

**A Needs Assessment Guide**  
**for Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness in Local Communities:**  
*based on the MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

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## Introduction

The Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness (“the Plan”) recommends that all regions conduct local needs assessments as a strategy to coordinate statewide efforts to end youth homelessness<sup>1</sup>. The Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (“UHY Commission”) wants to support the alignment of all regions with statewide goals through both the needs-assessment process as well as the development and refinement of the resulting local plans to end youth homelessness. As regions complete needs assessments, the UHY Commission would like to compile the information, including the best practices (and emerging best practices) as well as challenges that emerge from this process. This information will strengthen a coordinated response to youth homelessness in the Commonwealth.

## What is a needs assessment?

A community needs assessment provides community leaders with a summary of local data, systems, and strategies currently in place and helps to identify areas for improvement. With this information, communities can map out a course for improvement by creating proactive (rather than reactive) strategies to make positive and sustainable changes in their communities.

The recommended steps / elements to include in a Community Needs Assessment include (but are not limited to):

- I. Define community to assess
- II. Identify and engage Stakeholders
- III. Determine data collection methods
- IV. Collect best available data
- V. Inventory current resources
- VI. Review, evaluate, and summarize the data to identify strengths and weaknesses
- VII. Create initial recommendations

**Statewide Dashboard:** Certain data that must be collected and reported back to the Unaccompanied Youth Commission for use in the Statewide dashboard<sup>2</sup> is highlighted in text boxes throughout this document. Appendix A “Statewide Dashboard Worksheet” further streamlines this information into a worksheet that can accompany the final report.

## Conducting a Community Needs Assessment to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness

The following outlines recommendations for implementing each step of a needs assessment, with the hope that communities will have increased ability to engage in an assessment process if the best practices and steps are outlined and detailed appropriately. The steps outlined are also connected to specific recommendations and strategies in the State Plan (The full language from these recommendations and strategies may be found in Appendix B). Overall, the other steps and strategies listed below represent an

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation 1, Outcome 2, Strategy B: Provide training and technical assistance for conducting regional needs assessments, page 11, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>2</sup>Recommendation 5, Outcome 2: Statewide dashboard/monitoring platform for population size and characteristics, page 21, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

ideal process and practice; and knowing that communities may vary in their capacity and resources, the inability to conduct the needs assessment perfectly should not get in the way of conducting the best needs assessment possible. *“The optimal outcome is not the only outcome.”*

### **I. Define community to assess**

The “Community” part of a Community Needs Assessment can encompass many different geographic areas. Each community undertaking a Needs Assessment process will need to first define the boundaries of the community. This can be a town, region, COC, or group of providers that tend to work together. This should be defined at the beginning of the process.

### **II. Stakeholder Identification and Engagement**

Historically, when talking about issues of youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness, only a certain subset of providers end up at the table. However, creating new solutions and approaches to this issue requires broadening the tent and reaching out to and including less traditional partners. Some partners may only be able to participate via one-on-one phone calls or email exchanges. However, whenever possible it is ideal to have as many sectors as possible meeting together. Additionally, YYA with lived experience must be included throughout the needs assessment process.

Partners should include the following sectors:

- Advocacy organizations
- Child Welfare
- CoC providers and administrators
- Community Development corporations
- Domestic violence organizations
- Emergency Shelter providers
- Employment agencies/ WIOA workforce boards
- Health centers/ Emergency room providers
- Higher Education (SPOC's if possible)
- Housing programs/ providers
- Immigrant services organizations
- Juvenile Justice
- Landlords
- Law enforcement and judges
- LGBTQ organizations
- Local and State government
- Mental Health providers/ programs
- Non-profit youth organizations
- Philanthropic organizations
- Public Housing authorities
- Religious communities
- Secondary Education (McKinney-Vento liaison, Alternative education, HiSet providers)
- Substance Use/ Recovery services
- Teen parent programs

- YYA with lived experience<sup>3</sup>

The identification and engagement of stakeholders may happen over a period of time; as more individuals and organizations get involved, more stakeholders will be identified. Separate guidance on how to cultivate Youth Action Boards (YABs) may be found in a separate document.

### **III. Determine data collection methods**

A needs assessment should collect the best available qualitative and quantitative data examining YYA experiencing homelessness and the systems and programs that serve them. This information will be collected from multiple sources and in multiple formats. The quantitative data will include numbers to estimate how many young adults experience homelessness in a community; the qualitative data will get at individual people's perceptions of the system and its strengths and challenges.

Qualitative data will come from a number of sources, most specifically, from YYAs with experiences of homelessness and service providers and other stakeholders. This information can be collected through focus groups, round-table conversation, surveys, interviews, or other methods. The Needs Assessment team will have to determine what it has capacity and interest in doing.

One common data collection challenge may be the variability among how stakeholders collect and report information on housing status. Conversations with those providing data may be necessary in order to determine the best way to obtain the desired information, and suggested wording for framing a data-request is included below. Privacy restrictions may add additional challenges to determining total unduplicated numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. However even with these obstacles, a best-guess number is still important for determination of community needs.

### **IV. Collect information about prevalence and characteristics -- *how many young adults are experiencing homelessness and who are they?***

Prevalence estimates attempt to understand the size and scope of youth homelessness. These estimates are often based on point in time (PIT) methods which count the number of YYA experiencing homelessness at a given point in time, or on a typical day. PIT counts may be useful guides for understanding trends over time and for determining the number of YYA who may need services at a given time, such as drop in centers or shelter beds, and thereby help determine some levels of funding. While the needs assessment process should focus on existing data, it may reveal a need to improve future data collection methods. For example, unless hidden YYA -such as those who are couch-surfing or doubled-up- are included in prevalence numbers will be an undercount.

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendation 6, Outcome 2, Strategy A: Identify an agency in each region to develop and host a Youth Action Board (YAB), page 26, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

Annual estimates are also important for planning purposes because they are more likely to include individuals who experience brief episodes of homelessness, and research shows that homelessness among YYA is much more likely to be episodic than chronic<sup>4</sup>.

For the sake of this needs assessment, communities should begin by aligning with the definition established by The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth that defines “Unaccompanied Homeless Youth” as follows:

*A person 24 years of age or younger who is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian, and who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. “Fixed” refers to a residence that is stationary, permanent and not subject to change. “Regular” means a dwelling at which a person resides on a regular basis (i.e. nightly). “Adequate” means that the dwelling provides safe shelter, meeting both physical and psychological needs of the youth. All three components of this definition- age, connection to a parent or guardian, and housing status- must be met in order for a person to be considered an unaccompanied homeless youth.<sup>5</sup>*

Data should fall within the following parameters: program or system was located in the community being assessed; uses a broad definition of YYA experiencing homelessness or housing instability ages 13–24 (see definition above); YYA were the head of household where no members are over the age of 24, including pregnant and parenting youth.

A. Prevalence: Prevalence data should be sought from the following sources, and can be requested by beginning with this question<sup>6, 7</sup>:

*“ During [time period] how many 14-24 year olds were engaged in [program] from [community] who were “head of household” and their housing status was homeless/ unstably housed?”*

- a. HMIS
- b. HUD PIT counts
- c. MA Youth Count
- d. Provider data (including appropriate partners listed above)
  1. Youth-serving organizations
  2. Homeless service programs that do not report into HMIS
  3. Employment programs/ WIOA youth programs
  4. LGBTQ organizations
  5. Education data (may include McKinney-Vento liaisons and college/ university contacts)
  6. Health programs

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<sup>4</sup> "An Emerging Framework for Ending Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness," National Alliance to End Homelessness, Accessed April 07, 2018, <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/an-emerging-framework-for-ending-unaccompanied-youth-homelessness/>.

<sup>5</sup>“The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Youth: Report to the Great and General Court, Executive Office of the Governor, and Office of the Child Advocate, 2013.” Accessed March 26, 2018. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/eohhs/cyf/uhy032013.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Recommendation 5, Outcome 2: Statewide dashboard/monitoring platform for population size and characteristics, page 21, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>7</sup> Note: This question may lead to further conversations about how and/or if agencies and programs collect housing status information.

## 7. DPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services/ Substance Use programs

Once collected, report back the above prevalence data as follows:

- “Based on 2018 PIT counts, at least ### youth and young adults experience homelessness on the streets or in the shelters of [geography], and ##(%) of these youth are under age 18.”<sup>8</sup>
- “According to HMIS and service provider data, it is estimated that over the course of a year ## number of YYAs experience homelessness during some part of the year, and ##(%) of these youth are under age 18.” (HMIS, 2018; [provider data], 2018).”

If possible, collect additional prevalence data from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The results from this data may be presented in your summary findings.

### e. DYS

1. Total number of DYS-involved YYA in the community with an unknown living environment
2. Number of YYA transitioning from DYS to an unstable living environment

### f. DCF

1. Number of YYA transitioning from DCF to an unstable living environment
2. Total number of YYA listed as “on the run” or with an unknown living arrangement

B. Characteristics: Understanding characteristics of both the overall population as well as subpopulations of YYA experiencing homelessness can help policymakers and programs understand why YYA experience housing crisis in the first place; how various populations experience homelessness differently than others; where to target specific resources; and how to better communicate and raise awareness with a variety of community stakeholders.

Ideally, in addition to prevalence numbers, data collection should provide information on the characteristics of the young adults in the community experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Specifically, certain subpopulations of young adults are differentially affected by homelessness and may require special attention or services<sup>9</sup>. The State Plan highlights the needs of the following subpopulations, and local needs assessments should collect this information as possible.

- a. Minority YYA
- b. LGBTQ+ YYA
- c. Pregnant and parenting YYA

<sup>8</sup> This data will be used to populate a Statewide dashboard monitoring system, per Recommendation 5, Outcome 2: Statewide dashboard/monitoring platform for population size and characteristics, page 21, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation 2, Outcome 2: Housing and service needs for subpopulations of unaccompanied homeless youth are addressed, and partnerships with state agencies are developed to ensure appropriate statewide services, page 13, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

- d. Victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation
- e. YYA under 18 / Foster Care involvement
- f. YYA with less than a High School Diploma
- g. YYA with criminal justice involvement
- h. Undocumented and immigrant YYA
- i. YYA with substance use and/or mental health disorders
- j. College students experiencing hunger and homelessness
- k. YYA involved with domestic and intimate partner violence

At a minimum, the following characteristics need to be reported back as follows<sup>10</sup>:

- “Of the total YYA population experiencing homelessness in [geography], ## - ##% identify as African American ([provider data, 2017]; HMIS, 2017), and Latinx/Hispanic ([provider data, 2017]; HMIS, 2017) compared to ##% of the total population in [geography] who identify as African American (U.S. Census, 2017)
- “Approximately % of the total population of YYA experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+” ([Provider data], 2018)
- “##(%) of identified YYA were pregnant or parenting on the night of the [year] HUD PIT count in [geography]. HMIS indicates a [similar/contrasting] number, and reports that ### , accessed shelter and transitional housing during the year.”

## V. Inventory current resources <sup>11</sup>

In order to understand the needs of a community, an inventory must be taken of current resources, including housing and support services. This inventory may eventually lead to a local Resource Guide<sup>12</sup>, and/or used to populate a statewide resource guide. The inventory should include:

- a. Housing<sup>13</sup>
  - i. number of beds/units
    1. Rapid rehousing
    2. Transitional housing
    3. Permanent supported housing
    4. Host homes
  - ii. Source of vouchers and housing subsidies

<sup>10</sup> This data will be used to populate a Statewide dashboard monitoring system, per Recommendation 5, Outcome 2: Statewide dashboard/monitoring platform for population size and characteristics, page 21, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>11</sup> Recommendation 2, Outcome 1, Strategy B: Establish the numbers of existing and needed types of support services statewide, page 13, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>12</sup> Recommendation 3, Outcome 2, Strategy A: Develop an integrated, up-to-date, statewide referral system and/or online resource guide that includes a map of statewide distribution of resources, page 16, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>13</sup> Recommendation 2, Outcome 1, Strategy A: Establish the numbers of existing and needed units and models of housing statewide, page 13, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*



1. Project based
  2. Mobile
  3. rapid-re housing
- iii. List of agencies that conduct housing search

- b. Basic needs (showers, laundry, food)
- c. Benefits enrollment
- d. Child support
- e. Childcare
- f. Disability Services
- g. Documentation/ ID
- h. Domestic Violence
- i. Drop-in centers
- j. Education
- k. Emergency Shelter for young adults
- l. Employment/ training<sup>14</sup>
- m. Financial assistance
- n. Financial literacy
- o. General Case management
- p. Human trafficking/ commercial sex work
- q. Immigration
- r. Legal
- s. LGBTQ supports
- t. Medical care
- u. Mental health services
- v. Mentoring
- w. Outreach
- x. Positive Outlets/ Hobbies
- y. Pregnancy/ Parenting services
- z. Substance Use services

## **VII. Identify elements of your community's response to youth homelessness<sup>15</sup>**

Communities need to gather information including how YYA use the system. As previously described, information can be gathered in a number of ways, including focus groups, surveys, interviews and/or roundtable discussions. The following elements are taken from the US Interagency Council on Homelessness *Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness*<sup>16</sup>. Identification of these elements will help your community better understand the current system in place to support YYA experiencing homelessness :

<sup>14</sup> Recommendation 4, Outcome 3, Strategy A: Identify, focus, expand, and replicate models of public-private partnership (like the Private Industry Council in Boston) as well as social enterprise opportunities (such as More Than Words, the Haven Project), page 17, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>15</sup>[https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Youth-Criteria-and-Benchmarks-revised-Feb-2018.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Youth-Criteria-and-Benchmarks-revised-Feb-2018.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> ibid

- a. Identification, including outreach<sup>17</sup>
- b. Prevention
- c. Diversion
- d. Emergency shelter access
- e. Housing options/ opportunities
- f. Data Collection
- g. Coordinated entry
- h. How the four outcomes are supported (Stable housing; Permanent Connections, Health and well-being, Education and Employment)
- i. Special populations
- j. Use of best practices, including trauma-informed care, age and developmentally appropriate services, cultural and linguistically responsive services

Focus groups with YYA who have experienced homelessness should be conducted. A sample focus group outline can be found in Appendix C. The information from the focus group should be then summarized and analyzed for themes and insights.

#### **VIII. Review and evaluate the information to identify strengths and weaknesses**

1. Assess prevalence data gaps and strengths, including variation in definitions and collection methods
2. Assess service availability gaps and strengths from resource inventory<sup>18</sup>
3. Assess system gaps and strengths

#### **IX. Summarize findings**

First, gather the data highlighted in text boxes throughout this document to complete the Statewide Dashboard Worksheet in Appendix A. This data, along with additional data and process findings can then be summarized into the broad categories: *Who and what do we have?* and *What do we need?*

#### **X. Create initial recommendations and where outside support would be helpful**

Based on the information collected, list the initial recommendations to prevent and end YYA homelessness.

These recommendation should include:

- 1) Data- how to improve data collection, including subpopulations or overall consistency of terms;

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<sup>17</sup> Also found in State Plan Recommendation 3, Outcome 1: Improved ability to identify YYA at risk of housing instability and homelessness within programs not primarily focused on homelessness, including youth transitioning out of state systems of care, page 16, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

<sup>18</sup> Recommendation 1, Outcome 3, Strategy A: Convene a daylong, annual, statewide retreat for service providers to share evidence-based best practices, challenges, resources, and data collection efforts page 11, *MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness*

- 2) Service resources-- Identified places to fill housing and service gaps, including new program models that need to be explored;
- 3) Based on the US Interagency Council on Homelessness *Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness*, places where your current system might be improved to support YYA experiencing homelessness.

## APPENDIX A: Statewide Dashboard Worksheet

### PREVALENCE DATA

- 1) Based on 2018 PIT counts, at least \_\_\_\_ youth and young adults experience homelessness on the streets or in the shelters of [geography], and \_\_\_\_ of these youth are under age 18.
- 2) According to HMIS and service provider data, it is estimated that over the course of a year \_\_\_\_ number of YYAs experience homelessness during some part of the year, and \_\_\_\_ of these youth are under age 18.

### CHARACTERISTICS

- 3) Of the total YYA population experiencing homelessness in [geography], \_\_\_\_ identify as African American, and \_\_\_\_ identify as Latinx as compared to \_\_\_\_ of the total population in [geography] who identify as African American/Latinx
- 4) \_\_\_\_% of the total population of YYA experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.
- 5) \_\_\_\_ of identified YYA were pregnant or parenting on the night of the [year] HUD PIT count in [geography]. HMIS indicates a [similar/contrasting] number, and reports that \_\_\_\_ , accessed shelter and transitional housing during the year.

### HOUSING MODELS AND UNITS

#### 6) Housing

- i. number of beds/units
  1. Rapid rehousing \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Transitional housing \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Permanent supported housing \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Host homes \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Source of vouchers and housing subsidies
  1. Project based \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Mobile \_\_\_\_\_
  3. rapid-re housing \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. List of agencies that conduct housing search

## **APPENDIX B: Selected Recommendations, Outcomes, and Strategies from the Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness**

The six overall recommendations are:

- (1) Implement a coordinated statewide response to youth homelessness;
- (2) Expand the current spectrum of accountable and evidence-informed models of housing and services;
- (3) Enhance early identification, connection, and outreach systems to improve young people's connection to existing resources;
- (4) Improve education, employment, and credentialing opportunities in order to support young people's access to long-term, sustainable employment and income;
- (5) Create systematic outcome measurement systems and data-sharing opportunities; and
- (6) Create a structure to support authentic youth and young adult involvement statewide.

Specific Recommendations/Outcomes/Strategies referenced in this document:

(page 11 of Plan)

*RECOMMENDATION 1: Implement a coordinated statewide response to youth homelessness*

*Outcome 2: Enhanced regional capacity to prevent and end youth homelessness.*

*Strategy A: Assess regional capacities to prevent and end YYA homelessness*

*Strategy B: Provide training and technical assistance for conducting regional needs assessments.*

*Outcome 3: Enhanced connection among direct service programs throughout the state.*

*Strategy A: Convene a daylong, annual, statewide retreat for service providers to share evidence-based best practices, challenges, resources, and data collection efforts*

(page 13 of Plan)

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Expand the current spectrum of accountable and evidence-informed models of housing and services**

*Outcome 1: A flexible, regional response to YYA homelessness is developed including shelter, triage, assessment, and housing services and supports.*

*Strategy A: Establish the numbers of existing and needed units and models of housing statewide*

*Strategy B: Establish the numbers of existing and needed types of support services statewide*

*Outcome 5: Number of bed nights for young adults in adult shelters statewide is reduced through diversion.*

*Strategy A: Assess how current outreach, shelter, and other YYA access points are incorporating diversion practices.*

*Strategy D: Ensure all adult shelters know local and regional youth-specific resources*

*Outcome 2: Housing and service needs for subpopulations of unaccompanied homeless youth are addressed, and partnerships with state agencies are developed to ensure appropriate statewide services.*

(page 16 of Plan)

RECOMMENDATION 3: Enhance early identification, connection, and outreach systems to improve young people's connection to existing resources

*Outcome 1: Improved ability to identify YYA at risk of housing instability and homelessness within programs not primarily focused on homelessness, including youth transitioning out of state systems of care.*

*Outcome 2: Reduced amount of time between a YYA experiencing housing instability and connecting with services and supports.*

*Strategy A: Develop an integrated, up-to-date, statewide referral system and/or online resource guide that includes a map of statewide distribution of resources*

(page 17 of Plan)

RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve education, employment, and credentialing opportunities in order to support young people's access to long-term, sustainable employment and income

*Outcome 3: Improved opportunities for YYA experiencing or at risk of homelessness to further their employment and training opportunities.*

*Strategy A: Identify, focus, expand, and replicate models of public-private partnership (like the Private Industry Council in Boston) as well as social enterprise opportunities (such as More Than Words, the Haven Project).*

(page 21 of Plan)

RECOMMENDATION 5: Create systematic outcome measurement systems and data-sharing opportunities

*Outcome 1: Alignment of statewide definition of "unaccompanied homeless youth" across state-funded services.*

*Strategy B: Adopt common definition of "unaccompanied homeless youth" (including age ranges) across service delivery and housing systems.*

*Outcome 2: Statewide dashboard/monitoring platform for population size and characteristics.*

*Strategy B: Engage with non-HUD-funded providers to understand opportunities and overcome barriers to use of HMIS.*

*Strategy C: Compare and align intake forms statewide to ensure standardized data collection.*

*Strategy D: Identify and collect data from a range of existing statewide data sources to improve baseline estimates of young adults experiencing and at risk of homelessness.*

(page 23 of Plan)

RECOMMENDATION 6: Create a structure to support authentic youth and young adult involvement statewide

*Outcome 2: Improved statewide capacity for youth and young adult engagement.*

*Strategy A: Identify an agency in each region to develop and host a Youth Action Board (YAB).*

*Strategy C: Identify funding streams to support YAB development at local and state levels.*

## APPENDIX C. Suggested Community Needs Assessment Youth Focus Groups

*Below is a sample Focus Group for YYA who have experienced homelessness. The activities and conversations below will last about two hours with 5 - 10 participants. We recommend providing food and a stipend for participation. We have found it helpful to record the conversation (“Voice Record” is an example of an app the writers have used to record focus groups in the past) and have one person facilitating while another person takes notes.*

Supplies needed:

- Post it –paper (large)
- Markers
- Name tags
- Bag of candy(sensitive to common dietary and allergy needs) as a prize for winning team

### I. **Introduction** – who we are and why we are doing this

- Individual introductions
- Group agreements (should include: respect, agree to disagree, non-judgment from us as well as each other, understanding that everyone’s experience is different, and agreeing that no young person should experience homelessness)
- Definitions – what do we mean when we say “YYA experiencing homelessness”? (Anyone 14 – 24 who is not in the care or custody of a parent or guardian and doesn’t have a safe, stable, or regular place to stay at night. This includes couch-surfing, staying with friends, and being outside or in a shelter.)
- Permission to record, note that one facilitator will be taking notes during the conversation to ensure that the information they are sharing will be recorded correctly.

### II. **Supports/ Barriers (45 min)**

We want to start by looking at **Barriers** – What gets in the way of you getting your needs met? (Needs such as education, employment, income, housing, mental and physical health, and support). The way we are going to do this is as a game.

Instructions:

- 1) Divide into 2 or 3 groups (try to have no more than 3 people per group) – count off by 2s or 3s or just divide by location in the room.

Once group is divided:

- 2) Each group is going to get a pad with the letters A – Z written on it
- 3) Each group gets a marker for each person in the group (2 or 3 markers per group)



- 4) We are going to give you all 3 minutes to come up with a list of things that get in the way of getting your needs met. You can write down one word for each letter. After the 3 minutes is up, we will compare your lists.
- 5) Your team will get points for each UNIQUE word – words that the other teams haven't also come up with. You must be able to explain what is meant by this word and why it is a barrier.
- 6) Team with the most points wins the bag of candy (that they can share with the other team if they would like)

#### DISCUSSION:

- At each word identified, ask why or how it's a barrier – what does it get in the way of doing? (Limit time to one minute- Facilitator gets to judge if team gets a point or not).
- After all of the words are discussed, ask – “are any additional barriers that we / the state should know about?”

### III. Early Identification & Prevention

- The purpose of the next set of questions is to get information directly from you about barriers, gaps, best practices, and opportunities to improve the systems that affect YYA experiencing homelessness
- *We are going to shift to asking some more personal questions about your experiences, and if you are comfortable, we would like you to speak specifically about your experiences rather than more generally about other people's experiences.*

1. When you think about the first time you did not have a safe, stable, or reliable place to stay
  - a . Who knew? Who did you tell? Why or why not?
  - b . Where did you go/ stay?
  - c . Who could have helped you if they had known?
  - d . Is there anything that could have prevented you from getting to that situation?
  - e . Is there any advice you would give yourself in that moment? Advice you would give to others in this situation?
2. How did you find resources, programs, or supports (internet, social network?) ?
  - a . If you looked on the internet, what did you google?
3. If we were going to create something to better reach young people as soon as they become unstably housed, what would you recommend? How could we better reach

people in this community?

## **II. Strengths**

1. What do you think works well to support young adults in this community?
2. Who or what has been helpful to you? (can probe about specifics for Health /wellbeing, Housing, Employment/ Education, and Permanent connections).

## **IV. Summary questions: A few last questions...**

**1) Are there ways that you feel your sexual orientation or gender identity have impacted your experience with homelessness or housing instability?** *(only if it seems to pertain and feels safe)*

**2) Are there ways that you feel your racial or ethnic identity have impacted your experience with homelessness or housing instability?**

**3) In summary, we are trying to write a Plan for our community to better support and eventually end youth homelessness . What do you wish people knew about what it's like to be young and unstably housed in our community?** Think about service providers, policy makers, the general public...

- o Go around room, each person can say one or two things
  - o what do providers not realize about what it's like to be young and unstably housed?
  - o What do you think would surprise most people?

**4) If we could get our community to do one or two things to better support and/or end YYA homelessness, what would you recommend? Or, what would you change if you had the power to change things?**

## **VI. Conclusion and Evaluation**

Plus/ Delta Evaluation (One thing you liked about today, one thing you would change for next time)