, or move out of shelter, engage in lots of marijuana use, and may have a boyfriend or gang issues that interfere with their ability to thrive.

Homelessness System Experience and Pathways for YYA

76% of YA parents engaging with the homelessness system in 2019 did so for the first time, while only 24% had experienced homelessness more than once. 51% of parenting YAs who leave shelter or TH are known to exit to PH. Of these, 25% exit to housing with a subsidy, 18% exit to housing without a subsidy, 4% exit to live with family, 3% to housing with a temporary or short-term subsidy, and 1% to permanent supportive housing. 28% of parenting YA exit to temporary destinations--another shelter placement, transitional housing, or a temporary stay with family or friends. No data is collected for 22% of households. (HMIS 2019)

While CoC permanent housing only serves a small number of parenting youth (23 youth in 2019), it is a successful intervention--91.3% remain housed or exit to another form of permanent housing.

Nearly 70% of unaccompanied YAs without children engaging with the homelessness system in 2019 did so for the first time, while 30% had experienced homelessness more than once. Only 28% exit shelter, SH, or TH to PH. Among these young adults, 14% rent a unit with no subsidy, 7% rent with a subsidy, 4% live with family, and 2% live with friends. 11% go to temporary destinations, including family, friends, emergency shelter, transitional housing or incarceration.

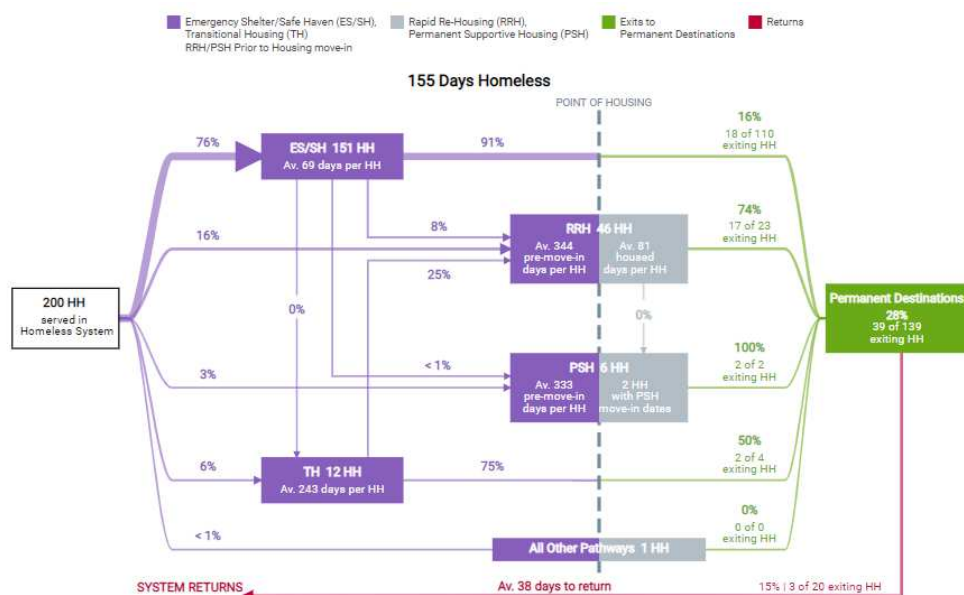
⁴ Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Births 2016 (May 2018), Table 5b.

⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (December 2018), p. 14.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 20.

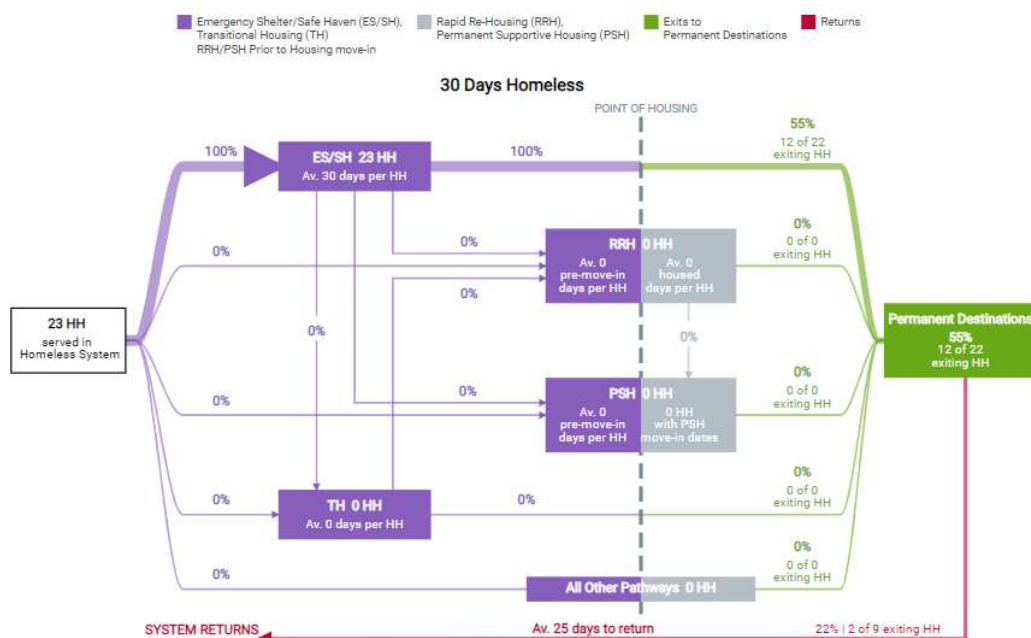
The destination for most youth is unknown--61% exited without completing an interview. (HMIS 2019).

The following is a visual representation of the system pathways for unaccompanied young adults 18-24.



Among minors, almost 83% engaging with the homelessness system in 2019 did so for the first time, while 17% experienced repeat homelessness. 64% of minors exit to permanent housing. The CoC does not have any permanent housing programs that serve this population.

The visual representation of the system for minors:



3% of all unaccompanied YYAs in HMIS are long term stayers (90 days or longer), and 2% (3 YYAs) are identified as chronically homeless. Because of long average stays in the Massachusetts family shelter system, parenting YYAs are more likely to be long-stayers and chronically homeless. Among parenting YYAs, 78% are long-stayers and 7% (19 YYAs) are chronically homeless. Among all YYAs, the numbers are 50% and 5% (HMIS, 2018).

Behavioral Health Impact on YYA Homelessness Experiences

37% of YYAs in HMIS report at least one disabling condition (HMIS, 2019). The number is much higher for non-parenting minors (70%) and for non-parenting young adults (49%) and lower for parenting YYA (26%). The experience of trauma, both before and during experiences of homelessness, was a consistent theme voiced by community stakeholders during our needs assessment, and they observed high rates of mental health and substance use issues.

In Hampden County, 30% of YYAs in HMIS report mental health as a disabling condition, including 18% of parenting YYAs, 35% non-parenting young adults, and 50% non-parenting minors (HMIS, 2019). Only a small percentage of YYA in HMIS, 9% overall, expect their mental health condition to be “long, continued indefinite duration and substantially impairs ability to live independently.” 69% of YYAs participating in the national Voices of Youth Count study indicated having mental health difficulties (Morton, 2017).

6% of YYA in HMIS report some form of substance “abuse” and only 2% expect the condition to be “long, continued indefinite...” (HMIS, 2019). In FY18, the MA DPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services identified 203 Hampden County YYAs ages 14-24 in their treatment system who self-identified as “homeless”, comprising 25% of identifiable enrollments. BSAS lists 344 additional YYA entries as either “missing” or “unable to determine” (BSAS, 2018). Homeless service providers report that parenting youth are often very reluctant to acknowledge substance use due to fear of involvement with the child welfare system.

Education for YYA Experiencing Homelessness

According to the Mass Youth Count, 74% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in Hampden County reported being in school or having a high school diploma or equivalent (Mass.gov, 2018). Unfortunately, HMIS collected grade level completion data from only 1% of YYA participants (HMIS, 2019). Nationally, the lack of a high school diploma or GED equivalent is associated with a 346% higher risk of homelessness (Morton, 2017).

YYAs and system stakeholders are generally aware that homelessness is a problem on college campuses. Two local community colleges, Springfield Technical and Holyoke Community College, participated in the 2018 Hope Labs survey that assessed for homelessness, housing insecurity, and food insecurity. The report combined data from those two schools with three other schools from the three-county geography as “Western Massachusetts.” For 2-year community colleges, the survey identified 13% of students experiencing homelessness, 47% experiencing housing insecurity, and 43% experiencing food insecurity. For 4-year institutions,

the survey identified 8% of students experiencing homelessness, 34% experiencing housing insecurity, and 37% experiencing food insecurity. The data specific to Holyoke Community College indicates that 7.3% of the 386 students surveyed experienced homelessness during the month of the survey, and 16% experienced homelessness at some point during the previous year. 46% of respondents indicated they were housing insecure, indicating frequent moves, overcrowding, being unable to afford rent or utility payments, or moving in with others due to financial problems (Wisconsin Hope Lab, 2018).

Employment for YYA Experiencing Homelessness

31% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in Hampden County surveyed during the Mass Youth Count reported active employment, which is significantly below the 54% of all 16- to 24-year-olds in Hampden County who report active employment (Mass.gov, 2018; Census, 2017). In the formal economy, 17% report part time work and 15% report full-time work. 43% receive cash assistance, 14% receive Social Security/disability, 6% receive income from family, and 4% work “under the table” (Mass.gov, 2018). In HMIS, 52% of YYAs reported income when entering the formal homelessness system. 20% reported earned income (HMIS, 2019). HMIS only captured “Employment Status” for 5% of YYA in FY 2019 (HMIS, 2019). Nationally, incomes below \$24,000 are associated with a 162% higher risk of homelessness (Morton, 2017).

Prior Systems Involvement of YYA Experiencing Homelessness

31% of YYAs experiencing homelessness in Hampden County reported foster care experience, which is consistent with national estimates. Hampden County YYAs report lower than national rates of involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice system—17%, compared to the approximately 50% of YYAs identified in national research. (Morton, 2017) We believe our data undercounts YYAs with juvenile or criminal justice involvement, indicating to us that our systems of identification and support may not be effectively targeting this population (Mass.gov, 2018).

Commercial and Sexual Exploitation and YYA Homelessness

We know little to nothing about the connections between sex trafficking and YYA homelessness in Hampden County, even though it was a major theme of discussions with community stakeholders. No one interviewed during the 2018 MA Youth Count self-reported “sex work” as a source of income, and only 4% indicated having ever exchanged sex for money or housing (Mass.gov, 2018). HMIS only captured “Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Sex Trafficking” data for 7% of participating YYA in FY 2019 and none reported exploitation or trafficking (HMIS, 2019). 21% of YYAs in HMIS report being survivors of domestic violence, a larger category of violence that may include sexual trafficking and exploitation, but that more often refers to intimate partner or family violence (HMIS, 2019). According to one national estimate, 15% of YYAs experiencing homelessness had been trafficked for sex and 32% had been involved in the sex trade (Wolfe, 2017).

Where YYA Experiencing Homelessness Sleep at Night

88% of the YYAs engaged during the 2019 PIT count were in emergency shelter (HUD, 2019). 10 individuals were either in TH or SH and 2 were in unsheltered situations. A similar pattern emerges from the state count, with 75 YYAs in shelter, 14 in some form of a doubled-up or couch-surfing situation with friends or relatives, 7 in TH, 2 sleeping outside, 1 in a hotel, and 1 in a car (Mass.gov, 2018). 9% of YYAs entered the homelessness services system from the street in FY 2018 (HMIS, 2018).

Homelessness Risk Factors for YYA

The experience of homelessness does not come out of nowhere. As a focus group participant explained, “Homelessness is a symptom of other fundamental issues: school drop-out, substance use, unemployment, depression. There is a range of issues they face...all these interlocking problems.” Many of the following increase the likelihood that YYA will experience homelessness.

Reasons YYA Identify to Explain their Homelessness Experience

According to data from the 56 TAY-VI-SPDAT assessments conducted in FY 2019, 70% of YYA responded that family or friends caused their homelessness (HMIS, 2019). 43% identified an unhealthy or abusive relationship, either at home or elsewhere, 29% identified violence at home between family members, 16% ran away from their family home, a group home or a foster home, 9% identified differences in religious or cultural beliefs from parents, guardians or caregivers, and 7% identified conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation. YYA were able to select more than one of the above reasons. According to data from the 2018 MA Youth Count, 26% responded that their house was too small, 20% that they were fighting with parents, 20% were told to leave, 19% wanted to leave, 12% left foster care, 11% had to leave due to pregnancy, the families of 11% lost their homes, 9% reported that home was not safe and an additional 8% that they left due to abuse and neglect. While neither these categories nor the TAY-VI-SPDAT are mutually exclusive, it appears that family conflict, safety, abuse and neglect play a significant role in leading to homelessness. Similarly, a second group of YYA appear to be leaving home due to poverty as connected to home size or loss of a home (up to a third), and a third group appear to be leaving due to their beliefs, behaviors, or identities. It is clear, however, that experiences among these groups are not mutually exclusive and may include factors not included in these surveys. In addition to the above, 25% of TAY-VI-SPDAT respondents claim that they have previously lost housing due to a mental health condition, 21% due to a learning disability, and 9% due to a head injury.

The Impact of a High Poverty Rate

Hampden County has a considerably higher rate of poverty (17.2%) than the national average (12.3%) (Census, 2017). The numbers are even more stark when you consider that the poverty rate is over 28% for the two largest population centers in the county, Springfield and Holyoke. The county poverty rate is 23% for YYAs between the ages of 12 and 24, and roughly 18,180 young adults 18-24 live in poverty.

The Impact of High Relative Rents

Fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Hampden County is \$1,061 (HUD.gov, 2019), yet renters earning an estimated average wage of \$11.18 per hour can only afford a unit up to \$581 per month (NLIHC, 2019). It would take two full-time incomes per household at the estimated average wage to afford the fair market rent. It is likely that the actual rent varies across the county between urban centers like Springfield and Holyoke, wealthy suburbs like Longmeadow and East Longmeadow, and rural areas like Tolland and Blandford.

An analysis by Glynn, Byrne, and Culhane in 2018 regarded Hampden County as a cluster 3 community, characterized by the highest homelessness rates (0.60% average), the least affordable housing (38.44% average), and the highest rate of extreme poverty (7.47% average). Most importantly, they noted a significant inflection point that identifies a spike in homelessness above 32% rent as a percentage of median income. The rate for Hampden County is 34.6% (Glynn, 2018+).

The Impact of Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Wealth and race are also important factors when considering poverty and housing costs. For example, Springfield had the largest disparity in unemployment in 2016 between Hispanic and White community members among 72 medium and large metropolitan areas (a rate of 21.5% for Hispanic residents compared to 6.3% for White residents). Springfield again ranked last when it came to income equality in the same report (\$23,911 compared to \$60,105). Unfortunately, when it comes to income inequality, several neighboring communities fared just as poorly, with Greater Boston, Providence, Bridgeport-Stamford, Hartford, and Worcester ranking 67 to 71 respectively (NUL, 2016).

The Springfield, MA Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which stretches from the Connecticut border to Vermont and incorporates Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin Counties, is among the most segregated in the nation. Analysis of 2010 census data determined that the MSA was first in the nation for Hispanic-White segregation and 22nd for Black-White segregation.⁷ The MSA's people of color are concentrated in the cities of Springfield and Holyoke, where 74.7% of the

⁷ University of Michigan Population Studies Center, Institute for Social Research, New Racial Segregation Measures for Large Metropolitan Areas: Analysis of the 1990-2010 Decennial Censuses, available at <https://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/dis/census/segregation2010.html>.

region's African-Americans and 73.0% of the region's Latinx inhabitants live. Springfield and Holyoke are majority-minority cities bordered by at least some towns that are more than 85% non-Hispanic white.

Education, Employment, and Opportunity Youth

About 17% of YYA aged 16-24 in the core cities of Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield and Westfield does not have a clear career pathway. These young people are either not enrolled in school **and** not working, or hold low-wage jobs with little hope for advancement **and** not continuing their education. This population is referred to as “Opportunity Youth” in a movement focused on providing them the right interventions to connect them to career pathways.⁸

Estimated Number of Opportunity Youth, 2016							
	Population	Not working, not in school	Not in school, low-wage job <\$10/hr	Male	Female	Age 16-19	Age 20-24
Chicopee	1,226	417	809	715	511	273	954
Holyoke	1,159	394	765	676	483	258	901
Springfield	4,490	1,527	2,963	2,619	1,871	999	3,491
Westfield	1,181	402	779	689	492	263	918
Total	8,056	2,740	5,316	4,699	3,357	1,793	6,264

Source: MassINC estimates from 2010-2014 ACS PUMS, from MassInc, Calling All Gateway City Leaders: An Action Guide to Workforce Development Transformation in Massachusetts (2016)

The Impact of the Family Shelter System

HMIS reported that only 6% of YYA in the homelessness system in FY2019 had experience with the family homelessness system as minors. Both non-parenting 18-24 year olds and parenting 18-24 year olds rarely reported family homelessness experiences, at 3% and 6% respectively, but 30% of minors experiencing homelessness report family homelessness experiences. We do not currently have the longitudinal data necessary to estimate the number of children in the family homelessness system who eventually experience future homelessness.

Exits from Institutions and Systems of Care

While many young people experiencing homelessness have had past experiences with institutions and systems of care, young people also frequently leave institutions and systems of care and subsequently experience homelessness. Hampden County has a high rate of foster care placements. While it has 7% of the state's population, it has 14% of the number of youth in foster care. At the end of 2018, roughly 2,595 young people between the ages of 12 and 24

⁸ MassInc, Calling All Gateway City Leaders: An Action Guide to Workforce Development Transformation in Massachusetts (2016)

were actively engaged with the child welfare system; 2,381 between the ages of 12 and 17 and 214 are over 18. DCF identifies 23% as “in placement” and 77% as “out of placement.” DCF indicated the permanency plan associated with many YYAs “in placement” as “Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement” (APPLA), including 70% for those over 18 and 2% as “Unspecified.” For those YYAs “out of placement,” 37% of those over 18 have an APPLA permanency plan and 23% of all YYAs have an “unspecified” permanency plan. Hispanic YYAs are vastly overrepresented among all YYAs in foster care at slightly lower rates than our homelessness data (~48%). The same is true for Black YYAs (~11%).

In Hampden County, an estimated 74 youth age out each year, and 39 (53%) do not receive continuing services. Of those that continue services, 53 stop after age 21 and another 8 stop services after age 23. Added together, this leaves 100 young adults at risk of homelessness each year after leaving DCF care.

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) reported 107 youth were “in treatment” in Hampden County in June 2019—80 in Springfield and 27 in Holyoke.⁹ The Springfield facilities serve youth from the City and the Holyoke facility serve youth from Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties. DYS reported that they discharged 7 youth to unstable housing in 2018. Six were connected to the Springfield office and one to the Holyoke office.

The Hampden County Sheriff’s Department reports having 168 young adults 18-24 in custody in December 2019. Of these, 71 are pre-trial, 93 are sentenced, and 4 are civilly committed. 92% are male. In FY19, the Sheriff’s Department released 108 young adults to the community. These young people are at high risk of continued adverse outcomes. Because we know who and where they are and have regular service interaction with them, there is an opportunity to target our prevention efforts and prevent their future homelessness.

A community stakeholder put it like this: “[YYAs] who have been in the system...are often not well supported to get back to something that would be safe, secure, and loving. They often have to make a choice between staying in an uncaring and unsupportive system, or wait out your time until you’re 18, then you sign out and you’re on your own. These kids are at tremendous risk for couch surfing, sexual exploitation, and abject homelessness.”

Geography and Transportation

Hampden County, population 463,490, is the most urban part of Western Massachusetts, but it is made up of 29 cities and towns, ranging from urban to rural. There is no county government, so government functions are either the state or local level. The county includes seven cities: Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, Westfield, West Springfield, Palmer and Agawam. The City of Springfield, with a population of 154,758, is the region’s economic center and is the fourth largest city in New England. One in three Hampden County residents live in Springfield.

Regional transportation is a significant challenge that has been identified in many focus groups and convenings. There is very little public transportation infrastructure and so most inhabitants

⁹ Conversation with Lorrie Bobe, Director of Community Services for the DYS Western Region, June 24, 2019.

are dependant on personal transportation options. This becomes more difficult the further a YYA or family is away from the County's population centers.

Hampden County is the crossroads of New England, intersected by the major east-west thoroughfare the MassPike, I-90, and the major north-south route from New York through Vermont to the Canadian border, I-91. While this makes the region accessible to New York, Boston and New England, it also places it along routes used for drug and human trafficking.

The YYA Homelessness System and Current Resources

When asked how they would describe the current state of the youth homelessness system in Hampden County, a group of community leaders used a variety of adjectives ranging from "Forward-thinking" to "Uncoordinated, Broken." Some folks described it as "difficult to navigate" and "unsafe," recognizing a "disconnect between system and youth perceptions." While it was also clear that participants felt system staff were "talented," "well-intentioned," and "willing to help," the community needs a new inclusive governance and decision-making structure that is well resourced, leverages young adult and provider expertise, connects partners and resources from a variety of different sectors including state agencies, and is transparent and accountable to its constituents. Community observations point to the need for a comprehensive and comprehensible response that expands awareness and has the capacity to meet our needs.

Housing Inventory

Out of the County's 59 programs and 3,369 beds dedicated to serving community members experiencing homelessness (78% of which are crisis residential), there are currently 5 programs and 67 beds dedicated to YYAs experiencing homelessness. These programs have special capacity to serve YYAs and meet their needs, including creating a space that specifically designed for their safety. Most of these units are for permanent housing (84%), with 26 beds for RRH, 20 beds for PSH, and 10 beds for other forms of permanent housing. The community has 1 transitional housing program with 5 beds and has 1 traditional YYA shelter with 6 beds that just opened in July 2019. The county also has a host home program for minors with up to six active host sites at any given time.

More than half of current YYA beds are scattered site (55%), which theoretically provides flexibility to serve the entire county outside of the more populous urban centers. A permanent supportive housing program for families is in Holyoke and another permanent housing program is in Westfield. There is no permanent supportive housing for YYAs in Springfield. Even when housing is close by, a major theme from focus groups has been long waitlists for housing and services. As one stakeholder put it, "We have a list, but all the lists have waiting lists."

Some housing resources target specific populations. For example, the Host Home model serves minors between the ages of 14 and 18. The transitional housing program serves YYAs between 17 and 22; the permanent supportive housing program in Holyoke serves YYA-led families with

disabilities; the RRH program is for unaccompanied YYAs; and the permanent housing program in Westfield serves YYAs between 18 and 24.

Other Resources

The Springfield CoC has a number of non-housing resources available to YYAs experiencing homelessness, some dedicated to them and others serving a broader population. For example, there are two YYA street outreach programs (CHD Safety Zone and Gandara). There is also a dedicated medical and dental service for YYAs who are doubled up or experiencing homelessness (Health Services for the Homeless Adolescent Health Center). There are 12 other homelessness programs that YYAs can access, including additional outreach, healthcare, basic needs support, benefits enrollment, and case management, but they do not have special capacity to serve YYAs.

The community identified over 185 programs with which YYAs experiencing homelessness might engage. Among those, 82 are specifically dedicated to YYAs. There are 28 positive outlet or hobby programs that can facilitate social and emotional wellbeing as well as help YYAs develop long lasting positive social relationships: 9 provide mental health services; 8 involved employment and training services; and 7 offer pregnancy and parenting services. There are several notable gaps, including basic needs programs; childcare services; human trafficking and commercial sex work support programs; immigration services; benefits enrollment; disability services; domestic violence supports; early childhood education resources; documentation and ID support; and legal services. While all of these gaps are addressed by programs that serve a general population, there may be barriers to access for YYAs.

Geographically, most YYA resources are located near the CoC's urban center. 64 out of the 82 YYA resources are located in either Springfield or Holyoke, and an additional 3 are located in neighboring West Springfield and Chicopee. 12 are described as covering all of Hampden County, although may have an urban core bias, leaving just 3 located exclusively outside of greater Springfield (2 in Westfield and 1 in Palmer). With a large geographical area and a challenging public transportation environment, this may impact the ability of suburban and rural YYAs to access the services that they need.

Appendix H: HUD Requirements

From the FY 2018 YHDP Notice of Funding Availability

Selected communities are required to develop a coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth homelessness. Selected Communities will have up to 4 months of initial planning and up to 4 months of additional time for HUD feedback and plan edits. The planning process is expected to lay the groundwork for implementation and provide a framework for the various projects that the Collaborative Applicant will apply for. The plan submission will also impact the availability of funding for selected communities, as HUD will only allow planning project applications until a coordinated community plan has been submitted to and approved by HUD, unless good cause is presented to HUD.

HUD will only approve of a coordinated community plan that meets threshold criteria, including whether the plan addresses the mandatory structural components and key HUD principles listed, below:

Mandatory Structural Components of a Coordinated Community Plan

A coordinated community plan must include the following structural components:

- A statement of need concerning at risk and homeless unaccompanied and pregnant or parenting youth in the geographic area;
- A list of partners, and a description of their involvement that includes representation from as many of the following stakeholder groups as possible:
 - Youth Action Board
 - CoC and ESG Program Recipients
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Providers
 - Juvenile and Adult Corrections and Probation
 - Public Housing Authorities
 - Community Development Corporations
 - Institutions of Higher Education
 - Landlords
 - Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations
 - Public Child Welfare Agencies
 - Local and State Government
 - Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Agencies
 - Local and State Law Enforcement and Judges
 - Affordable Housing Providers
 - Local and State Educational Agencies
 - Non-Profit Youth Organizations
 - Privately Funded Homeless Organizations
 - Early Childhood Development and Child Care Providers
- A shared vision, list of goals, objectives, and actions steps, including which partners are responsible for each action step;
- A list of new projects, to be funded by HUD and other sources that will support the implementation of the coordinated community plan;
- A governance structure, including an organizational chart and decision-making process;

- A plan for continuous quality improvement during the implementation of the coordinated community plan;
- A unified community assessment plan for measuring progress on preventing and ending youth homelessness.
- A signature page that includes the signatures of official representatives of at least the following systems:
 - The Continuum of Care
 - Public Child Welfare Agency
 - Local Government Agency
 - Youth Action Board
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth Providers (if any)

HUD Principles to Be Addressed in the Coordinated Community Plan

In order to be approved by HUD, a coordinated community plan must address how the following principles will be incorporated into the community's overall approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness as well as the individual interventions that support such an approach.

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Youth Framework and the Four Core Outcomes: USICH coordinates the federal response to homelessness and creating a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness. The coordinated community plan must demonstrate a commitment to the principles of the USICH Youth Framework to End Youth Homelessness published in 2012 and to its four core outcomes:

1. Stable housing includes a safe and reliable place to call home;
2. Permanent connections include ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks;
3. 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; and
4. 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; **and**

Special Populations: USICH, in partnership with its member agencies, has identified several special populations of youth experiencing homelessness that are particularly vulnerable in how they experience homelessness, as well as their pathways in and out of homelessness, in ways that are distinct from the general population of youth. For these particularly vulnerable and often overrepresented young people, there is a need for identification and engagement strategies, infrastructure considerations, and housing and service-delivery approaches that are responsive to their specific needs. The coordinated community plan must identify and address the local impact of homelessness on these special populations and address how the community will meet the needs of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ); youth who are gender-non-conforming; minors (under the age of 18); youth involved

with juvenile justice and child welfare systems; and victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation; **and**

Equity: Research has found significant racial and ethnic disparities in rates of homelessness.^[i]^[ii] Specifically, black and Native American persons experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates compared to other races. Community efforts to prevent and end homelessness should consider and address racial inequities to successfully achieve positive outcomes for all persons experiencing homelessness. The coordinated community plan must address how the community is measuring and considering racial inequities and other disparities in the risks for, and experiences of homelessness in the community, consistent with fair housing and civil rights requirements; **and**

Positive Youth Development (PYD)^[iii] and *Trauma Informed Care (TIC)*^[iv]. Both PYD and TIC are accepted best practices in housing and service delivery for youth and include principles and service frameworks. The coordinated community plan must address how PYD and TIC will be incorporated into all aspects of the youth crisis response system, including at the system and project levels; **and**

Family engagement. HUD believes that the best diversion and intervention strategy is to engage families, whenever appropriate, through community partnerships with organizations such as child welfare agencies, schools, youth providers, and other community human services and homeless services providers. The coordinated community plan must address family engagement strategies and services designed to strengthen, stabilize, and reunify families. Potential services include family counseling, conflict resolution, parenting supports, relative or kinship caregiver resources, targeted substance abuse and mental health treatment, etc.; **and**

Immediate access to housing with no preconditions: Housing is a cornerstone for meeting a multitude of basic needs necessary for success. Young people should be provided with rapid access to safe, secure, and stable housing that meets their needs as quickly as possible, without the condition that they are 'ready' for housing. The coordinated community plan must address how all youth will be offered immediate access to safe, secure, and stable housing with no preconditions; **and**

Youth choice: The capacity for self-determination may be a critical factor in obtaining many positive outcomes for Transition Age Youth,^[v] and is closely related to the principles of PYD. Consistent with federal youth policy, allowing youth to exercise self-determination is a youth centered approach that values youths' expressed needs, self-awareness, and community knowledge. This youth centered approach emphasizes youth choice in terms of the kind of housing youth need and the extent and nature of supports and services they access and presents alternative options for youth who avoid programs with barriers like sobriety or abstinence. The coordinated community plan must address how youth choice will be integrated into all aspects of the youth crisis response system; **and**

Individualized and client-driven supports: The coordinated community plan must acknowledge that the needs of the young people to be served will be unique. Housing and support packages that help prevent and end homelessness among youth must recognize and respond to individual

differences across individuals to serve them appropriately and efficiently. Communities must design the system flexibly to accommodate individuals with both high and low service needs, as well as the need for short-term or long-term supports. The coordinated community plan must address how the youth crisis response system will provide individualized and client-driven supports; **and**

Social and community integration: The goal of youth homelessness services should be a successful transition to adulthood, including the successful integration into a community as a positive contributing community member. To accomplish this requires the community to provide socially supportive engagement and the opportunity for youth to participate in meaningful community activities; [\[vi\]](#) **and**

Coordinated entry: Coordinated entry processes are necessary components of a high functioning crisis response system and must be developed intentionally to incorporate youth. The coordinated community plan must address how the CoC will ensure that the coordinated entry process is youth-appropriate.

[\[i\]](#) Moser Jones, M. (2016). Does Race Matter in Addressing Homelessness? A Review of the Literature. World Medical Health Policy 8(2):139–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.189>

[\[ii\]](#) Fusaro, V.A., Levy, H.G., Shaefer, H.L. (2018). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Lifetime Prevalence of Homelessness in the United States. Demography 55(6):1-10. 2018 Sep 21.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0717-0>

[\[iii\]](#) <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/pyd-tip-sheet>

[\[iv\]](#) <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/trauma>

[\[v\]](#) Carter, E. W., Lane, K. L., Pierson, M. R., & Stang, K. K. (2008). Promoting Self Determination for Transition Age Youth: Views of High School General and Special Educators. Exceptional Children 75(1), 55-70.

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[\[vi\]](#) Johnstone, Melissa & Parsell, Cameron & Jetten, Jolanda & Dingle, Genevieve & Walter, Zoe. (2015). Breaking the cycle of homelessness: Housing stability and social support as predictors of long-term well-being. Housing Studies. 31. 1-17. 10.1080/02673037.2015.1092504.

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