



Until everyone has a place to call home

# Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Impact Report

## 2022-2023 Executive Summary



# Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

## Executive Summary

### Problems to Address:

Based on a needs assessment conducted in Franklin County in 2018, more than 3,000 youth are estimated to experience literal homelessness annually, and another 1,400 are at high risk for literal homelessness. Yet, at the time, there was not a homelessness prevention or intervention system designed around the needs of youth.

### Activities to Address the Problems:

In July 2018, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected Columbus and Franklin County for Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) funding to reduce homelessness among transition-age youth (TAY). The goal of YHDP is to have a collective impact response to youth homelessness to ensure all youth have immediate, easy access to crisis housing services and to ensure that homeless episodes are rare, brief, and one-time.

The collective impact response includes Community Shelter Board as the backbone organization and 17 partner organizations. Not all partners received funds from the YHDP grant, but all are committed to the common goal. There are four YHDP Funded Partners in the evaluation of the collective impact response:



Together, this response system provides Coordinated Access and Rapid Resolution (CARR); homelessness prevention; street outreach; emergency shelter; rapid re-housing; transitional housing; and permanent supportive housing and additional supportive services (i.e., healthcare, employment, education, mental health) to TAY.

### Expected Outcomes

The collective impact response was built around ensuring TAY:

1. Have quick, easy access to needed prevention and homeless intervention services to stabilize their situation.
2. Have opportunities to achieve their personal goals (i.e., education, employment, basic life skills, connections to ongoing support).
3. Ultimately find safe, stable housing.

## Evaluation Approach:

In 2021, Measurement Resources Company was contracted to conduct a two-year evaluation of YHDP between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2023. The evaluation included analyses of quantitative and qualitative data from the following sources: YHDP partners' internal client tracking, Community Shelter Board's client-level data in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Franklin County Court eviction records, focus groups with TAY and service providers, and in-depth interviews with TAY.

## Evaluation Results:

Based on HMIS records, a total of 896 TAY were served by one or more YHDP programs within the evaluation period. TAY served were predominately female (64%), Black, African American, or African (69%), and non-Hispanic/Latino (92%). A little over half of the youth served had no prior engagement with the homelessness system.

Prior to YHDP, the majority of TAY entered the system through emergency shelters and engaged in an average of 94 days of services, and 46% exited to safe, stable housing.

Through YHDP, TAY entered the system through the CARR, had had proportionally more engagements in YHDP assessment and rapid rehousing services relative to TAY engaging in similar services through non-YHDP programs, and engaged in an average of 149 days of services; 60% existed to safe, stable housing.

Of all TAY served by YHDP within the evaluation period, 68% recidivated at least once during their journey from homelessness to safe and stable housing. Within this subgroup, 55% recidivated within six months or less (n = 334), 14% recidivated within 6-12 months (n = 88), and 31% recidivated after a year or more (n = 187).<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, exits from prevention-based programs were excluded from calculations.

Approximately two thirds of YHDP TAY engaged in programs two or more times during their journey. Those leaving YHDP programs experienced an average of 32 days between programs (i.e., not actively receiving services after exiting one program prior to entering a new program), while those exiting other youth-serving programs spent an average of 23 days between programs. In other words, gaps following YHDP programs were 39% longer on average than gaps following non-YHDP programs.

These results suggest YHDP was a unique and effective rehousing solution for TAY served during the two-year evaluation period; the process improvements increased gaps between episodes of service, and the increased duration of time that TAY received services was associated with a higher success rate. However, the high recidivism rate of youth is very concerning and needs further investigated with solutions to stabilize youth in housing for a longer time.

Through interviews and focus groups with partners and TAY, external forces challenging the success of YHDP were identified. Most prominent is the affordable housing shortage which makes it very difficult for TAY to have access to affordable housing of their choice when they are ready to exit the system. In addition, the system's workforce shortage impacts the timeliness of services and capacity of partners to meet the TAY where they are. Internal forces challenging success included staff turnover, especially in the front-line roles which are integral to positive TAY experiences. The system's housing and workforce shortage along with YHDP program staff turnover make it difficult for programs to achieve their goals.

However, partners and TAY highlighted the quality and commitment of staff/partners and general quality of the coordinated response. TAY especially appreciated staff knowing TAY by name, the on-site supportive services, linkages to ongoing support, and having a place to regroup and focus on improving their circumstances.



In in-depth interviews, TAY shared their journeys begin with dysfunctional relationships at home and lack of support for overcoming adversity. This results in a TAY leaving their home and looking for a safe place to stay. Once in the youth homelessness system, TAY have some time to regroup, experience structure and accountability in working towards personal goals, and connect to needed support while receiving services. However, not all TAY utilize the supports that are available, and some feel like they would be a bother if they asked for the help they need.

As a system, CSB and the collective impact partners have responded to opportunities for improving processes and programs so that TAY voices are heard and TAY are receiving the services they need. Safety was a key concern among TAY, and partners responded quickly to address immediate concerns and put in place a committee to ensure opportunities for improvement are prioritized throughout the system. In addition, the collective impact partners demonstrated commitment to inclusivity by agreeing to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression questions in data collection so that TAY experiences and outcomes can be analyzed in ways that will help the system be more inclusive and effective for all TAY.

The results of this two-year evaluation demonstrate that YHDP's collective impact response has given TAY quicker access to crisis housing and services, and because of the resources invested in the system, the commitment of partners at the table, and the quality of services, YHDP is an effective coordinated rehousing solution. As the system becomes a more effective coordinated response and rapid rehousing solution, CSB should consider expanding its partnerships and look for more opportunities to support homelessness prevention services addressing "root causes" of homelessness.





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