

# **Coordinated Community Plan for Ending Youth Homelessness**

Erie and Niagara County

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## Introduction

On August 29th, 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected Buffalo/Erie and Niagara Falls/Niagara County to receive new Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) funding. The initial two-year \$3,592,570 grant was awarded to the Homeless Alliance of Western New York and it may be renewable annually through the CoC Program NOFA after the initial two-year period.

In order to demonstrate how a strategic approach to planning and continuous quality improvement will guide the process of ending youth homelessness in our community, we have developed this Coordinated Community Plan which outlines a comprehensive, community-wide approach for identifying, engaging, empowering, and serving unaccompanied youth age 24 and under. These youth are either experiencing homelessness or housing instability alone or with other youth, are pregnant or parenting.

This Coordinated Community Plan builds on the dedicated planning and advocacy work done by our Youth Task Force and Youth Action Board over the past several years. Our CoC has always prioritized collaboration and innovation to end homelessness in our communities. As such, our CoC received the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' designation of effectively ending Veteran's homelessness in 2016. We strive to do the same for all populations experiencing homelessness.

Since receiving YHDP funds, our community has enthusiastically come together to develop this plan to end youth homelessness, agree on common goals and objectives, and develop new partnerships to ensure youth homelessness in our community is rare, brief, and nonrecurring. Our CCP was both youth-led and

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data driven. We analyzed national and local data from multiple sources, held focus groups with youth and service providers, and recorded the ideas expressed in Youth Task Force, community stakeholder, and Youth Action Board meetings.

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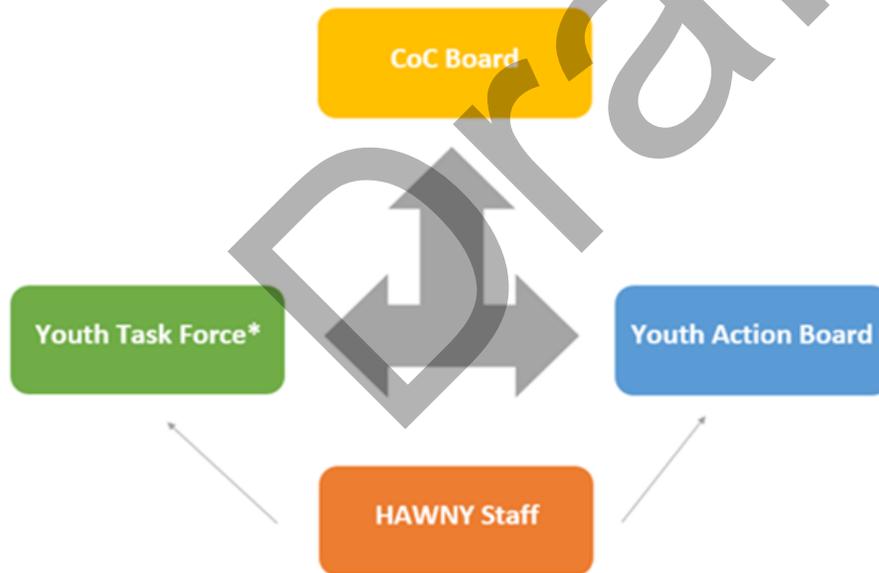
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# Community Partners and Governance Structure

## Community Partners

Homeless Alliance of Western New York and the Technical Assistance Collaborative facilitated many community stakeholders, Youth Task Force, and Youth Action Board meetings throughout the planning process to build upon existing relationships and build new partnerships across Erie and Niagara Counties. For a full list of our partners, stakeholders, and YAB members, see Appendix A.

## Governance Structure



\* Youth Action Board members will also sit on Youth Task Force

The governance structure for YHDP included the Erie and Niagara County Youth Task Forces (YTF) (with CoC Board members sitting on these task forces), and the Youth Action Board (YAB) - all facilitated by Homeless Alliance of Western

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New York and our YHDP Technical Assistance providers from Technical Assistance Collaborative. The Youth Task Force, Youth Action Board, and Homeless Alliance of WNY worked together to create this Coordinated Community Plan. The planning process included monthly YTF meetings and weekly YAB meetings, from September 2019 to April 2020, facilitated by the Technical Assistance Collaborative and Homeless Alliance of WNY. The YHDP Leadership Team will continue to oversee continuous quality improvement throughout YHDP implementation.

The governing bodies for the purposes of the YHDP planning process are as follows:

### **Youth Action Board (YAB)**

The Youth Action Board (YAB) is a youth-led committee comprised of youth and young adults ages 15 - 24 with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing instability and facilitated by adult allies who work as a team to strategically share their stories and solutions, to identify gaps in services and areas of need for youth experiencing homelessness, to evaluate current and new services, and initiate a change in the status quo. The Youth Action Board is made up of two committees - a representative committee and the general committee. The Representative Committee is made up of 2 YAB members who can commit to at least 6 meetings or 7 hours per month and represent the entire YAB at Youth Task Force and other community meetings. The Representative Committee and general committee make decisions based on consensus of the whole YAB. The Representative Committee may attend Youth Task Force or other CoC committee meetings on behalf of the general YAB committee and make decisions on behalf of the general YAB committee. It is assumed that prior to any decision making by the Representative Committee, the whole YAB itself has had a chance to discuss the issues at hand. Within YAB meetings, decisions will be made through consensus. If consensus is achieved, it means that 100

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percent of YAB members in attendance are each at least 75 percent comfortable with the decision being made. The YAB, in collaboration with the Youth Task Force, Project Selection Committee, and CoC Board will lead the creation and selection, evaluation, and implementation of new YHDP projects.

### **Youth Task Force (YTF)**

The Youth Task Force (YTF) was developed several years ago within our CoC to help advocate for youth and organize youth specific point in time counts. Upon receiving YHDP, the YTF was expanded to include all community stakeholders. Public Child Welfare Agencies, Departments of Social Services, Juvenile Justice, local libraries, corporate sponsors, homelessness service providers, and many others participated in Youth Task Force meetings (see a full list of partners in Appendix A). The YTF lead the development of the Coordinated Community plan in concert with the Youth Action Board and with the help from our designated TA providers (Technical Assistance Collaborative and True Colors United). Several subcommittees of the Youth Task Force in development and existing committees, such as Raise the Age committee, Homeless Awareness committee will be tasked with specific action steps.

### **Homeless Alliance of Western New York (YHDP and CoC Lead Agency):**

The Homeless Alliance of Western New York (HAWNY) is the lead agency for both the Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Wyoming and Orleans Counties, and the YHDP Lead. HAWNY does not offer direct services, rather they work to foster collaboration in the community to implement best-practice models ensuring everyone has a home. They offer technical assistance and a bird's eye view of homelessness and homelessness services.

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**CoC Board:** The CoC Board, comprised of 17 members, oversees the efficiency of HAWNY operations and the community's goals to end homelessness. For the YHDP process, the CoC Board will approve the coordinated community plan along with any CoC policy changes that impact the CCP.

### **Project Selection Process**

The YAB and YTF through planning meetings discussed the needs assessment and discussed potential project types, developed target outcomes and essential elements, award amount, project capacity. HAWNY and YAB then develop the Request for Proposals including project application and project threshold/scoring criteria that will be approved by the YAB and the CoC board.

**Project Selection Committee (PSC)** The PSC is an independent committee including YAB representatives and members from the YTF who are not directly associated with any applicants. For the YHDP process, the Project Selection Committee will approve YHDP funded youth programs that meet community needs, are YAB approved, and embrace our guiding principles including positive youth development, affirmation of LGBTQ+ identify, trauma-informed care, and cultural competence. The Youth Action Board will assist with determining criteria for Project Selection Committee membership. The Project Selection Committee will score and vote on all applications and could make adjustments to proposals to better meet community needs. Highest scored proposals will move forward to receive YHDP funds.

**YHDP Leadership Team:** The YHDP Leadership Team is responsible for Continuous Quality Improvement efforts and annually reviewing and updating the Coordinated Community Plan. This team will be solidified in the coming weeks and will contain representatives from the YHDP planning process. The YHDP

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Leadership Team will include members from Erie and Niagara County government, Department of Social Services, Child Welfare, Homeless Alliance of WNY, the Youth Action Board, Youth Task Force, and YHDP funded agencies. The Team will meet with community stakeholders, the Youth Task Force, and the Youth Action Board on a quarterly basis to share challenges, barriers, opportunities and adopt new ideas or solutions and create new strategies to ensure our success in ending youth homelessness.

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## Statement of Need

After several months of deliberate discussion with community stakeholders, youth providers, our Youth Action Board, and youth with lived experience, we developed a statement of need detailing the unique qualities and needs of youth in our community. We used information gathered through many different methods and systems including: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Point in Time Count, Be Counted! End Youth Homelessness Campaign, Child Welfare, Public Assistance information from the Department of Social Services, the Juvenile Justice system, local holding center and the education system.

### Definitions of Youth

#### ***Youth Experiencing Homelessness:***

Unaccompanied or pregnant/parenting youth and young adults aged 11 to 24 experiencing literal homelessness, meaning they are staying in a shelter or on the street or places not meant for human habitation (cars, public parks, etc.)

#### ***Youth at-risk of homelessness:***

Youth who are residing in unsafe situations as defined by the youth or youth who are at imminent risk of losing their primary nighttime residence.

***Minor Youth:*** Youth aged 11 to 17 years of age.

***Transition Aged Youth:*** Youth aged 18 to 24 years of age.

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## Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness

### Basic Demographic

Erie County Poverty: 14.9% of the population for whom poverty status is determined in Erie County, NY (134k out of 898k people) live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 13.1%. Females 18 - 24 is the 2nd largest demographic and then Males 18 - 24.

Niagara County Poverty:13.4% of the population for whom poverty status is determined in Niagara County, NY (28.1k out of 209k people) live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 13.1%. Females 18 - 24 is the 2nd largest demographic.

People Living in Poverty	Erie	Niagara
16-17 Males	2,052	273
16-17 Females	2,398	252
18-24 Males	8,416	1,650
18-24 Females	10,204	2,043
Total	23,070(85%)	4,218 (15%)

source:American community Survey 2017 five year data

There are 5 types of homelessness services that youth and young adults experiencing homelessness currently have access to in our community that utilize HMIS.

1. Two shelters designed for youth who are under 18, funded by RHY.
2. Shelters designed for adults 18 and over.

3. Transitional housing that generally serves clients between 16-21.

4. Non-youth specific street outreach.

5. Coordinated Entry

HMIS CY2018 data, including shelter, outreach and transitional housing:

Age Group	Erie	Niagara	Total
Under 18	218	78	296
18-24	427	22	449
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>645 (87%)</b>	<b>100(13%)</b>	<b>745</b>

Gender Identity	Erie	Niagara	Total
Female	55.0%	66.0%	56.5%
Male	44.0%	33.0%	42.6%
Data not collected	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)	0.3%	1.0%	0.4%
Trans Male (FTM or Female to Male)	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Race	Erie	Niagara	Total
Black	57.2%	45.0%	55.6%
White	30.4%	23.0%	29.4%
Multiracial	8.5%	25.0%	10.7%
Missing	1.7%	1.0%	1.6%
Native American	0.9%	4.0%	1.3%
Asian	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0.3%	2.0%	0.5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ethnicity	Erie	Niagara	Total
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	80.6%	93.0%	82.3%
Hispanic/Latino	17.1%	5.0%	15.4%
Data not collected/client doesn't know	2.3%	2.0%	2.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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Despite the breadth of our HMIS coverage in our CoC, providers felt these were undercounts relative to actual incidence, and that a lack of service capacity (e.g. outreach and youth focused shelters) meant that the opportunity to collect data is missed, and in some ways the disparity of numbers in Niagara County reflect services that are not offered.

Almost 57 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identified as female, and about 43 percent male. This is a reverse from the trend we see in adult homelessness. Based on interviewing youth and youth providers, we think that this trend is because female youth are more likely to seek help or to stay connected to services as compared to males. Male youth also expressed difficulty in accessing services and a sense of expectation to “just deal with it” or “find a job”. LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming youth are underrepresented in HMIS reporting. Youth have expressed this may be due to a feeling of discomfort in disclosing parts of their identity before they’ve built rapport with a service provider.

Black youth are overrepresented in youth experiencing homelessness, as in the general population, even though their total population in Erie and Niagara County is much smaller than that of whites (11% Black vs 84% White<sup>1</sup>). Providers and youth believe that all services must provide an inclusive culture and staffing that reflects the demographics of youth being served.

Other data points:

- Harbor house is a mental health focused overnight drop in center. This program served 65 young adults in CY18, utilizing 377 beds per night.
- Compass house is a Youth Resource Center (Day drop in center) that served 145 youth ages 18 - 24 in CY18, in which 42 were in shelter/TH, 21

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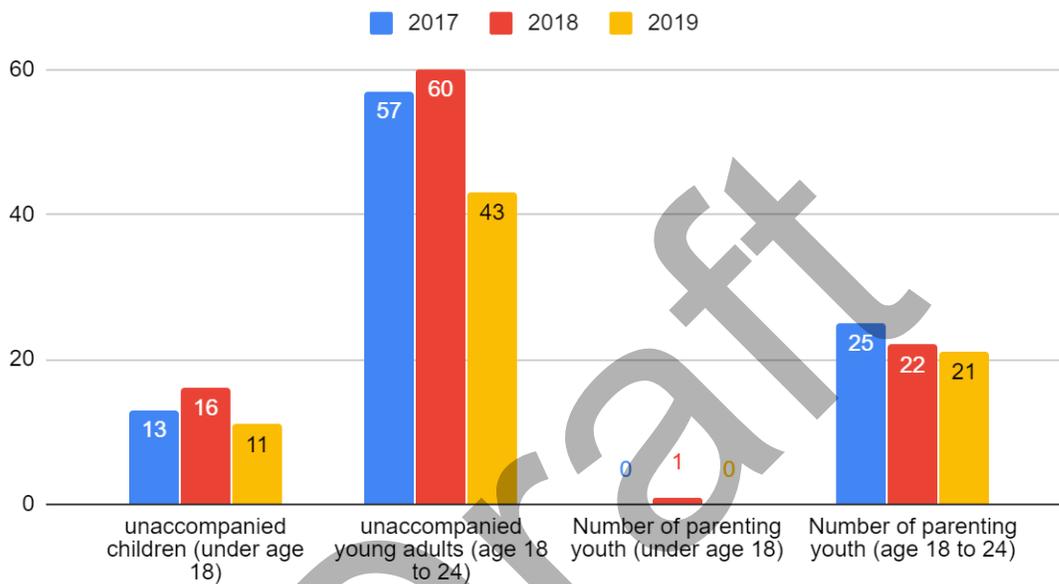
<sup>1</sup> 2016 American Community Survey Erie and Niagara County

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identified living on the street, 68 were staying with friends/family. 97 (66%) out of 145 resided in an institution in the past, e.g. group home, foster home, detention, correctional facility or psychiatric institution.

## Point-in-Time Data

### 2017-2019 Point in Time



The Point in Time Count is a one day snapshot of homelessness in Western New York. On a single night in January, outreach workers and volunteers (including YAB members) search the streets and shelters to enumerate every person experiencing literal homelessness. We did not find any unsheltered youth in 2017-18, and there were two unsheltered youth identified in 2019. It is common for the count of unsheltered youth to be low. We believe one reason is that Western New York's weather conditions are so cold in January, and youth are often couch-surfing rather than staying outdoors. The other is that New York is a right to shelter state. Especially during the winter since the Code Blue shelters operate as low demand shelters, no questions asked, if the temperature outside falls below 30 degrees Fahrenheit.

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## **Intensity of Service Needs and Disability Status**

When accessing Coordinated Entry, if youth consent, they are screened with the Transition Aged Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (TAY-VI-SPDAT). This screening tool includes questions about mental health, substance use, parenting status, homeless history; among other inquiries in order to prioritize youth quickly for assistance. Thirty percent of young adults who completed the VI indicated they had trouble maintaining housing because of mental health issues. In addition, when client information is entered into HMIS during their intake, youth are asked if they have a disability. Twenty seven percent of young adults experienced homelessness indicated they have a disabling condition at intake: 36.5% of 18-24 year olds and 12.5% of youth under age 18.

Out of the 449 young adults aged 18-24 who utilized the homeless system last year, 173 (38.5%) were assessed using VI/VI-F/TAY. We understand that most people are not being screened for housing because so many of these young adults (43%) left the homeless system in two weeks or less. Of those who we assessed, 61% scored high enough to be prioritized for PSH or for long term housing with high service intensity. Thirty three percent scored high enough to be prioritized for RRH or for time limited support with moderate intensity and 5% scored low enough for no moderate or high intensity services.

Currently our CoC only has youth dedicated Rapid Rehousing but no youth dedicated PSH. Youth often do not have enough homeless history to be prioritized in PSH and referred in a timely manner. We take a progressive engagement approach and refer all young adults to youth dedicated RRH regardless of their score. We find that in taking a progressive engagement approach, many youth, even those who score relatively high on the TAY-VI-SPDAT, are quite resilient and successful in RRH.

A common theme among Youth Task Force and Youth Action Board members was that the presence of disability may be underreported. Since HMIS data is self-report, youth may not disclose a mental health or substance use disorder, or may not be aware they meet criteria for a disability. The YTF and YAB suggested that more thorough assessments during the referral process may be able to discern more accurately if a youth has a qualifying disability.

### **Reasons for Homelessness and Exit Destinations**

Although each young person has their own unique story, HMIS, RHY, and survey data show that there are trends in events that trigger homelessness and how youth navigate the homelessness services system. The most commonly self-reported antecedent for minor youth and transition aged youth homelessness is interpersonal and family conflict.

Reasons of homelessness and prior living situations of minor youth:

<b>Is your current lack of stable housing...</b>	
a) Because you ran away from your family home, a group home or a foster home?	<b>17%</b>
b) Because of a difference in religious or cultural beliefs from your parents, guardians or caregivers?	<b>13%</b>
c) Because your family or friends caused you to become homeless?	<b>78%</b>
d) Because of conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation?	<b>10%</b>
e) Because of violence at home between family members?	<b>55%</b>
f) Because of an unhealthy or abusive relationship, either at home or elsewhere?	<b>61%</b>

The multiple-choice questions in the TAY-VI-SPDAT indicated the complexity of the causes transition aged youth experience homelessness. Most of these youth experienced homelessness after having conflict with family or friends that they were staying with. Shelters sometimes become places of “respite” and a safe haven for those who are trying to escape from an unhealthy environment.

National research suggests several predictors or correlates to youth homelessness such as prior child welfare involvement, juvenile justice

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involvement, mental illness, and family homelessness. Our data shows that 97% of young adults indicated in their VI-SPDATs that in the last three years prior to their most current episode of homelessness, their family had experienced homelessness. This indicates the need for early intervention and wrap around services for families as a prevention strategy.

#### Exit destinations

Seventy percent of youth under 18 exited shelter to return to their family's residence. This may be because for minor youth, the number one priority and focus of service providers is reuniting youth with their family or kin. Only 13% of young adults 18-24 exited homeless services to stay with family. Thirty one percent exited without a known destination. Many transition aged youth exit shelter without a known destination, and it is assumed they have self-resolved their housing situation.

### Needs for All Youth Experiencing Homelessness

#### **Housing**

- Focus on case management, mediation, or short term crisis “respite” shelters, with a focus on conflict resolution
- Address intergenerational homelessness with wrap around services for the entire family

#### *Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Transition-Age Youth expressed the need for longer term Rapid Rehousing or Permanent Supportive Housing with more intensive services and lower caseloads while they acclimate to living independently
- Youth would like access to crisis housing immediately that is specific to their age group. One youth in our study stated, “shelters will give you a

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place to stay...but it's not an environment you will want to be in because people might steal your things."

- More support is needed for college age youth who may not have a place to stay over holiday breaks or summers

## **Education and Employment**

- In order to obtain and retain jobs, youth and young adults need soft skill training, opportunities for paid training/education programs and employment opportunities that are low barrier (i.e. no drug tests, background checks, etc.)
- Partnerships between the CoC and local colleges and universities to better identify youth experiencing homelessness and connect them with services

### *Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Transportation and child care are identified as two of the barriers on obtaining employment. Current system often only provides support after a person gains employment. Supports are needed when seeking employment.
- Transition age youth have difficulty applying for colleges and for financial aid (ex. filling out the FAFSA) - a navigator knowledgeable in financial assistance policy should be readily available for these youth.

## **Social and Emotional Well-being**

- 36% of young adults who completed a VI indicated that they have trouble maintaining housing because of a mental health issue/ a past head injury/ a developmental disability.
- 36% of the young adults have threatened to or tried to harm themselves in the past year.
- The need for continuity of care among healthcare providers serving youth

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*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Mentoring
- Accessible counseling for mental health issues such as anxiety and depression
- Autonomy and respect from adult helpers
- Creative outlets to process difficult emotions

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**Unaccompanied Youth At risk of homelessness**

We've identified various risk factors for unaccompanied youth homelessness in our community, and detailed the specific populations who are at-risk. Several risk factors for homelessness include foster care involvement, juvenile justice involvement, prior family homelessness.

**Couch - Surfing**

Youth in our community often report couch-surfing in between episodes of homelessness, and sometimes these youth never access services at all. In 2017 our Be Counted! Youth Homelessness Campaign surveyed 112 youth who identified as "couch-surfers".

Youth couch-surf because they can leverage their social networks for some time, often alternating between friends and family's houses week to week. One youth stated, ***"If you ask people, especially around Buffalo, there is a big community of people that are very supportive and willing to help out."*** This may indicate an opportunity for utilizing crisis host homes as an intervention, to stabilize the housing situation of youth who are residing with friends or relatives.

However, some youth also reported on the TAY-VI-SPDAT finding themselves in dangerous situations when strangers allowed them to stay in their homes,

sometimes demanding sex in exchange for a place to stay as showing in the TAY assessment below:

Do you ever do things that may be risky, like exchange sex for money, food, drugs, or a place to stay, run drugs for someone, have unprotected sex with someone you don't know, share a needle, etc?	<b>19%</b>
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Be Counted! End Youth Homelessness Campaign

Several years ago our community began a campaign to better identify youth who may not be accessing services or who may be couch surfing, as well as school aged youth who are unaccompanied. As part of this campaign, we conduct a youth-specific count every two years coinciding with Public Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). In 2017, the combination of school surveys and magnet site survey events counted 305 unaccompanied youth who were literally homeless or couch-surfing (approximately 112 out of those 305 were couch surfing). This campaign helps us to raise awareness in the community and also start to develop more effective ways to collect data on at-risk and couch-surfing youth who are notoriously difficult to identify.

**School Age Students Experiencing Homelessness**

Local Education Agency (LEA)	Total Homeless Enrolled students School Year 17-18	Unsheltered School Year 17-18	<b>Unaccompanied Homeless Youth School Year 17-18</b>
Total Erie LEAs	2807	3	<b>317</b>
Total Niagara LEAs	467	0	<b>57</b>
Total Erie & Niagara	3274	3	<b>374</b>

School Year 2017-18	Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Shelter	Unaccompanied Homeless Youth who are unsheltered	Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Hotel-Motel	Unaccompanied Homeless Youth who are doubled up
Erie Niagara CoC Percent	16.40%	0.00%	1.80%	81.80%
Erie Niagara CoC Count	61	0	7	306

Unaccompanied youth are a small proportion of the total McKinney-Vento students identified by the local school districts. Nearly eighty-two percent of the unaccompanied homeless youth are doubled up, representing an at-risk population with a higher likelihood of needing an intervention to prevent further housing instability and to attain educational success.

There is a discrepancy between the number identified as homeless under HUD's definition by the schools and how many are documented in our HMIS. This needs further analysis seeing that HMIS data shows there were 283 unaccompanied homeless youth under 18 that had at least one emergency shelter entrance. It is possible that there may be broader undercounts as couch-surfing youth had indicated in focus groups that they are reluctant to identify themselves to McKinney-Vento liaisons. One urban district showed an extremely low unaccompanied youth number (3) which may also indicate a need for enhanced identification of McKinney-Vento eligible students.

### Youth and Young Adults Receiving Public Assistance

A total of 3645 young adults who are 18-24 received public assistance (PA) in CY2018. Of this total:

- 42% indicated that they do not have a highschool diploma or equivalent.
- **29% (747) young adults receiving PA moved 3 times or more in the past year, indicating unstable housing.**
- 83% of the recipients are female and 17% are male.

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- 6.7 % due to substance use, and 9 percent due to long term disability are exempt from work
  - Racial distribution: 52% Black, 38% White, 5% multi-racial, 3% asian, 2% unknown.
  - Ethnic distribution: 75% non-hispanic, and 25% hispanic.

## Needs for At Risk Youth

### **Housing**

- Better identify youth and young adult who experienced housing instability and try to prevent homelessness upstream
- Cross system case conferencing including representatives from education, juvenile justice, and child welfare to ensure continuity of care
- Better discharge planning to ensure youth have the support that they need and do not enter into homelessness upon discharge

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- A need for rental assistance if a youth is facing eviction
- Youth often do not know where to go for assistance or what kind of assistance they are eligible for, they need to be able to access a list of resources

### **Education and Employment:**

- Connection between social programs and school/employment program will be important to ensure youth and young adults achieve their education goals and find meaningful employment

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

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- In need of education support for youth who are at-risk or couch-surfing such as academic, transportation, and basic living necessities

### **Social and Emotional Well-being**

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Youth identified a need for mentoring from peers and adults
- Accessible counseling for mental health issues such as anxiety and Depression
- Autonomy and respect from adult helpers
- Creative outlets to process difficult emotions

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## Impact and Strategies for Special Populations

In the following section we give particular attention to several unique populations of youth at-risk and experiencing homelessness. First we discuss the needs of each population, derived from national estimates, our HMIS and survey data, cross referenced data from the child welfare and juvenile justice system, and qualitative data from the Youth Task Force, Youth Action Board, and focus group discussions. Finally we synthesized this information into an actionable strategy designed to end youth homelessness for all youth. Needs were agreed upon and approved by the Youth Task Force and Youth Action Board and follow the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness four core outcomes for youth: Stable Housing, Permanent Connections, Education/Employment, and Social-Emotional Well-Being.

### Pregnant and Parenting Youth

Pregnant and parenting youth face a myriad of challenges including needing access to prenatal and perinatal care, parenting education, health care, and child care support.

Of the number of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in CY18, 140, or 18.8%, were pregnant or parenting. However, 42% who completed VI-F said they let their children stay with family or friends due to homelessness, therefore, we believe that the number of youth who have children might be higher than we see.

	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>18-24</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Pregnant/Parenting	11	129	140
Parenting	3	121	124
Pregnant	8	8	16

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Youth with children may be at a higher risk of homelessness. Sixty eight percent of young adults (2,484 youth) aged 18-24 who received public assistance in CY18 were pregnant or parenting. Forty seven percent of those youth who are pregnant or parenting and on public assistance have children between the ages of 1 - 5 years old. These youth are also not exempt from working, indicating they may need child care and other supports in order to maintain employment.

## Needs

### **Housing**

- Tailoring services specifically to this population, ensuring this population has access to crisis housing that is suitable for them.

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Youth said they personally knew more people than recorded in the chart, reflecting couch surfing circumstances and the need for better identifying them.
- A need for better housing conditions or bigger housing arrangements if they have a family or are planning a family

### **Permanent Connections**

- Youth need to build a strong and available network of family, friends, and community that can assist with child care and emotional support

### **Education and Employment**

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- Schools could collaborate with parenting services to provide parenting classes

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Quality childcare that could accommodate outside of regular work hours
- Help with finding a well paying job to be able to support a family

### **Social and Emotional Well-being**

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Need of accessing prenatal and postnatal services.
- Support from family and friends

#### Strategies

Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness need services specific to prenatal and perinatal health, childcare, and parenting education. Parenting youth stated that they wished they had a larger support network to help with caring for a child. Since a large portion of pregnant/parenting youth stated they receive help from their family and friends caring for their child, our strategies may focus on wrap-around services for the youth's social network, as well as safe crisis housing for youth with children.

- Free or low cost childcare or assistance for kin who help to take care of the children
- Focus on employment and educational opportunities for parents to acquire the skills they need for a adequate paying job
- More parenting education and planning services for all youth and young adults
- Advocate to normalize conversations about safe sexual practices, relationships, and family planning by agencies interacting with youth - youth sometimes felt uncomfortable having these conversations with adults in their life

### **Minor**

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There were 296 unaccompanied youth under 18 experiencing homelessness in CY 2018 and on average they stayed at a shelter for 23 days. After youth exit the shelter, their rate of returning to the shelter is 30 percent. This recidivism rate is higher than the adult population in our community. This may be the result of unresolved family conflict. Minor youth, who tend to experience homelessness for the first time around 15 years old, typically come into contact with the homelessness services system after running away from home or being forced out of the home due to family conflict. This reflects a need to address the family unit as a whole, while providing safe crisis housing when a respite is needed.

## Needs

### **Housing**

- The group suggested that for youth under the age of 18, the focus should be on mediation (among family and friends) and family reunification, if possible, and short term crisis housing to serve as a sort of “respite” while children and families are resolving disputes.
- Better way to identify and diagnosis mental health at an early age

### **Permanent Connections**

- Youth need strong role models and mentors to act as a guide and emotional support
- Strengthen connections with family members and community

### *Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Minor youth expressed the need for choice in their everyday lives. They felt as though adults often insisted they talk about their struggles before

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they were ready to do so, and wished they'd have more creative outlets to express themselves.

### **Education and Employment**

- Better identification and referral of students experiencing homelessness or at-risk so they can be linked with the proper supports

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Youth expressed a desire for teachers to be more compassionate and flexible since homelessness can cause the youth stress and difficulty with completing work on time

### **Social-Emotional Well Being**

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

- Youth expressed a need for mentoring and activities that could provide positive impact in their life
- Choice and autonomy in everyday life at school and when using services
- More creative outlets to express themselves
- Minor youth expressed the need for choice in their everyday lives. They felt as though adults often insisted they talk about their struggles before they were ready to do so, and wished they'd have more creative outlets to express themselves

## Strategies

Our transition aged youth and minor youth agreed that minor youth often have differing needs than older youth. For the minor population, strategies should focus on family engagement, providing respite and crisis housing, and developmentally appropriate services. Our community aligns with national research showing the first time for many minor youth to experience homelessness is around 15 years old. This is also an age at which adolescents are experiencing many changes in their identity, body image, and thought processes. Thus, it is imperative to have developmentally appropriate services

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for minor youth that mitigate common risk factors such as unsafe sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, and human trafficking.

- Family engagement and connection is important. Could adopt Functional Family Therapy to re-connect minors to family or other caregivers
- Create a referral system in partnership with school staff in order to identify school age youth who are at-risk or experiencing homelessness
- Services that address the unique challenges adolescents face as their body and mind experiences rapid development
- Provide mentors with lived experience who can serve as a role model
- Encourage providers, direct service staff, and schools to recognize that adolescents desire to make their own choices and have autonomy, with the guidance of a trusted adult, and modify policies and procedures accordingly

## LGBTQ+ Youth

It is well known that youth identifying as LGBTQ have a higher risk for negative health outcomes and housing instability. These youth report family conflict and being asked to leave their home because of their identity, and discrimination when seeking services. In addition to our HMIS and survey data, we also analyzed data from local school districts and conducted focus groups at a, LGBTQ specific drop-in center.

Based on our various needs assessments and RHY data, we estimate that between 25 and 40 % of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+. Based on data from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey from Buffalo Public Schools, a significant number of minor youth who experienced homelessness also identified as LGBTQ+ (approx. 40%).

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*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

### **Stable Housing**

- Youth need housing options available to them with supportive services such as counseling and academic services readily available
- Utilize tools for shelters to create inclusive shelter policy such as True Colors Fund Inclusion Manual

### **Permanent Connections**

- Youth want peers and adult role models that will be supportive and accepting, and willing to stand up to the microaggressions of others pointed at the LGBTQ community

### **Education / Employment**

- Youth need to feel like their educational and employment environment is safe and accepting of their identity, and want allies to assist them with applying to higher education and jobs

### **Social-Emotional Well-being**

- Providers should make space for them to feel comfortable reaching out for support
- The ability to build rapport with staff before identifying as LGBTQ or gender non-conforming

## **Strategies**

Research suggests that LGBTQ identifying youth have much poorer mental health outcomes than their cisgender peers if they are not in a gender-affirming environment. Therefore in order to best serve LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, providers should adopt a trauma-informed and gender affirming

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culture to successfully engage and stably house these youth. LGBTQ youth were adamant that one of the most important things to them was having a pro-LGBTQ environment they could feel safe in. Strategies for serving these youth should focus on eliminating the microaggressions, such as misgendering, that cause these youth to feel emotionally unsafe and unable to trust.

- Planning and services focus on cultural competency, race/ power dynamics, and inclusivity
- A common understanding among all shelters and housing providers of HUD's Equal Access Rule, forbidding discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation
- Providers should hire peers as staff who can build rapport with the youth from a common identity
- Include programming supports positive mental and physical health and provides linkages for these services for youth identifying as LGBTQ, who may have health concerns because of family conflict, discrimination, or bullying

### Foster Care Involvement

We conducted a system cross reference data analysis between child welfare data and homeless data (HMIS and public assistance information). Out of 1748 from 2011-2018 who were discharged from the child welfare system, **36% or 629 of them had indicators they have previously experienced homelessness or may be at-risk of experiencing homelessness.** These indicators are a prior stay in a shelter and having received public assistance but have no permanent address. **In 2018, a total of 746 youth discharge from foster care.**

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The Cross Reference Data Analysis also confirmed some of the risk factors stated in the Analysis of Data on Youth with Child Welfare Involvement at Risk of Homelessness (YARH Aug 2017) study that the homelessness and foster care placement is often part of a larger pattern of instability. The higher number of placements, the higher chance youth ended up homeless. Twelve percent of the foster care youth we examined experienced 6 or more placements, and these youth have a 50% or greater chance of becoming homeless after transitioning out of foster care. This may highlight a need to engage and support families who are providing a placement in order to prevent the youth from being removed from that placement.

## Needs

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

### **Stable Housing**

- There is a need for affordable housing for youth transitioning out of foster care, and collaboration among public housing agencies, the CoC, and the child welfare system
- In need of shelter or crisis housing for older youth ages 18 - 21 who are in Foster Care but have left or run away from their foster homes. Respite beds are currently being developed for Erie County.

### **Permanent Connections**

- Youth indicated they need role models and peers in their life who can act as both an emotional support as well as someone who can help them learn independent living skills
- Staff need to discuss with the youth their family of origin and extended family to discern which relatives or friends can act as a support network for the youth

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## Education / Employment

- Youth need time to learn jobs skills and assistance with obtaining employment or education, with the help of a peer or mentor to help guide them

## Social-Emotional Well-being

- Youth want to make connections with trusted adults so they have people they can count on when things get tough

### Strategy

Many variables contribute to placement in foster care and risk of homelessness. Family homelessness may contribute to a young person's placement in foster care and may subsequently hinder efforts at family reunification. A focus on wrap around services for the youth's family of origin will be necessary for the goal of family reunification.

An important correlation between foster care involvement and future homelessness that we found was the number of placements a youth had while in foster care. This indicates a need to continuously engage families with foster youth in order to facilitate the youth being able to stay in that placement for a longer amount of time.

For youth in foster care, our strategy should focus on preventing youth from entering the homelessness response system through family engagement, developing permanent connections for the youth, and teaching self-sufficiency. For youth who exit foster care into homelessness, our strategy should focus on providing crisis housing and staff trained to address the unique developmental and emotional needs of foster care involved youth.

- Better prepare youth who are still in foster care and assist them to achieve education and employment goals in order to transition youth to live independently

- 
- Providers suggested developing an assessment to screen youth in foster care to help develop a plan for them to exit foster care to stable housing, including preemptively discussing family dynamics with the young person in case they decide to reunite with their family.
  - Youth currently in foster care and transitioning out of foster care spoke of the importance of having mentors and role models who can help them navigate the challenges in life and to help develop a strong network of support.
  - Provide support in rental assistance and case management after they exit foster care

### Justice involved

The relationship between juvenile justice involvement and homelessness for youth is bi-directional, meaning each has been found to increase the likelihood of the other. National data suggests that youth who have justice involvement may be at a higher risk for later homelessness, and youth who experience homelessness are at a greater risk of later involvement in the justice system.

When Buffalo or Niagara Falls police arrest an individual, they are held at the Erie County Holding Center in downtown Buffalo. Among 3317 people who were held at the Erie County holding center in CY18, **1572 were 17-24 years old (47 percent)**.

#### **Adult Justice System:**

We found that 72 young adults experienced homelessness within the 3 years before jail and 82 of them experienced homelessness within 2 years after their release. A total of 154 (9.7%) young adults who have justice involvement had experienced homelessness. In addition, 24 percent indicated on the TAY-VI-SPDAT that they'd stayed at the holding center in the previous year. The relationship we found aligned with National data in that it was also bi-directional.

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### Demographics of Youth at Erie County Holding Center

Gender	Count
Female	41
Male	113

Race	Count
Black	118
White	36

Mental Health Issue	Count
No	65
Yes	89

### Juvenile Justice

In our community we found that 9.7 percent of youth who'd had juvenile justice involvement had also experienced homelessness.

Racial disparities exist within our justice and homelessness system. Nearly 77 percent of youth who've experienced both homelessness and justice involvement were Black. In addition, these young adults were often male. This highlights a need to address systematic and institutionalized racial and gender disparities within our community.

Each County has Family Services Team that assist families in stabilizing their home environments and to prevent youth from becoming involved, or more deeply involved, in the Justice System, where possible and most appropriate. Youth under the age of 18 who show a pattern of ungovernable behavior, such as running away, curfew violations, alcohol and/or drug abuse, violent or destructive behavior, or severe school truancy are placed in a program called People in Need of Supervision (PINS). This program can assist with successful re-entry and linkage to appropriate housing resources.

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## Needs

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

### **Stable Housing**

- Youth need access to crisis and permanent housing where they can receive case management assistance to help them navigate obtaining employment, education, and public assistance

### **Permanent Connections**

- Youth who may be disconnected with their support network because of juvenile justice involvement need effective discharge planning and follow up to ensure they remain stably housed or reunite with their family

### **Education / Employment**

- Jobs need to be available to youth who may have a criminal record or who may need on the job training and access to education
- Service providers may be able to build relationships with employers and landlords to allow for these youth to obtain jobs and housing without difficulty

### **Social-Emotional Well-being**

- Youth involved in the criminal justice system need to be able to learn self-sufficiency through life and job skills training and education

## Strategies

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Youth with juvenile justice involvement are disproportionately Black and male. Strategies should focus on reducing these racial and gender disparities through targeted outreach and re-entry programs for at-risk youth.

Ongoing discussions have centered around new legislation in New York called “Raise the Age”, which ensures 16 and 17 year olds are not prosecuted as adults, but rather adolescent offenders. In addition, adolescent offenders will no longer be placed in a detention facility for non-violent crimes. Therefore, our community should work together to ensure these youth have the appropriate housing and other resources to succeed.

- Targeted outreach and data driven prevention programming
- Collaboration to ensure effective discharge planning and prevent any youth from being discharged into an unstable living situation
- A community wide effort to address racial and gender disparities in youth involved in the juvenile justice system

### **Youth Survivors of Human Trafficking**

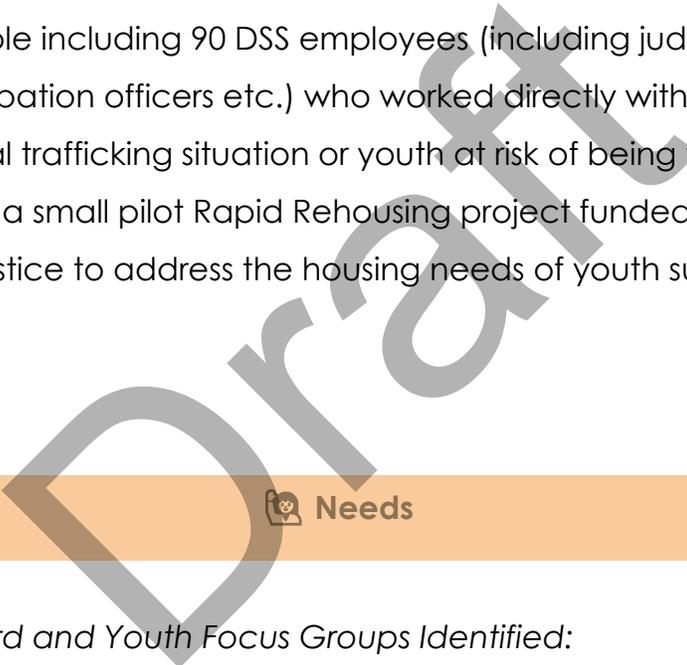
Human Trafficking is defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 as “sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion...,” or “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion....” In a study by Covenant House, a nationwide organization providing housing and supportive services to youth experiencing homelessness, nearly 14 percent of the youth they interviewed fit the US definition of human trafficking.

The Erie County Department of Social Services has partnered with the International Institute of Buffalo (IIB) through a New York State Office of Children

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and Family Services initiative called the Safe Harbor Plan. The initiative is designed to build a localized response to child trafficking under the state-wide “Safe Harbor for Exploited Children Act” that was passed by the NYS Legislature in 2008 to redirect exploited children from the criminal or juvenile justice systems to the family courts. Once in the family courts, the children and their families can receive support and services from the child welfare system.

In 2018, there were 115 youth that were connected with human trafficking, and 67 percent of those were going through our child welfare system in Erie County. Ninety nine percent of them are US citizens. The International Institute of Buffalo trained 1314 people including 90 DSS employees (including judges, foster care workers, youth probation officers etc.) who worked directly with youth last year to identify a potential trafficking situation or youth at risk of being trafficked. They also administered a small pilot Rapid Rehousing project funded by the Department of Justice to address the housing needs of youth survivors.



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 Needs

*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

**Stable Housing**

- Provide safe and immediate crisis housing that is trauma-informed for youth who are identified as survivors
- Currently the child welfare and juvenile justice system are utilizing a standardized tool to identify trafficking survivors. More programs could be utilizing such standardized screening tools to better identify survivors.

**Permanent Connections**

- 
- Ensure youth identified as survivors have a support network who have knowledge of human trafficking and how to identify the signs of human trafficking

### **Education / Employment**

- Identify any legal and housing barriers that prevent youth from finishing their education or obtaining employment

### **Social-Emotional Well-being**

- Encourage cultural competency in providers and hire bi-lingual staff to overcome any language barriers
- Provide trauma-specific treatments and interventions for survivors

### Strategies

Individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness are vulnerable to exploitation through human trafficking. Providers should focus on offering trauma-specific treatment and trauma-informed services, and ensuring that survivors can access permanent housing solutions. However, these trauma-informed and trauma-specific services should be offered to all youth at-risk and experiencing homelessness.

- Youth are hesitant to disclose occurrences of sexual exploitation, or do not understand the implications of the situation they've found themselves in. Continue education and adopt a standardized assessment tool so all service providers and more community partners including business could better identify victims who are trafficked.
- Our strategy should focus on ensuring all of our providers are trauma-informed and equipped to deal with survivors of trafficking, especially crisis housing providers.
- Our community started a pilot rapid rehousing program that focuses only on serving survivors of trafficking that recently funded by the Department of Justice is administered by the International Institute of Buffalo. The program is only in its first year.

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## Youth with Disabilities

Twenty seven percent of youth experiencing homelessness reported they had a disability upon intake, including a mental health concern, substance use concern, developmental disability, or physical disability.

A common theme among Youth Task Force and Youth Action Board members was that the presence of disability may be underreported. Since HMIS data is self-report, youth may not disclose a mental health or substance use disorder, or may not have been diagnosed by a mental health clinician. The YTF and YAB suggested that more thorough assessments during the referral process may be able to discern more accurately if a youth has a qualifying disability.

Twenty seven percent of youth experiencing homelessness disclosed that they had a disability upon intake into HMIS (36.5 percent of 18-24 year olds and 12.5 percent under age 18).

	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>18-24</b>	<b>Total Clients</b>
Alcohol Abuse	0	10	10
Both Alcohol and Drug Abuse	0	19	19
Chronic Health Condition	7	17	24
Developmental	12	37	49
Drug Abuse	2	48	50
HIV/AIDS	0	1	1
Mental Health Condition	28	140	168
Physical	2	27	29
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>350</b>

**Self-reported disabilities at intake into HMIS**

 Needs

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*Youth Action Board and Youth Focus Groups Identified:*

### **Stable Housing**

- Youth discussed the need for permanent housing that has an appropriate intensity of services and longer term financial assistance

### **Permanent Connections**

- Youth want to have a support network that understands their disability and unique needs

### **Education / Employment**

- Internship programs and extra assistance with acquiring a diploma, higher education, and jobs
- Guidance and assistance navigating the complexities of filling out documentation

### **Social-Emotional Well-being**

- Time to build rapport with staff before disclosing a disability
- Trauma-informed services delivered in an environment that supports some youth's needs for a modified structure
- Improved identification of those who might not have a diagnosis

## **Strategies**

In order to address the needs of youth with disabilities, providers will need to practice appropriate referral and linkages to youth friendly mental and physical health services. We will continue to develop our partnerships with local mental health and substance use treatment agencies in order to have effective linkages for youth. Realizing that some youth experiencing homelessness may have a disability, providers should cultivate a trauma-informed environment in

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crisis housing and practice progressive engagement after youth are successfully housed.

- Build stronger partnerships with mental health and substance use treatment providers in order to create an effective referral and linkage for youth
- Educate providers and case managers on effective strategies to acquire disability benefits (SSI) for youth
- Increase data quality by ensuring youth's disability status is recorded and updated in HMIS
- Practice progressive engagement in order to tailor permanent housing assistance to the youth's unique needs and abilities
- Integrate trauma-specific evidence-based practices into a young person's permanent housing plan to address different mental or substance use condition

Draft

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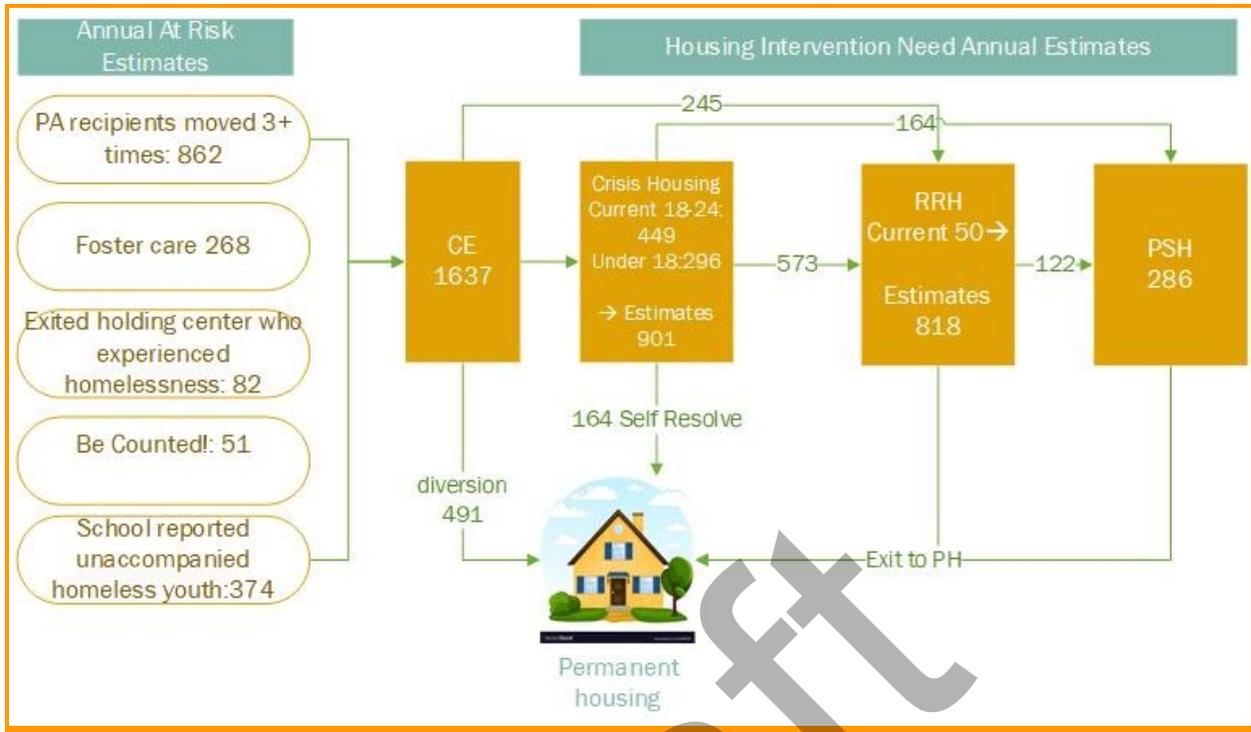
## Summary of Needs Assessment

Our community identified diversion, self-resolution, crisis housing, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing as pathways youth currently utilize in our homelessness response system. Through discussion with the Youth Task Force and Youth Action Board, we determined the ideal pathways for transition aged youth. The pathways and percentages of youth who will use each pathway are identified in the chart below.

Pathways Identified	YAB/YTF estimates
Diversion	30%
Self-Resolve	10%
CE-->Crisis Housing-->RRH--> PSH	15%
CE-->Crisis Housing--> PSH	10%
CE-->RRH	15%
CE-->Crisis Housing (including TH)--> RRH	20%

Using HMIS, child welfare, school, holding center and youth-specific point in time count data as mentioned in the previous section, we mapped the current utilization of the homelessness crisis response system and the estimated need for each system pathway.

### System Capacity and Gaps



\* Crisis housing current capacity includes 65 youth served in Transitional Housing

\* Compass house resource center (day drop in) annually served 145 clients

Program Type	Est.Per person cost	Estimate d need	Existing resources	unmet Need	\$ Need
PSH	\$ 15,000	286	0	286	\$4,290,000
TH-RRH	\$ 12,000	327	95	232	\$2,784,000
RRH(short to medium term)	\$ 1000-10,000 (avg. \$5000)	818	15	803	\$4,015,000
Diversion	\$ 1000	491	145	346	\$346,000
Crisis Housing	\$ 3,000	901	745	156	\$468,000
<b>Total</b>					<b>\$11,903,000</b>

## System Gaps

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1. Low barrier transitional housing allows youth to access crisis housing and stable in TH without precondition.
  2. Provide additional support in order to build the life skills youth needed to be successful independently.
  3. Increase short term rental assistance capacity to address the unmet needs for supportive housing.
  4. Using a longer term rapid rehousing to address the need for permanent housing due to concerns that not able to document a disability will disqualify youth who needed the services.
  5. High return rate for youth who left the shelter back to their family.
  6. Seek other options besides youth's parents as their safe options
  7. Provide additional support to high risk youth who are in Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) Diversion Services
  8. Connect high risk foster care youth who exited foster care system and maintain stable housing
  9. Provide support to the at risk population, where other funding might not be able to assist, to prevent youth experiencing homelessness and find safe housing options
  10. We currently do not have any youth specific 18-24 shelters. In need of a safe and low barrier location for youth to stay
  11. Although our unsheltered youth population are low, we believe that providing a low barrier overnight drop in center will provide an opportunity for us to engage with youth who might be otherwise hidden

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## Guiding Principles

We developed our community wide goals by following youth-centric principles and evidence based frameworks. The Youth Action Board (YAB) and Youth Task Force (YTF) formulated strategies to implement these principles in YHDP funded projects. Homeless Alliance of WNY, as the CoC lead, will advocate for and promote these guiding principles as best practice when it comes to ending youth homelessness. All YHDP funded projects will be required to implement strategies and interventions that incorporate these principles, which will be reflected in their performance review. All of the guiding principles encourage agencies serving youth to incorporate each young person's unique risk and protective factors when collaborating with that youth to come up with the plan they need to succeed.

### Trauma Informed Care

Findings from the CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study show that harmful, potentially traumatic experiences, during childhood often lead to negative outcomes for individuals later in life.

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC), a product of this study, provides a strengths-based framework for practitioners and researchers of social service, healthcare, and beyond to integrate into their practice and field of study. TIC recognizes the complex nature of trauma experienced by individuals while promoting resilience and healing.

These expectations will be met through sharing throughout the CoC what the TIC framework is, educating stakeholders on why its importance in meeting our collective goals and how to incorporate TIC within each organization, committee, and group that make up our CoC.

### ***Strategies to Promote Trauma-Informed Care in our Community:***

- Integrating knowledge about trauma and its effects into policies, procedures, and practices
- YHDP agencies will provide referrals to appropriate trauma-specific treatments if the youth chooses

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- Operationalizing the tenets of TIC - Safely, Trust, Choice, Collaboration, and Empowerment - in order to provide training and monitoring of projects

## **Positive Youth Development**

The Department of Health and Human Services developed a framework to empower youth to become self-sufficient and healthy adults. This framework, called Positive Youth Development (PYD), utilizes four basic principles to guide work with young people. These principles are competence, usefulness, belonging, and power. PYD is now advocated as a best practice, designed to guide the way that staff and organizations interact with youth to ensure the development of healthy social and emotional skills and coping mechanisms.

We utilize the PYD approach with our Youth Action Board. Our goal is to empower our YAB members with the skills they need to be successful both on the YAB and in their personal and professional lives. In addition to our YHDP work, we've incorporated leadership and community organizing training within our curriculum.

### ***Strategies to Promote Positive Youth Development (PYD)***

- Encourage PYD as a best practice for youth focused housing providers
- Providing PYD trainings and workshops for our Continuum of Care
- Connect youth to mentors with lived experience who can act as role models
- Include strategies in case management to help youth learn social and emotional skills and wellness
- Including PYD as a project performance indicator and in the continuous quality improvement plan
- Project staff will provide youth with options during case management, such as allowing the youth to decide if and when they want to discuss personal issues

## **Family Engagement**

Our community concluded that family engagement is imperative to the prevention of youth homelessness. This is especially important for youth under the age of 18, who cannot yet obtain a lease for housing.

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### ***Strategies to Promote Family Engagement:***

- Focus on the family unit as a whole when addressing youth homelessness, making sure to engage the family at every step of the way, if the youth chooses they want to reunite with family
- Provide mediation between youth and family with conflict resolutions
- Provider supports and linkages to not only youth but their family to build family resiliency

### **Immediate Access to Housing with No Preconditions**

Housing First recognizes that the key to ending homelessness is a home, and a person experiencing homelessness ought to be able to have access to housing without preconditions. By implementing Housing First for youth, we recognize that youth will have immediate access to housing with no preconditions.

### ***Strategies to Promote Quick Access without Preconditions in our Community:***

- Encourage Housing First as a best practice in our community
- Provide trainings and workshops on Housing First practices for youth
- Implement Housing First as a requirement for all YHDP projects
- Continue to develop relationships with landlords and affordable housing developers in the community to facilitate youth being housed quickly
- Recognize that substance use and mental health is not a barrier to shelter or obtaining housing
- Provide youth necessary and age-appropriate supports that focus on health, well-being, life skills, engagement in education and employment and social inclusion

### **Youth Choice**

As a primary tenant of both Trauma Informed Care and Positive Youth Development, youth choice came up as a central theme in focus groups and

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YAB conversations. Young people expressed a need to be able to direct their own goals and path, with guidance from a trustworthy mentor.

***and Youth Choice in Our Community:***

- Providing individualized supports
- Allow youth and young adults to choose the intensity, duration, and types of services that are available to meet their unique needs
- Youth can choose where they are housed through rental assistance programs
- Elicit feedback from youth clients and the YAB for project performance review

**Individualized and Client Driven Supports**

Each young person has distinct histories and strengths. Through YHDP, agencies will provide services and support that match the needs of each young person. Flexibility in case management allows for youth to work on their unique goals at a pace that will allow them to be successful in the program.

***Strategies to Promote Individualized and Client Driven Supports:***

- Youth will determine what their specific goals are and the timeframes for achieving them
- Flexible funding will help to ensure each youth can furnish their homes if they need it
- Utilization of mental health, substance use, and social-emotional wellness assessments to determine the specific treatment needs of each youth

**Social and Community Integration**

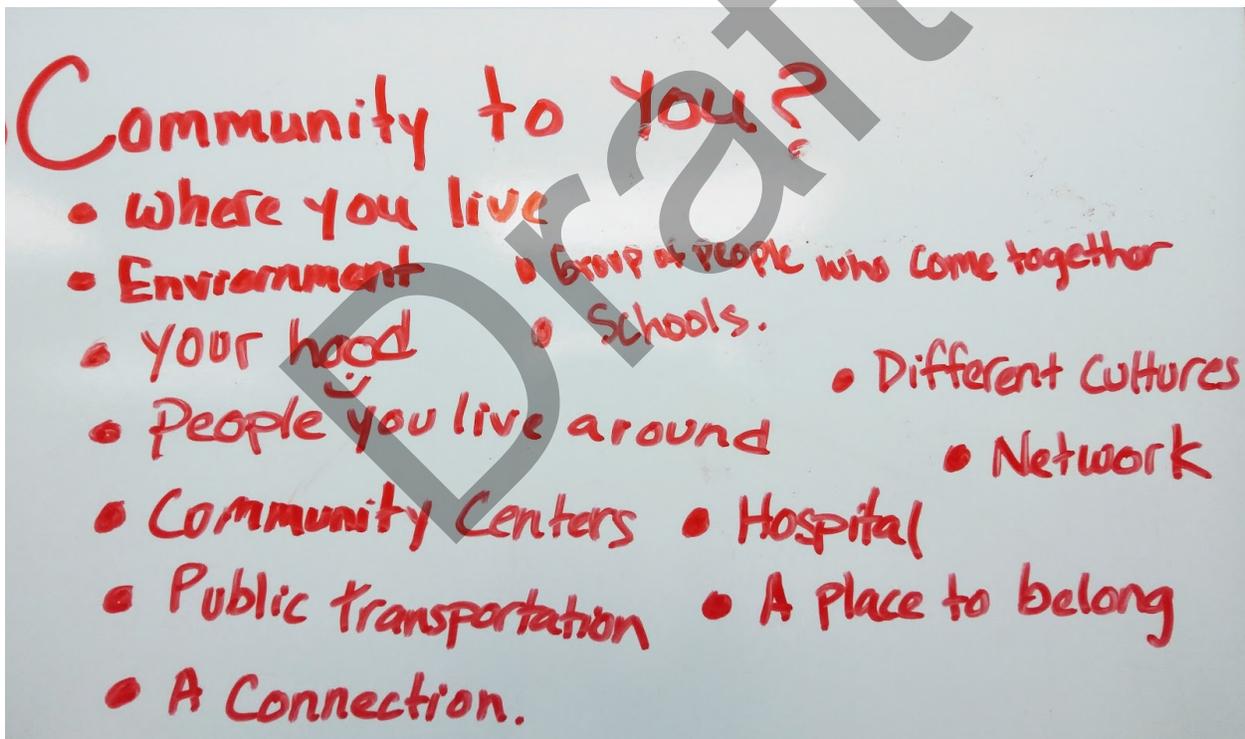
Youth expressed that they need to feel safe and welcomed in their community in order to be successful and secure. Social and Community Integration is imperative for a young person to develop the social skills and connections they need to achieve their goals. Social and Community Integration is encouraged through all of our guiding principles - Trauma Informed Care, Positive Youth Development, and Youth Choice.

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Our Youth Action Board determined that in order to be able to explore their community and make connections, they need to feel safe and to live somewhere they choose and where they feel like they belong.

**Strategies to Promote Social and Community Integration in our Community:**

- Direct service staff should encourage and promote attendance at free, youth friendly community events
- Agencies should promote healthy communities by advocating for a clean environment, affordable housing, and advocating for decreased violence
- Work with youth to build relationships with family, friends, and community organizations to develop permanent connections



Youth Action Board Session on Social and Community Integration

(Word box - "Youth told us they want to work with someone they can trust, who genuinely cares about their well being. They want to have access to low barrier crisis housing with the ability to get help based on what their unique needs are")

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## **Progressive Engagement**

Progressive engagement is a technique that seeks to maximize the number of individuals who can be served in permanent housing, while taking into account each individual's unique risk and protective factors. Initially, enough assistance is provided to stabilize the youth in permanent housing. After the initial housing crisis is alleviated, a case manager will work with the youth to determine if this lesser amount of financial assistance is enough to stabilize them, or if they will need more assistance for a longer amount of time. Many youth in our community need only a small amount of financial assistance to stabilize, and then successfully exit to a permanent destination. By providing youth in crisis enough financial assistance to alleviate their immediate crisis and then re-assessing the youth's needs, we are able to both assist those in crisis but also provide more resources to those youth who may need more intensive services.

### ***Strategies to Promote Progressive Engagement in Our Community:***

- Ensure service providers are assisting youth with the least amount of resources needed to get back on their feet, then re-assessing the youth to determine what their unique needs and strengths are and how long they may need financial assistance

## **Coordinated Entry**

Coordinated Entry allows for a standardized process of ensuring the most vulnerable youth are prioritized for housing interventions. Our community currently has two Coordinated Entry access points that are youth specific, otherwise youth are using the general adult system. Coordinated Entry for youth should be easily accessible and reflect an accurate prioritization system. Youth stated they can feel pressured or uncomfortable if asked to disclose too much personal information to someone they don't already know. In addition, there is no VI-SPDAT for youth under the age of 18.

### ***Strategies to Promote a Youth Centric Coordinated Entry System:***

- 
- Allow for an intake and screening process that goes at the young person's pace
  - Develop a screening tool that youth can self-administer
  - Ensure that schools, Department of Social Services and other youth serving agencies have a thorough understanding of the Coordinated Entry process and can refer youth to an access point
  - Develop a way to prioritize youth under the age of 18 for referral to crisis and permanent housing

...

*Youth told us they want to work with someone they can trust, who genuinely cares about their well being. They want to have access to low barrier crisis housing with the ability to get housing and support services based on what their unique needs are.*

*"I want to be able to choose how I talk about problems...sometimes I'd rather draw or write than just talk. It makes me feel more comfortable."*

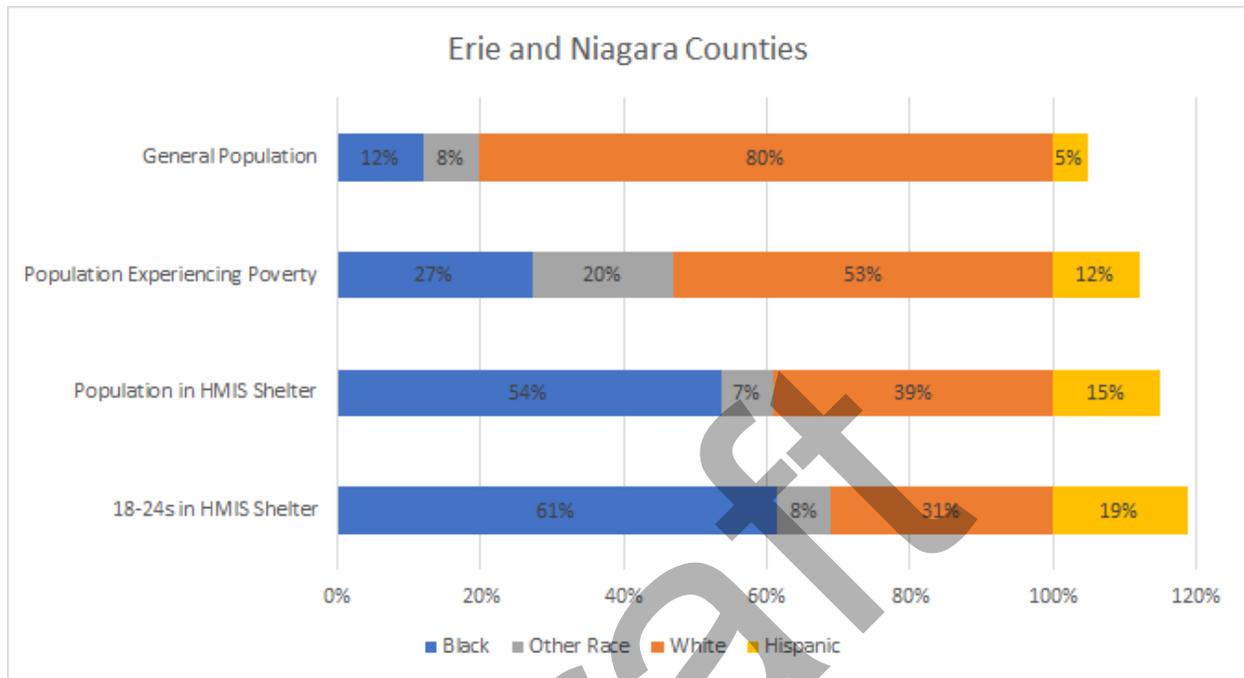
*"Sometimes you can't trust people...I just want to know I can trust someone before I'm going to let them help me."*

*"I just want to be around positive energy!"*

**- Youth Action Board Members**

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## Equity

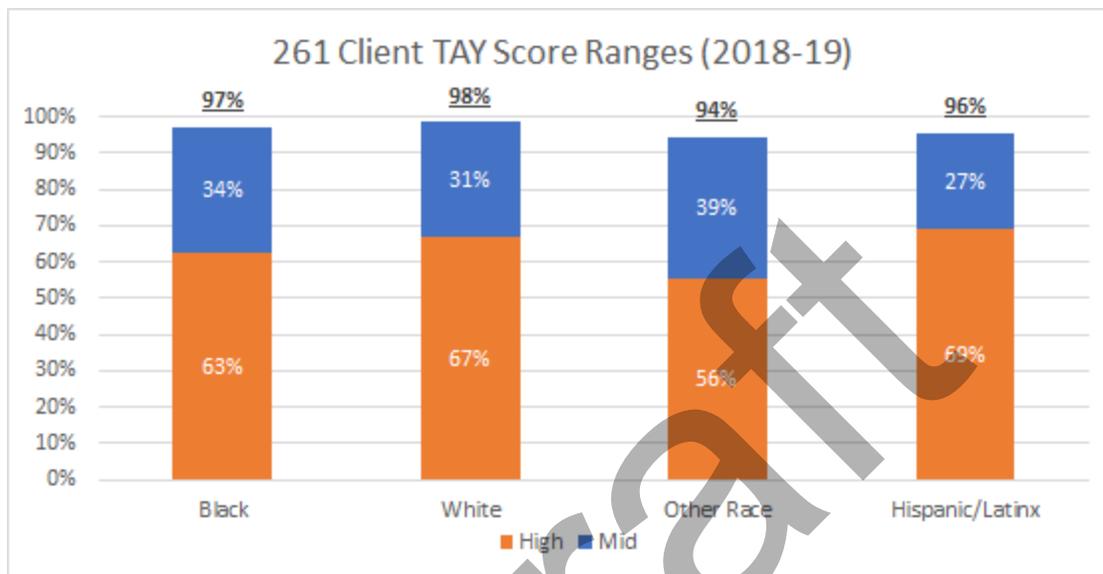


**Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey data and HMIS data**

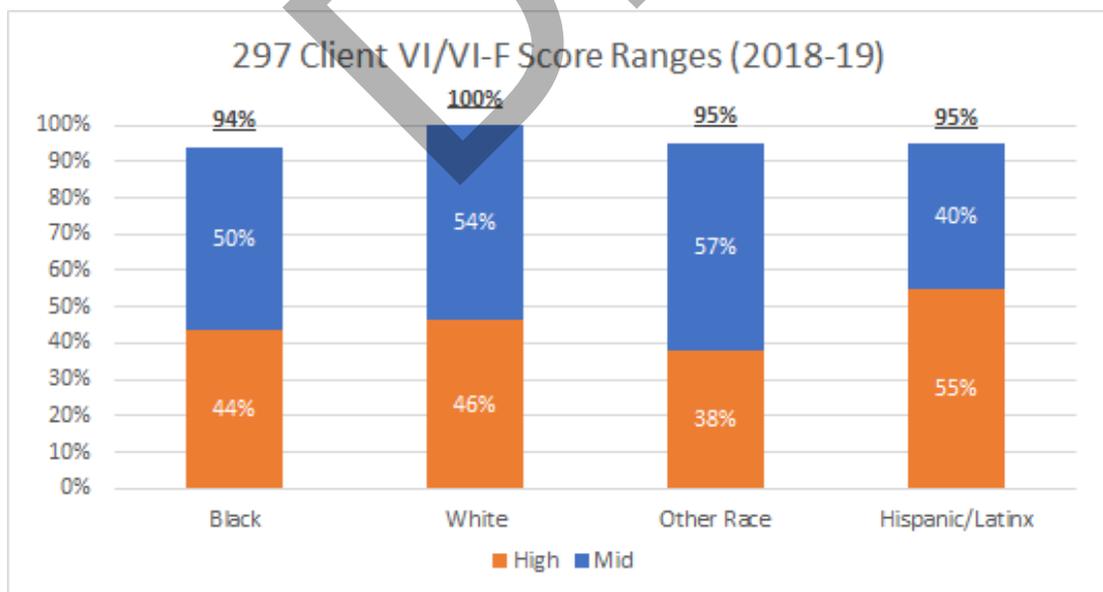
By comparing the racial and ethnic composition among the general population, people of color are significantly overrepresented in people experiencing poverty and people who are homeless, especially those who are 18-24.

New York State is a Right-to-Shelter State, which means that the Department of Social Services is obligated to place everyone who has nowhere to sleep into shelters regardless of their race, sexual orientation, age, religion, or marriage status. The above chart shows there are a disproportion of people of color experiencing homelessness. We also started to capture client' sexual orientation, however, there is no community wide baseline to compare. Based on observation and feedback, youth shelters most likely have better practices on being LGBTQ+ friendly, while some adult shelters could use some

improvement. New York State recently issued an Administrative Directive Memorandum to all districts to ensure all shelters comply with Equal Access rules by providing culturally competent services to LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness, and as a CoC lead we offer annual Equal Access Rule training to all CoC members.

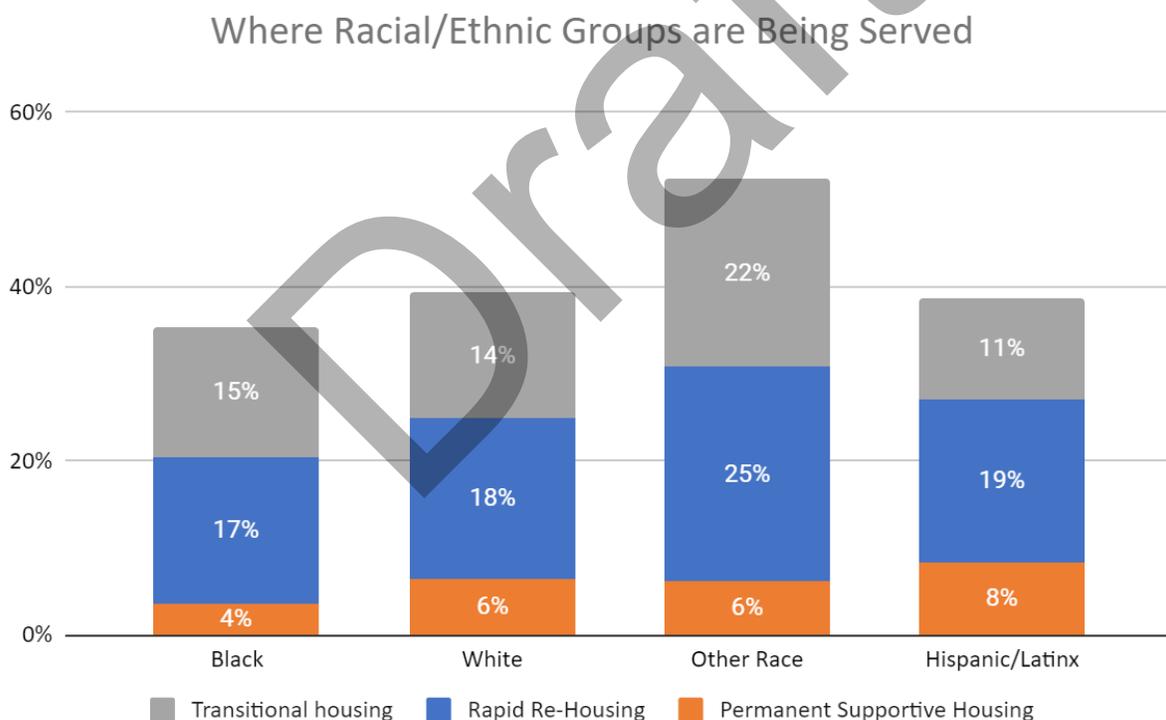


Source: TAY-VI-SPDAT Scores for Youth Ages 18 - 24



Source: VI-SPDAT / VI-F-SPDAT Scores for Youth Ages 18 - 24

Non-youth specific providers often conduct the Vulnerability Index screening tool using the adult version instead of the Transition Age Youth version. Overall, it doesn't show significant differences among different racial groups or percentages of whom qualify for rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing. However, people who are screened with the TAY are more likely to score higher than those who are screened by the VI, and therefore may be prioritized first. Moving forward, we have prioritized offering training and support to providers so they are always utilizing the TAY when screening single transition aged youth, in order to ensure standardization and equal access to permanent housing. In addition, we will use YHDP funds to create more youth specific services that prioritize equity at all levels of an organization.



**Source: HMIS data**

We analyzed the percentages by race and ethnicity of transition aged youth accessing transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive

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housing. Compared to the TAY/VI/VI-F result, other races (including Asian, Native American, Hawaiian, and multiracial. N=65) are disproportionately being served in TH/RRH/PSH higher than other races/ethnicity. The result of this analysis is different from what we see in the overall system. This serves as our baseline and we will pay more attention in practice as well as review this information annually to ensure all youth are being served fairly.

We have formed a Racial Equity committee for the CoC and we have been reviewing racial disparities information, surveyed clients, identified other systems that contributed to the disparities, and educated the CoC and community on outcomes we found. We will be including racial disparities information for the youth population in our dashboard and encourage YAB, YTF and Racial equity committee to work together to address the racial inequity in our community.

...

*“I believe that our system needs to be reconstructed in a way where we are willing to help those in need. No matter what you may look like. Safety should look and feel the same.”*

*“Everyone should be treated the same way, don’t matter what color you are.” -*

**Youth Action Board Members**

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## Community Shared Vision

The Youth Action Board and Youth Task Force created a vision statement that encapsulates the strengths based and youth-centric approach our community has taken to ensuring the end of youth homelessness in Buffalo and Niagara.

**"All youth and young adults in our community are valuable, resilient, and deserving of resources, safety, and a sense of empowerment. Our goal is to end youth homelessness in collaboration with youth and young adults and create an environment where our youth can thrive and become healthy adults."**

## Community Identified Goals, Objectives, and Actions Steps

The Youth Task Forces of Erie and Niagara Counties and the Youth Action Board discerned five goals in the course of the development of this Coordinated Community Plan. These goals are:

1. Identification: The community will provide a safe and supportive environment to identify all youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness by connecting with a wide range of community partners.
2. Prevention and Diversion: The community uses outreach, engagement, prevention, and diversion strategies whenever possible, and otherwise provides immediate access to no or low barrier crisis housing and supportive services to any youth, regardless of their circumstances, who needs or wants it.
3. Coordinated Entry: The community uses youth focused coordinated entry processes to effectively link all youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness to eligible and appropriate housing and services solutions that are safe, secure, and tailored to youth needs.
4. Stable Housing: The community acts with urgency to swiftly and consistently engage and support all youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness to move into permanent housing options, with the location

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guided by youth choice, with appropriate supportive services meant to maintain youth engagement.

5. Sustainability: All youth and young adults in our community are valuable, resilient, and deserving of resources, safety, and a sense of empowerment. Our goal is to end youth homelessness in collaboration with youth and young adults and create an environment where our youth can thrive and become healthy adults.

As part of the process in discerning the Coordinated Community Plan, the community went into more depth with these goals, dividing them into objectives, and further still, into actionable steps to create a to-do list moving forward. This section shall go into further detail with the objectives and and action steps behind these goals and how the community plans to address them.

These goals and action steps are in service of our overarching plans to facilitate particular well-being goals to facilitate the achievement of the four USICH identified outcomes to end youth homelessness. We'd indicated this through the following symbols:

-  Social and emotional well-being
-  Permanent connections
-  Education and Employment
-  Stable housing

The Youth Action Board and Youth Task Force determined the length of time it would take to achieve each action step. The action steps below are divided by steps that can be completed in the short term, the medium term, and long term. Short term goals for the community are a priority that the community wishes to begin working on immediately to achieve within the next year. We define the below timeframe to achieve each objective as: Short term: 1-2 years, Medium term: 3-5 years, Long term: within 5-7 years. Highlighted Action Steps (in orange) are ones the community prioritized for YHDP funding.

## **Goal 1: Identification**

The community will provide a safe and supportive environment to identify all youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness by connecting with a wide range of community partners.

In order for young people to be willing to identify themselves and their circumstances to service providers and members of the community who wish to help, we need to ensure that there exists a safe, supportive environment where youth and young adults recognize that coming forward will lead to assistance. It needs to be as effective as it is welcoming.

**Objective A:** Increasing identification points for the homeless assistance system to ensure all youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are identified and connected to services.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core outcome achieved
Developing a 24 hour hotline where youth could call in and access crisis resources. Such services would have peer-led staffing. This would be an anonymous call/hotline to help young people navigate the youth homelessness assistance system and create a standardized referral or linkage system.	Short Term	Youth Task Force	
Training youth and young adults on peer outreach teams to better identify youth experiencing homelessness	Short Term	Youth Task Force	
Increasing community education so community members can self-identify or refer other people to services. This includes training non-social service entities, such as	Short Term	Youth Task Force/ Homeless Alliance	

law enforcement or 24-hour businesses on how to identify and respond to youth experiencing homelessness.			
<b>Developing a 24-hour drop-in center for youth</b>	<b>Medium Term</b>	<b>Youth Task Force</b>	

**Objective B:** Increasing data from community partners through community opportunities - networking, meetings, survey and list servers as well as government entities (New York State Office of Mental Health, counties Department of Social Services, New York State Office of Persons with Disabilities, and other entities).

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Facilitating the creation of a common language and definition for all data sources such that they can effectively identify the youth that are homeless or at risk	Short Term	Homeless Alliance (in its role as HMIS lead)	
Identifying single points of contact within each department to act as the liaison to the homeless system for the purposes of case conferencing.	Medium Term	Department of Social Services	
Identify or create an assessment tool that might point to predictors or factors that might suggest homelessness or at risk populations	Medium Term	Youth Task Force and DSS	
Ensuring the community utilizes a standardized by-name list of all youth and young adults experiencing homelessness	Medium Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	

Creating a platform or forum for systems of assistance that serve youth to communicate about high risk cases. This includes facilitating the creation of informed consent processes that would facilitate the continuity of care and mutual awareness of barriers to assistance.	Medium Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
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**Objective C:** Partner with schools, particularly those in geographies of higher need, to identify students at risk of homelessness.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
In partnership with schools, the Youth Task Force would ensure that there were standardized presentations about the services offered, and how to access them, given on a regular basis.	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	

## Goal 2: Prevention and Diversion

*The community uses outreach, engagement, prevention, and diversion strategies whenever possible, and otherwise provides immediate access to no or low barrier crisis housing and supportive services to any youth, regardless of their circumstances, who needs or wants it.*

The community believes that youth homelessness starts with family and there are opportunities at different stages with different interventions to prevent youth experiencing homelessness.

**Objective A:** Improve discharge processes from other systems of care

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Establishing earlier time frames for discharge planning, for instance from foster care or the juvenile justice system, in collaboration with youth and their families, such that planning begins significantly before discharge is anticipated to occur	Short Term	Youth Task Force	  
Ensuring that when youth are reunited with their families, norms of aftercare practices includes consulting both youth and their guardians in the discharge processes, development plans, and also ensure that these plans prioritize client choice	Short Term	Youth Task Force	 
Ensuring that when one system is revising its discharge procedures, other collaborative systems are consulted to ensure the discharge procedures are standardized	Short Term	Youth Task Force	 
Include the relevant adult systems of care in early discharge planning from foster care or children's single point of access, including creating case conference across systems using the Single Point of Access model to facilitate warm handoffs when needed	Medium Term	Youth Task Force Subcommittee	 
Develop discharge planning standards in light of "Raise the age" legislation (as discussed on page 33)	Short term	Raise the age committee	 

**Objective B:** Increase youth-focused crisis shelter beds, safe shelter, respite, and housing options for youth who may be at risk of being asked to leave home by their families

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Increase collaboration among agencies to identify and increase respite options. Respite locations should be a low-barrier place to pause for youth who are at risk of greater crisis.	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	 
Respite placement options need to be delivered in culturally appropriate ways, including the "family first" initiatives.	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	  
Increase mediation services available to youth and young adults who are at risk	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	 
Increase the number of low-barrier crisis beds suitable for PINS (Persons In Need of Supervision) youth in need of respite.	Short Term	Department of Social Services and HAWNY	 
Increase low-barrier medium term crisis housing beds, ensuring that they are created with an identified pathway to permanent housing.	Short Term	Dept. of Social Services And HAWNY	
Explore other options for nighttime respite including models such as host homes	Short Term	Subcommittee of the Youth Task Force	
Ensure that best practices such as trauma-informed care, low barrier	Medium Term	Dept. of Social Services and a Subcommittee	 

service provision are the norm with service provisions for these beds with youth-centered social activities to ensure positive engagement in case management		of the Youth Task Force	
Create crisis beds for 18-24 year-olds	Medium Term	Dept. of Social Services and Youth Task Force	
Access to prenatal and perinatal resources for pregnant and parenting youth	Short Term	Subcommittee of the Youth Task Force	 

**Objective C:** Increase low barrier access to mental health services to facilitate the stability of housing

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Create easily accessible, low barrier mental health services and ensure they are marketed well in the community such youth and young adults are familiar with the services	Medium to Long Term	Youth Task Force	
Create more in-house professional mental health assistance services	Medium to Long Term	Youth Task Force	
Closer collaboration between children's Single Point of Access and the homeless system, including additional avenues of assistance for youth and young adults seeking help with homelessness accessing the services in the children's SPOA system	Long Term	Youth Task Force collaborating with the Office of Mental Health	

**Objective D:** Increase diversion activities for youth who are at imminent risk of homelessness

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Train the community, both lay people and service providers, on diversion practices so youth do not enter the homeless system	Medium Term	A subcommittee of the Youth Task Force and Youth Action Board	
Procure fiscal resources for security deposits, or rental arrears	Short Term	Youth Task Force	
Increase diversion activities for youth with lower assessment scores or who might be at imminent risk of homelessness	Short Term	Youth Task Force	
<b>Increase shared housing options</b>	<b>Medium Term</b>	<b>Youth Task Force</b>	
Increase respite and short-term crisis housing for youth under age 18	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	
<b>Increase family engagement strategies to stabilize youth, using a family-centered approach, through a diversity of service providers so families and individuals feel represented.</b>	<b>Medium Term</b>	<b>Youth Task Force</b>	 

### Goal 3: Coordinated Entry

The community uses youth focused coordinated entry processes to effectively link all youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness to eligible and appropriate housing and services solutions that are safe, secure, and tailored to youth needs.

The community recognizes that assisting youth and young adults experiencing homelessness requires more than just services being available, it also requires that the process by which young people can access them to be efficient, equitable, and skillful in matching young people to the services that can assist them most effectively.

**Objective A:** Expand Coordinated Entry System to include designated services and locations for youth and to be more youth friendly.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Standardize the coordinated entry process in both Erie and Niagara County to ensure that the location of a youth or young adult is not a barrier to accessing services	Medium Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
Hire peers to conduct Coordinated Entry assessments and service navigation activities.	Short Term	Youth Action Board	
Ensure that the coordinated entry sites are at the community's "hot-spots" for youth, and that some have the capacity to be mobile to meet youth where they are at	Short Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
Ensure free transportation to Coordinated Entry Hubs for youth experiencing homelessness	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	

Ensuring the community is using HMIS as the backbone of Coordinated Entry	Short Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
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**Objective B:** Ensure all touchpoints of coordinated entry are operated in accordance with best practices, such as trauma-informed care, positive youth development, de-escalation, and are able to service youth whose first language is not English.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Ensure that all people facilitating coordinated entry are trained in best practices, like trauma informed care, positive youth development, etc.	Medium Term	Youth Task Force in partnership with the Youth Action Board	 
Create a process that includes a timeframe that facilitates trust-building and rapport-building prior to CE assessment.	Short Term	Youth Action Board	 
Develop age appropriate assessments for minors	Short Term	Youth Task Force	 

### Goal 4: Stable Housing

*The Community acts with urgency to swiftly and consistently engage and support all youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness to move into permanent housing options, with the location guided by youth choice, with appropriate supportive services to maintain youth engagement.*

The only solution to homelessness is a home. Ending youth homelessness in any long-term way will need to be housing focused and focused on the strategies to facilitate the stability of housing.

**Objective A:** Increase the number of permanent housing beds designated for youth.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Increase the number of permanent supportive housing beds designated for youth	Long Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY and the Continuum of Care	
<b>Increase the number of rapid rehousing beds designated for youth</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Homeless Alliance of WNY/ Continuum of Care</b>	

**Objective B:** Ensure that permanent housing options are coupled with the appropriate level of services, as determined by the young person

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Ensure that supportive needs are continuously assessed throughout youth enrollment in assistance programs	Short Term	Youth Task Force	 
Include a mentoring component for youth in assistance programs. Mentors would have lived experience and would assist by building life skills and resilience in youth experiencing homelessness	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	
Ensure that the services to aid youth and young adults conform to OCFS regulations requiring different sites for the under-18 and 18 and over populations.	Medium Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	

Increasing links and referrals to mental health and substance abuse services	Short Term	Youth Task Force	
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**Objective C:** Expand affordable housing opportunities outside of the homelessness alleviation system

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Increase youth designated units within the community's affordable housing portfolio	Long Term	Youth Task Force	
Establish and maintain strong relationships with landlords willing to house youth	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	
Advocate for more affordable housing	Medium Term	Continuum of Care/ Homeless Alliance of WNY	

**Objective D:** Increase workforce development options for youth and young adults

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Develop partnerships with local employers to hire youth	Medium Term	Youth Task Force Subcommittee/ coalition of workforce development agencies	
Provide tangible assistance to overcome barriers to employment	Medium Term	Coalition of workforce	

such as interview clothing, work clothing, child care assistance, transportation, and other necessities.		development agencies	
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### Goal 5: Sustainability

*All youth and young adults in our community are valuable, resilient, and deserving of resources, safety, and a sense of empowerment. Our goal is to end youth homelessness in collaboration with youth and young adults and create an environment where our youth can thrive and become healthy adults.*

It is important that the systems we build to assist youth and young adults experiencing homelessness endure after this planning process, and are maintained with a commitment to continual betterment.

**Objective A:** Increase staff retention activities for front-line staff at youth serving organizations.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Increase salaries for case managers	Long Term	Youth Task Force	
Ensuring that all youth-serving agencies have staff members with lived experience	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	
Ensure that staff roles and responsibilities are structured in such a way to guard against burnout with clear boundaries around what is and what is not a staff-member's responsibility	Short Term	Youth Task Force	

**Objective B:** Track performance data through utilization of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and through monitoring by the Collaborative Applicant

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Increase utilization of HMIS by non-HUD-funded youth homelessness providers	Long Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
Identify and standardize performance measures to track progress with existing youth service provider	Medium Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
Create a virtual open portal that uses HMIS data to demonstrate which aggregate service pathways are most effective in successfully leading youth and young adults out of homelessness.	Medium Term	Homeless Alliance of WNY	
Establish a sustainability/continuous quality improvement committee which would monitor continuous quality improvement using data and performance outcomes. Youth Action Board plays a key role in it	Short Term	Youth Task Force / Youth Homelessness Demonstration Leadership Committee/YA B	

**Objective C:** Ensure continuous collaboration of all community partners to ensure eligibility, service delivery, and successful outcomes.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Responsible Partner	Core Outcome Achieved
Increase awareness of homeless services through engagement of families starting in kindergarten with parent mentors, employment	Short Term	School systems	

assistance, substance use, nutrition, etc			
Design peer support programs to share success stories, encouragement, mentoring, etc	Medium Term	Youth Action Board	
Ensuring retention of the information communicated the community through education efforts, as well as using social media, podcasts, or broadcast advertisements to ensure that the awareness of homelessness among youth and young adults is sustained	Medium Term	Youth Task Force	

**YHDP new projects**

Upon recommendation from the Youth Action Board and Youth Task Force, the CoC board approved the following projects and allocation of Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program funding for FY 2020-2021.

**YHDP Project Selection**

A competitive request for proposals (RFP) for an initial two years of YHDP funding for youth-serving projects was issued by the Homeless Alliance of WNY on behalf of the CoC and Youth Action Board on DATE. Applications are due by DATE. Qualified applicants will be interviewed by a Project Selection Committee consisting of YAB members, Child Welfare agencies, Youth Task Force members who did not submit an application, CoC Board and interested community

members. Project Selection Committee members were selected to ensure there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest. The Project Selection Committee will select the highest rated eligible applicants in June 2020.

### 1. Joint Transitional Housing (TH) and Permanent Housing-Rapid Rehousing(PH-RRH)

Joint Transitional - Rapid Rehousing is a program that includes both transitional housing and Rapid Rehousing. Youth might only use transitional, only use RRH, or use both. The transitional part of the project is meant to be a short term stay while a youth is facing a housing crisis. Rapid Rehousing places youth in their own apartment in the community and assists with rental costs and provides case management.

Maximum request: \$\_\_\_ over two year period (Final approved budget may be subject to change based on quality, quantity, geographic coverage and services provided in this project type)

Program Description	Timeframe for Participants	Population Served	Desired outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide both transitional housing and rapid rehousing assistance. Clients can choose to receive either TH, RRH or both.</li> <li>● Provide life skills development, service linkage and referral, individual and group counseling, connections to mainstream benefits that are offered by DSS, connections to employment, connections to mentors.</li> <li>● Provide YYA in their own apartment in RRH (could be shared with other participants or</li> </ul>	<p>Clients <b>could</b> stay max. 2 years in TH and max 2 years in RRH. Project must use progressive engagement model and connect youth to permanent housing as soon as possible. Participants may continue to</p>	<p>Unaccompanied youth and young adults ages 16-24 who meet category 1,2 or 4 in HUD homeless definition.</p>	<p>Increase successful access to crisis housing (TH)</p> <p>Increase YYA housing stability.</p> <p>For RRH, decrease the length of time youth spend literally homeless.</p> <p>Reduce recidivism</p> <p>Support youth in education, employment, income, health</p>

<p>non-participants) or their own bedroom in TH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RRH will provide intense case management with a caseload 1:10 and be able to check in with clients at least once a week for the first 3 months.</li> <li>• If TH chose to be a single site, preferably to be centrally located with easy access to public transportation and other services nearby</li> <li>• TH serving youth under 18 are required to be OCFS certified (Could be certified afterward)</li> <li>• With Rapid rehousing, we encourage applicant explore sharing housing options</li> </ul>	<p>receive supportive services for up to 6 months after rental assistance ends.</p>		<p>and well-being.</p>
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**2. Family engagement team with diversion**

This is intended to be a supportive services project with small rental assistance funding for diversion. Supportive service could include case management, transportation, mental health counseling, linkage and referral, grocery, transportation etc. Diversion funds could be made available though rental assistance to prevent youth from utilizing shelter or sleeping on the street. Maximum request: \$\_\_\_ over two year period(Final approved budget may be subject to change based on quality, quantity, geographic coverage and services provided in this project type)

Program Description	Timeframe for Participants	Population Served	Desired outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide case management that connects and mediate between YYA and their</li> </ul>	<p>Based on clients' needs to provide up</p>	<p>Unaccompanied youth and</p>	<p>Reduce YYA recidivism rate</p>

<p>chosen family, continue follow up with the family to create permanent connection for YYA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term rental assistance can be provided if needed. Including Security Deposit, first/last month rent, and no more than 3 months of rent that assist a YYA to remain in permanent housing. Units that receive any rental assistance will have to meet all CoC requirements for rental assistance (HQS, rent reasonableness, 1-year lease requirement).</li> <li>• Provide linkage to mental health counseling, substance use treatment and medical need</li> <li>• Maximum request on rental assistance no more than 15% of total budget</li> </ul>	<p>to 1 year of services.</p>	<p>young adults ages 12-24 who meet category 1,2 or 4 in HUD homeless definition.</p>	<p>Reduce first time homeless youth</p> <p>Reduce filing pin partition as well as other juvenile penetration by reducing family conflict</p>
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### 3. Supportive Service Only--Overnight Drop in Center

Supportive Service Only project can only apply for admin cost, supportive service cost, and the operating costs would get charged as supportive services in the budget.

Maximum request: \$\_\_\_ over two year period (Final approved budget may be subject to change based on quality, quantity, geographic coverage and services provided in this project type)

Program Description	Timeframe for Participants	Population Served	Desired outcomes
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide overnight access to a safe place for YYA to stay. Basic needs should be provided on site, e.g. showers, laundry, food.</li> <li>• Act as one of the access points for coordinated entry for youth. Provide connections to community resources. Prefer to utilize peer navigators.</li> <li>• Assist with housing search, linkage to mental health and substance abuse counseling and connect with family.</li> <li>• Preferably to be centrally located with easy access to public transportation and other services nearby. Operate between 9 PM to 9 AM</li> </ul>	<p>As needed.</p>	<p>Unaccompanied youth and young adults ages 16-24 who meet category 1,2 or 4 in HUD homeless definition.</p>	<p>Increase # of youth identified as homeless or at risk.</p> <p>Support youth in achieving education, employment, income, health and well-being goals through linkage to other program/ services</p> <p>Provide immediate safe access for YYA</p>
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## Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

As our community efforts shift from planning to implementation, we will establish a Continuous Quality Improvement Process to track our progress in achieving the system and program outcomes. We commit to adjust local programs and funding based on the learnings and determine to continually improve our programs to better serve youth and young adults to achieve the goal of ending youth homelessness in our community.

We understand that the expected outcomes, recommended projects, and action steps might change over time. YHDP Leadership Team will be responsible

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to create opportunities for community stakeholders to share challenges, barriers, opportunities and adopt new ideas or solutions and create new strategies to ensure our success in ending youth homelessness. All responsible parties listed in the Objective and Action Plan section will lead the effort in achieving the objectives and actions. Community wide stakeholder meetings will be held quarterly to report on progress, lessons learned and discuss any adjustments to be made accordingly. The YHDP Leadership Team will review this Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) annually and make changes if needed.

We will also commit to reviewing measurements used for continuous improvement and results-based accountability for the youth homeless system. These measurements were developed to align with the activities and desired results proposed by the Youth Task Force and YAB. These goals and action plans informed the theory of change that identified key outcomes and social impacts the partners are aspiring to achieve. The measures selected for the measurement framework align with five goals outlined in the Coordinated Community Plan, USICH Core Outcomes to End Youth Homelessness, HUD's System Performance Measures, and the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) model. This approach to the development of a Collective Impact Measurement Framework ensures measures are verifiable, achievable, and meaningful to all system partners.

### **Data Quality Improvement Plan**

As the Continuum of Care and HMIS Lead, Homeless Alliance of WNY will ensure that YHDP project data quality is continuously monitored to ensure accuracy and reliability of outcome tracking. Currently we have full HMIS coverage of current youth-specific beds. In order to accurately track YHDP program outcomes, the Homeless Alliance of WNY will train and provide ongoing technical assistance to new and current staff serving youth as well as regularly monitor the timeliness and accuracy of data collected by YHDP projects.

## System level outcomes

<p><b>How much did we do?</b></p> <p># of youth access safe crisis housing (reduce unsheltered population)</p> <p># of youth on the By-name list</p> <p>Increase #of youth served by Family Engagement Team</p> <p>Increase # of youth assessed through Coordinated Entry</p>	<p><b>How well did we implement services as intended?</b></p> <p>Increase % of case managers trained in all guiding principles according to the CCP</p> <p>Length of Services provided</p> <p>Increase % of youth reporting services were delivered in a culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate manner</p> <p>Staff retention</p>
<p><b>Are youth better off?</b></p>	
<p># of youth Improved social emotional outcome</p> <p>#of youth exit to permanent housing</p> <p># of youth return to homelessness</p> <p># of youth achieve their education/vacation goal</p> <p># of first time homeless youth</p> <p># of filing pin partition as well as other juvenile penetration by reducing family conflict</p> <p># of youth connect to their family</p>	<p>%of youth Improved social emotional outcome</p> <p>% of youth exit to permanent housing</p> <p>% of recidivism rate</p> <p>% of youth have employment or attending school</p> <p>% of first time homeless youth</p>

The above measures will be prepared by HAWNY staff and reviewed quarterly by the YHDP Leadership Team. HAWNY will be responsible to use HMIS data to track system performance (e.g. recidivism, total number of youth experiencing

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homelessness) and program performance (% of youth exit to safe housing successfully) and all projects funded through YHDP shall keep track of individual outcomes utilizing standardized social-emotional assessment tools (e.g. Improving life skill).

### **Project /participant level outcomes**

#### **TH-RRH:**

Program outcomes:

1. 85% of participants remain or exit to stable housing
2. 35% of youth 18-24 employed
3. Maintain stable housing at 3rd, 6th, 12th months after rental assistance ended
4. improve social emotional health and physical health, independent living skills (monthly assessment)
5. Enrollment in school/vocational program if appropriate.

#### **Family Engagement Team with Diversion**

1. Build multiple permanent connections
2. Prevent youth from becoming homeless/ return to homelessness
3. Linkage to services

#### **Overnight Drop in Center**

1. Provide a safe place for youth to stay

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2. Linkage to services in order to support youth and young adult's education, employment, income, health and well-being goals.

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**Appendix A: Community Partners and Stakeholders**

<b>Partners</b>	<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Description of Involvement</b>
CoC Board	HAWNY Board	Participate in discussion, review, and approve CCP 6 of 17 Board members have been regular participants in the YTF meetings for 3 years. 1 Board member is the Chair of the YTF. 4 Board members sit on the Independent Project Selection Committee. 2 Board members represent Youth TH programs. Board members whose programs are not applying for YHDP will be represented on the Project Selection Committee for the YHDP and participate in the CQI
Youth Action Board	See Appendix A-7 for a list of YAB members	Participated in discussions for 3 years and have, created, reviewed and will need to approve CCP. They will have representation on the Project Selection Committee for the YHDP and participate in the CQI.

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<p>Local and State Government</p>	<p>City of Buffalo, City of Niagara Falls</p>	<p>Participate in the CCP development. Representatives of the City of Buffalo, County of Erie and Niagara County have been regular participants in the CCP development and members of the YTF. Buffalo and Erie County have participated for 3 years. The New York State Office of Child and Family Services has been a member of the YTF since late 2019. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance has also pledged support for our efforts. They will have representation on the Project Selection Committee for the YHDP and participate in the CQI</p>
<p>Public Child Welfare Agencies</p>	<p>Erie County Department of Social Services; Niagara County Department of Social Services, NYS Office of Children and Family Services</p>	<p>Participate in the CCP development, provide data, conduct data analysis. The local Departments of Social Services and the NYS Office of Child and Family Services are the Public Welfare agencies and have assisted with the collection and analysis of data outside of HMIS for the past two years. They are participating in the YTF and will</p>

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		have representation on the Project Selection Committee for the YHDP and participate in the CQI
ESG Program Recipients	City of Buffalo, Erie County, City of Niagara Falls	Participate in the CCP development. City of Buffalo, County of Erie and City of Niagara Falls have been regular members of the YTF for 3 years. All three entities have representatives on the Project Selection Committee, Performance Review Committee and will be part of the CQI.
Local and State Law Enforcement and Judges	Buffalo Police Department	Participate in the CCP development. They have provided some input but have not been regular participants in the YTF.
Early Childhood Development and Child Care Providers	NA	
Local and State Educational Agencies	Buffalo School Districts, Niagara Fall School Districts	Participates in CCP development. The large city schools districts have cooperated with the YTF in the collection of data and we are working with them on developing a referral system into whatever programs are funded under YHDP. NYTEACHS has come to Buffalo to offer guidance and has provided data for the statement of needs.

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		Focus groups with McKinney Vento liaisons have been conducted with the smaller school districts.
Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Providers	Compass House, Pinnacle Community Services	Participates in CCP development They have been members of the YTF for 3 years and have been instrumental in the development of the CCP
Non-Profit Youth Organizations	Plymouth CrossRoads, Teaching and Restoring Youth	Participates in CCP development . Both programs offer TH for youth and have given us guidance on the needs of youth utilizing their services. Some of their clients have participated in the YAB and focus groups have been conducted at both facilities to gain further input from clients. Both organizations have participated in the YTF for 3 years.
Juvenile and Adult Corrections and Probation	Erie County Department of Social Services, Niagara County Department of Social Services, NYS Office of Child and Family Services, Erie County Dept. of Mental Health	Participates in CCP development, provide additional data. Our Departments of Social Services and NYS Office of Child and Family Services are responsible for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice so there is a lot of crossover in their participation and continued participation going forward. The ECDMH is creating a one stop shop

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		for those coming out of local jails to access services and they have assisted in the CCP and connecting the 24 and under population with services. They will participate in project selection and CQI.
Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse agencies	Erie County Department of Mental Health, BestSelf, DePaul, Cazenovia Recovery	Participates in CCP development, provide additional data. All four have representation of the CoC Board and have been regular participants in the YTF. The representative from BestSelf chairs the YTF and has been a driving force behind it. They may have representatives on the selection committee and CQI if they do not apply for funding.
WIOA Boards and Employment Agencies	YouthBuild, Buffalo Urban League, Catholic Charities	Participates in CCP development. All agencies have pledged support for the YHDP and will work with successful applicants on receiving and making referrals for assistance.
Landlords	NA	
Public Housing Authorities	Rental Assistance Corp.	Participates in CCP development. One of our Board members represents a HCV PHA and has regularly attended the YTF

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		meetings. He will be asked to serve on the selection and CQI committees.
Institutions of Higher Education	University of Buffalo, Buffalo State, Niagara County Community College, Daemen College	Participates in CCP development, 1 CoC Board member is from a local college and serves on the Project Selection Committee. A professor at the University at Buffalo concluded a published research study in 2016 on 18-24 year old homeless young adults which served as an impetus for our CoC to focus on youth homelessness regardless of whether or not we received YHDP funding. Discussions have been held with Buffalo State and Niagara CC on YHDP but both have had limited participation.
Community Development Corporations	NA	
Affordable Housing Developers	NA	
Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	University at Buffalo, Western New York Coalition for the Homeless.	See the comments on institutes of higher learning above. One of our Board members is the co-chair of The WNY Coalition for the Homeless who does advocacy for clients and related issues. They

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		have helped communicate the YTF meetings and helped recruit YAB members and have been regular participants in the YTF
Privately Funded Homeless Organizations	Buffalo City Mission/Cornerstone Manor	Participates in CCP development. This is our largest emergency shelter that is privately funded but is an extremely valuable partner in our CoC. They have a representative on the CoC board and a representative on the Project Selection Committee, Coordinated Entry Oversight Committee and Performance Review Committee. They are opening a new facility this spring and cannot be part of the youth project selection committee or CQI at this time.
Other non-for profit organization	International Institute of Buffalo, Matt Urban Center, Community Missions, Northpointe Council, DePaul, Catholic Charities, Legal Aid Bureau, Blue Cross Blue Shield, AmeriGroup, Cazenovia Recovery, Restoration Society, Homespace, Say Yes	Participates in CCP development. We have consulted with several other entities during the CCP process. International Institute has given us guidance on victims of human trafficking Legal Aid offeres legal services for youth and families who need assistance on McKinney Vento legal questions. Restoration Society is our CE entity, Homespace provides housing to

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		<p>parenting and pregnant youth, Say Yes provides case management in Buffalo Schools for families in need and has participated in the CCP process. AmeriGroup is a Health Home provider affiliated with Blue Cross/Blue Sheild. Northpointe is a substance abuse treatment program and has participated in the development of the CCP. The Matt Urban Center provides street outreach, emergency shelter and PSH in our CoC and they have participated in the development of the CCP</p>
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## Appendix A: Community Partners and Stakeholders

### Youth Action Board members

*YAB Representative Committee:*

Teneva Dennis

Corey McCarty

*YAB Members:*

Alyssa Palmer

Christian Jones

Dashawn Pickett

Diamond Young

Justin Griesbaum

Joe Debiew

Ma'kala Walker

Maliq Howell

Taikia Harris

Tanisha Riley

Dylan Williams

Janaya White

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