



From Surviving to Thriving:

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services
Strategic Plan for Housing Stability and Homelessness Prevention
2020



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**“We work so hard to find
[DYS-involved youth] places to stay,
and it’s so hard when
- despite everything we’ve done -
we still don’t have a place
for them to go.”**

—DYS staff





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Jonas' story*



**As re-told by staff; names and identifying details have been changed*

At age 16, Jonas was involved in a gang-shooting. His best friend died at the scene, and Jonas was arrested for gun charges. Jonas was charged and spent some time in a Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) hardware-secure facility. When he was eligible to transition back into the community, he requested an inter-state juvenile justice transfer to live with an aunt out of state. He expressed wanting a fresh start away from the reminders of his past.

For a while he did well, attending school, getting a job, and making new friends. However, he and his aunt began disagreeing about rules, specifically his curfew, and he eventually asked to come back to Massachusetts. Unfortunately, when he arrived in Massachusetts, his mother decided that she couldn't have him in her house, despite previously agreeing to take him back. His gun charges jeopardized her subsidized housing and with other children living with her, she could not afford to take that risk. Through DHS, Jonas was placed in a foster home. As his 22nd birthday approached, Jonas and staff began planning for his discharge from the foster home and the agency. Because he had no one else who could take him in, his plan was to live with his girlfriend until he could find an apartment, even though he wasn't sure how long that would last. His caseworker lamented, *"Is anyone going to put him on the lease? No, not if they do a background check. Is he even going to be able to find an apartment that he can actually afford with the job he is working? No. He says he feels helpless and hopeless and says to me 'I've got nobody'."* Without another identified option, the girlfriend's house was written into Jonas' discharge plan as his exit destination. If that didn't work out, DHS and Jonas were not sure where else Jonas could turn.



Introduction



Every year in the United States nearly 100,000 young people leave juvenile justice facilities.¹ Additionally, every year an estimated one in ten young adults ages 18 to 25 and 1 in 30 young people between the ages of 13 and 17 will experience some form of homelessness, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.² Youth and young adults may be at an even greater risk of experiencing homelessness after juvenile justice involvement due to education disruption, criminal record, and unmet basic needs. A 2017 national study, *Voices of Youth Count*, found that 46% of youth experiencing homelessness have been in juvenile detention, jail, or prison compared to 15% of the general population and that nearly 62% of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness reported that they had been arrested at some point in their lives.³ Data from the 2018 Massachusetts Youth Count reported that unaccompanied homeless youth were six times more likely to have had justice system involvement compared to respondents who were housed and never homeless. Justice-involved youth experiencing homelessness were also the least likely to be sheltered and most likely to be couch surfing or living with a relative, partner, or friend⁴ (for more national and statewide statistics see *Appendix A: Numbers and Characteristics*). Such correlations have recently led to an unprecedented increase in collaboration among federal, state, and local partners, including juvenile justice agencies.

From Surviving to Thriving

From Surviving to Thriving is the first published plan released by a statewide juvenile justice agency that specifically focuses on homelessness and housing instability, adding key qualitative data to the national and local statistics that connect juvenile justice involvement with housing instability and homelessness. The Plan is comprised of four categories of recommendations:

- 1. HOUSING**
- 2. TRANSITION PLANNING**
- 3. PARTNERSHIPS**
- 4. SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT**

The DYS vision is that *every young person served by the Department of Youth Services will become a valued, productive member of their community and lead a fulfilling life*. This plan builds upon the Department's desire that, upon release, youth will not only survive but also become thriving members of their communities.

¹ "An Empirical Portrait of the Youth Reentry Population." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*. Accessed September 27, 2018. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1541204003260046>.

² Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M (2017). "Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America." Retrieved March 27, 2018, from <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>

³ *ibid*

⁴ "Massachusetts Youth Count 2018." http://www.mahomeless.org/images/2018_finalYouthCountreport.pdf



Context: The MA Department of Youth Services



The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services is the Juvenile Justice agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that serves youth committed as juvenile delinquents or youthful offenders and detained youth awaiting judicial action. The DYS mission is “to enhance community safety by improving the life outcomes for youth in our care and custody.” DYS achieves this mission by investing in highly qualified staff and through implementing a service continuum that engages youth, families, and communities in strategies that support positive youth development. DYS programming provides a continuum of supervision and services to address the unique educational, psychological, and health needs of youth in DYS care and custody.

Dividing the state geographically into five regions, DYS operates (as of September 2019) 44 residential programs ranging in security levels and 21 district offices strategically located in each region to provide comprehensive supervision and support to DYS committed and detained youth. DYS strives to serve youth as close as possible to their home communities and families.

Additionally, DYS offers a voluntary post-discharge service to all youth leaving DYS commitment called the YES (Youth Engaged in Services) program. Created in response to research indicating that the highest risk period for recidivism for youth and young adults formerly involved in the juvenile justice system is the first six months post-discharge, the YES program allows youth to continue to access or initiate involvement in individualized services after their commitment to the Department has ended. Youth who opt out of a YES agreement upon discharge have a 90-day window in which they can request a return to DYS for YES services up until their 22nd birthday. In 2018, the majority of all youth discharged from DYS (62%; 216 youth) opted to engage in a YES agreement.



Scope



This plan represents a strategic look into the policies and practices impacting housing stability for youth in the DYS system. This report was developed between August 2018 and September 2019 via a team of consultants with expertise in homelessness and housing policy, qualitative research, direct service, and with lived experience of young adult homelessness. The DYS Director of Community Operations provided direct oversight to the team. The consultants conducted an extensive literature review, interviewed DYS Directors of Community Services, conducted focus groups with DYS-involved youth and DYS-staff, surveyed DYS staff, and held a roundtable dialogue with DYS-involved families. Members of the DYS executive team engaged with the findings throughout the process. The recommendations and the accompanying action plan are shaped by these data and informed by the statistics and national best practices for improving housing stability for juvenile justice-involved youth and their families.

Methods



Literature review

In fall 2018, consultants conducted a literature review of national and state homelessness data and best practices specifically for juvenile justice agencies wanting to improve housing outcomes for youth exiting custody. This paper examines the needs of youth and young adults involved in the juvenile justice system within two subgroups: 1) youth and young adults in families experiencing homelessness or housing instability and 2) youth and young adults (up to age 24) experiencing homelessness unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. The reviewed best practices included transition planning and re-entry; housing; education and employment; permanent connections; health and wellbeing; and serving specific subpopulations. This paper informed the development of the interviews, survey, and focus groups, and ultimately, the recommendations found within the Plan.

Interviews

Consultants conducted interviews with the five DYS Directors of Community Services in Fall 2018. The objective of these interviews was to discern how DYS staff currently understand and provide housing support to DYS-involved young people and their families in the following areas: 1) awareness of available resources; 2) availability of resources; 3) appropriateness of resources; and 4) exclusion from resources (because of criminal offender record information [CORI] etc.). Each interview was approximately 75 minutes in length and followed the developed interview protocol (see *Appendix B: Staff interview guide*). Notes were then analyzed for themes, with special attention paid to identifying gaps and opportunities.

Staff survey

Consultants created and conducted a survey for DYS staff in early 2019. Shaped by findings from the literature review and interviews with the Directors of Community Services, the objectives of the anonymous survey were 1) to understand the level of implementation and consistency of certain DYS policies and procedures; and 2) to gain insight into when staff need additional support and resources to improve housing stability for DYS-involved youth. The survey was sent out via Survey Monkey to senior DYS staff, who then forwarded the survey onto additional staff. Each of the five DYS regions were represented in the 134 staff members who completed the survey. Of these respondents, thirty-seven percent (37%) identified as Case Workers, 21% as Youth Service Coordinators, and 16% as District Managers. Directors of Community Services, Director of Operations, Regional Directors, Family Engagement Specialists, Community Clinical Coordinators, Clinicians, Community Contract Managers, and Administrative Assistants each comprised less than 5% of the responding populations. The majority (58%) of respondents worked with DYS for over 10 years, 12% between 5-10 years, 16% for 2-5 years, and 14% for 0-2 years. The survey responses helped direct the creation of the focus groups protocol, guiding areas for which further investigation was needed (See *Appendix C: Staff Survey*).

Focus Groups

Over four months, consultants conducted 11 focus groups with DYS staff and youth across the state. The objective of these focus groups was to better understand the current processes, policies, and experiences impacting housing stability for DYS-involved youth and their families.

Staff Focus groups. The Directors of Community Services selected staff for participation and, in total, 55 people attended five staff-specific focus groups, one in each DYS region. The participants' employment with DYS ranged from 6 months to over 35 years, with an average tenure of 14.5 years. Staff roles included Caseworkers, Clinical Directors, Directors of Community Services, District Managers, Family Engagement Specialists, Program Directors, and Youth Service Coordinators. One hundred percent of participants had worked with DYS youth experiencing housing instability. Each group lasted two hours. There was no financial compensation for attending the focus groups (See Appendix D: Staff Focus Group Protocol).

Youth Focus Groups. Thirty-nine DYS-involved youth participated in six focus groups. Consultants conducted five all-male focus groups, one in each region, and an additional female-only group in Grafton, MA. Focus group participants ranged in age from 16 to 21 years old, with an average age of 19 years old. The age of first commitment ranged from 11 to 17 years old with an average of 15.5 years old. Of the youth focus group participants, 41% of participants identified as Latinx, 35% as Black, and 23% as White. When asked if they had ever "not had a place to stay for the night", the majority of participants who were over 17 years old responded that they had experienced housing instability, with some reporting these experiences of homelessness occurring "many times" or "all the time". Each focus group lasted about two hours and participants each were compensated \$30 in cash for their participation (See Appendix E: Youth Focus Group Protocol).

Family symposium breakout session. In June 2019, consultants led a breakout session at the Metro Region's Family Advisory Symposium titled "Understanding Housing Challenges for DYS-Involved Families." Consultants used this session as a quasi-focus group to explore the housing challenges faced by families of DYS-involved youth. The 20-person group was equally composed of family members, community members, and DYS staff. Three key questions were explored: 1) "What are the ways involvement with DYS impacts housing?"; 2) "How has DYS involvement been helpful or unhelpful?"; And 3) "What are some suggestions or recommendations you would make to DYS for how to improve housing stability for DYS youth?" The content gathered at this session added crucial insight and nuance to the housing challenges faced by both DYS-involved youth and their families (See Appendix F: Family Advisory Council Workshop Question). No compensation was offered for participation in the breakout session.

Definitions

Federal definitions of "literal homelessness" for both individuals and families include those who live in a place not meant for human habitation, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and hotels paid for by a government or charitable organization.⁵ The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers individuals and families family "at imminent risk for homelessness" if they "will lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and [have] no other resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing."⁶

Family. Under the HUD Equal Access Rule the definition of "Family" includes, but is not limited to, "regardless of marital status, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity, any group of persons presenting for assistance together with or without children and irrespective of age, relationship, or whether or not a member of the household has a disability. A child who is temporarily away from the home because of placement in foster care is considered a member of the family."⁷

⁵ US Housing and Urban Development "Children and Youth: HUD's Homeless Definitions" Accessed September 23, 2018 <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HUDs-Homeless-Definition-as-it-Relates-to-Children-and-Youth.pdf>

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/1529/how-is-the-definition-of-family-that-was-included/>

Youth Experiencing Homelessness. The HUD Category 3 definition of homelessness is the only one that specifically mentions youth and uses the following definition:

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not meet any of the other categories but are homeless under other federal statutes, have not had a lease and have moved 2 or more times in the past 60 days, and are likely to remain unstable because of special needs or barriers.

Youth up to age 24 who are with their own children are also considered to be unaccompanied when they themselves are not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Many federal definitions of youth homelessness also broadly include youth and young adults who are both literally “homeless” and “at-risk” for homelessness. Similar to families, this broad federal definition is inclusive of young people living on the streets, in shelters or transitional housing, in temporary accommodations (e.g., doubled up and couch surfing), and those fleeing or attempting to flee a dangerous living situation.

Additionally, in line with federal definitions, the Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth established the following definition in 2013 for “unaccompanied homeless youth”:

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.¹⁰

⁸ For more information about HUD’s definitions for youth homelessness please see: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Determining-Homeless-Status-of-Youth.pdf>

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ “The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Report to the Great and General Court, Executive Office of the Governor, and the Office of the Child Advocate.” Mass.gov. 2013. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/eohhs/cyf/uhy032013.pdf>.

**“If you don’t have a place to stay,
it’s hard to keep your job.**

**And if [a youth] can’t maintain
employment, they will turn back to
what they know. Then they pick up
new charges and everything gets
harder. It’s like a domino effect;
the lack of housing leads to all
these other things.”**

—DYS staff



Findings & Recommendations

Focus groups and interviews with DYS-involved youth, DYS staff, and DYS-involved families confirmed the need for DYS to better address issues of homelessness and housing instability. As such, the Plan constitutes four categories of recommendations:



1. HOUSING



2. TRANSITION PLANNING



3. PARTNERSHIPS



4. SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT



Housing

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION: Enhance the DYS continuum of housing models and the policies and procedures that support them

HOUSING FINDINGS A: Current Continuum of DYS Housing Programs

Staff reported making significant efforts to find appropriate housing placements for youth in custody and expressed frustration that a full range of residential options do not currently exist in each region. The current residential options for DYS-youth are

Track I: Residential treatment in staff-secure facilities where egresses are not secured and the bedroom doors do not lock.

Track II: Housed in the same facilities as Track I but designed to support a youth's transition to the community through additional staffing, support, and opportunities.

Pre-Independent Living Program (ILP): Staffed and similar to group-home models. Currently only exists in two regions as the "SEIL"¹¹ and "LIFE"¹² programs.

"You begin making negative decisions and going to negative places - because when you have to survive, you make decisions that get you in trouble."
—DYS-involved youth

"Planning doesn't seem to be the main issue, lack of available housing resources does."
—Staff survey

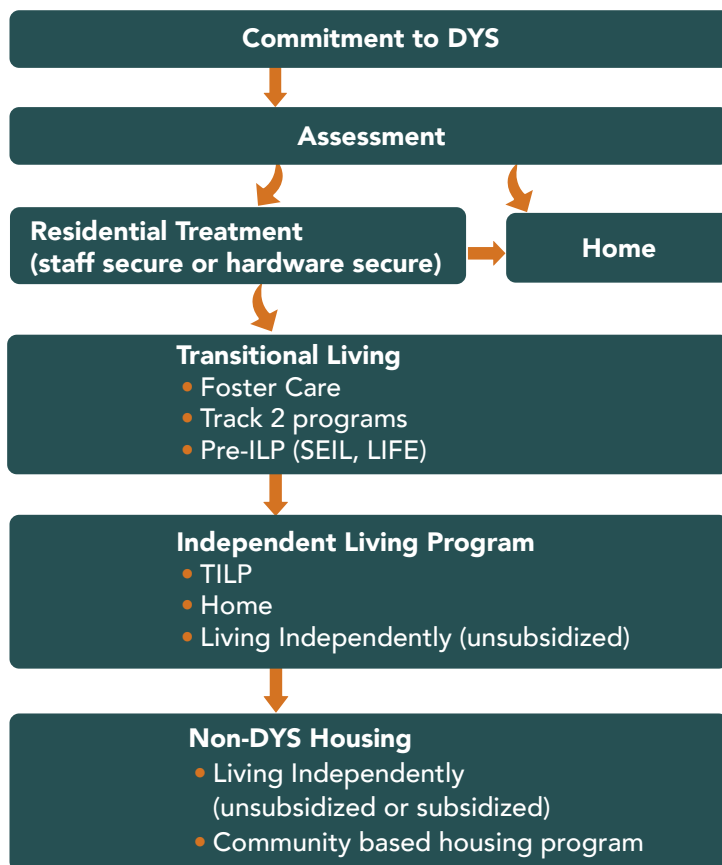
Foster Care: A community-based option that places DYS-involved youth in a family-based setting to receive therapeutic services and supports (See also *Appendix H: Types of DYS Foster Care*).

ILP: The ILP is designed for youth ages 17+ years old and can be scattered site apartments and group residential settings. In an ILP, a youth's resources (school, healthcare, behavioral health supports, employment, etc.) come from the community. Youth can stay in an ILP until the age of 22.

¹¹ SEIL: SouthEast Independent Living

¹² LIFE: Learning Independence by Fostering Empowerment

The full range of programs and housing options that currently exist for youth committed to DYS are depicted in this flow-chart



In addition to redefining and reconfiguring some of the above residential options, a full continuum of housing in each region that includes Track 1, Track 2, Foster Care, Transitional Housing, and ILPs that transition youth to independence is necessary. Such a continuum should include a designated number of ILP units located outside of treatment facilities, with numbers based on the housing availability and regional need.

Additionally, the interviews, focus groups, and staff surveys all highlighted the need for more transitional and ILP beds for females. As of June 2019, there are approximately 50 females in DYS custody across the state. The current programs are not geographically dispersed, which forces females committed to DYS to choose between obtaining housing in a new community or potentially losing access to community resources and connections, such as family, school, and employment. Because they are not geographically distributed, these beds are often under-utilized, creating an uneven contrast of under-utilization but high-reported need.

Another concern identified by staff and youth is the ability of DYS to serve and specifically house young adults who are custodial parents of young children. Though most DYS-youth who are parents are not custodial, those who are able to want to provide a safe and stable environment for their children. DYS does not currently have a way to house DYS-youth and their children. In surveys, staff recognized that this can undermine a youth’s positive steps towards responsibility, accountability, and involved and invested parenting. One youth commented that *“if I didn’t have a wife and two kids, I would have jumped at the opportunity [to be in a DYS ILP]. I want to be a father ... but I also want to have a place to live. It’s not fair I have to choose.”* Even non-custodial parents expressed wanting to have housing that allows them to interact with their children, stating *“stability is a place where you can have your kids around you.”*

“We don’t have the resources in the region, so we refer out. Ideally, we’d refer in the region, but that’s not the case.”
 —DYS staff

Each stage of this continuum must have clearly articulated expectations and programming that transitions youth to independent living. A repeated concern from both staff and youth was that there should be room for youth to make mistakes safely, with natural and logical consequences. As late adolescence is characterized by exploration, experimentation, and identity development, mistakes are a developmental necessity; as such there is a clear need to revisit policies and practices.

HOUSING RECOMMENDATION A: Each region has a full continuum of housing programs that support transitions to independence with clearly defined policies and protocols for transitions

Action 1. Re-develop the current Pre-ILP model into a Transitional Housing (TH) model.¹³ Explore the addition of off-site TH programs in every region. TH will be separate from Track II and Independent Living Programs.

- Transitional Housing will be less restrictive than Track II placements with fewer restrictions on how youth can interact with the community. These programs are designed to help young people make a successful transition to self-sufficient living.

Action 2. Current Transition to Independent Living Programs (TILPs) are reconfigured into Independent Living Programs¹⁴ with at least 3 off-site apartments in every region.

- ILPs provide housing in furnished apartments in which youth can continue building the necessary skills required for independent living. In an ILP, all of a youth's resources (school, healthcare, behavioral health supports, employment, etc.) come from the community.¹⁵

Action 3. Explore the addition of more regional ILP beds for young women; research national models and best practices.

Action 4: Explore the creation of a TH-RRH (transitional housing to rapid re-housing)¹⁶ program as a pilot model for DYS-involved youth.

Action 5. Investigate opportunities for DYS youth who are parents to have housing that would allow their children to live with them. Examine policy implications to have DYS funding services for youth's children.

Action 6. Evaluate the reason for transition out of the current Track II and Pre-ILP/ILP as well as the policies and practices to determine which policies result in the most successful outcomes from the program.

Action 7. In tandem with the revision of housing programs, ensure developmentally appropriate expectations and consequences for Track II, TH, and ILPs.



HOUSING FINDINGS B: DYS Foster Care

The DYS Foster Care program is a community-based service that places both male and female justice-involved youth in a family-based setting to receive therapeutic services and supports (See also Appendix G: Types of DYS Foster Care). When available, staff report using DYS foster care as the "go-to resource." One staff member reported, "For kids under 18, we typically try to get them into a foster home." Additionally, when a youth turns 18, they have the option to sign on to the YES program until age 22 and to stay with the foster family. Sometimes a foster home is preferable to an ILP or Pre-ILP program, especially for youth who are not perceived to be ready for more independent living. Occasionally, staff have to find a foster home in another region if one is not readily available; other times, relocation is intentional for safety reasons.

"I over-utilize foster-care all the time."
—DYS staff

¹³ For more information on Transitional Housing Models see Appendix G: Housing Models

¹⁴ For more information on Independent Living Program models see Appendix G: Housing Models

¹⁵ Implementation note: One juvenile-justice ILP in California operates a model that does not terminate services or remove a youth from the program due to poor performance or behavior. Instead, the program adopts the notion of unconditional care and, instead of terminating the youth for certain behaviors, they conduct an intervention with the youth to determine why they were not performing as expected.

¹⁶ For more information on TH-RRH Models see Appendix G: Housing Models

All five Directors of Community Services spoke well of DYS foster care placements. However, in focus groups, even though many DYS-involved youth said positive things about their foster home placements and families, youth voiced concerns about the structure and stability of foster homes. They reported discomfort largely due to a lack of clarity on their length of stay, unclear expectations for support from foster families, a general sense of feeling unwanted, and little privacy. Multiple youth described a personal history of running away from foster care placements, despite the risk of a warrant. Youth and staff communicated that the current options for foster placements sometimes leave youth with nowhere to go during daytime hours, restricted access to the homes and amenities, and no effective transition to permanent housing. Staff identified a gap in capacity, citing that there weren't enough placements to support the need. Staff and youth also indicated a need for more comprehensive training and supports for families who agree to foster DYS involved youth.

HOUSING RECOMMENDATION B: DYS Foster Care contracts and placements are systematically designed to support and prepare youth for independence

Action 1. Evaluate community contracts' current training and expectations of foster care placements with attention paid to differences between youth under 18 and over 18.

Action 2. Monitor practice and procedures of foster care contracts.

Action 3. Assess current utilization of foster homes in each region; consider rebranding foster care for over 18/YES youth as "host homes."



HOUSING FINDINGS C: Kinship Placement

Overall, both staff and youth articulated challenges with the process of kinship placement. According to staff focus groups, the process of kinship placement can be unclear and lengthy, often changes at the last minute, undermines natural family connections, and is not always able to honor a youth's placement preferences. Staff described that sometimes kinship placements are deemed "unfit" due to past criminal charges within the household, even though the charges may be considered "minor" and maintaining a relationship with the youth would be beneficial.

"They have to live with a parent or legal guardian unless we go through a whole process. [They] have to get foster care approval to live with kinship families - and often a young person's choice can't be honored. We have to go through a third party - and it takes a long time [for placement approval]."
—DYS Staff

There is currently neither a consistent policy nor process directing kinship placement and the process varies by region. Two Directors of Community Services noted that it would be helpful to receive "DYS-approved training" in genograms¹⁷ or other ways to look for kinship placements and non-family housing placements for young people.

HOUSING RECOMMENDATION C: The kinship placement process is clear, consistent, and supports permanent connections

Action 1. Assess current practice on kinship placements and possible regional differences.

Action 2. Develop, distribute, and monitor consistent policy and practice for kinship placements (based on assessment from Action 1).

Action 3. Develop framework for extended family mapping/"family find" process to be conducted at intake.

¹⁷ "A genogram is a graphic representation of a family tree that displays detailed data on relationships among individuals. It goes beyond a traditional family tree by allowing the user to analyze hereditary patterns and psychological factors that punctuate relationships." from <https://www.genopro.com/genogram/>



HOUSING FINDINGS D: Housing Stability of Families

Staff reported that housing instability of DYS-involved youth was often due to changes in a family's lease while a youth was in custody or to the youth being generally unwanted in the home. Often a family will renew their lease and be told that their DYS-involved youth either cannot be on the lease or that the youth was intentionally not put on the lease. This sometimes means the family cannot or will not reunify with their DYS-involved child and that the housing of the entire family is jeopardized. One family member articulated, *"It feels as if the whole family suffers the aftermath of what the children are doing."*

"Can't you just help my mom get housing?"
—DYS involved youth

"Are we really going to have to put a kid into foster care because the family doesn't have stable housing?"
—DYS staff

In addition to the aforementioned housing challenges, many families experience additional housing instability due to eviction-histories, poverty and inability to pay rent and utilities, and a desire to relocate to avoid violence in their community. Such instability can undermine a family's capacity for reunification, even when that is desired and beneficial. As one staff member put it, *"We don't just end up with homeless youth; we end up with homeless families."* Staff articulated that children are part of a family eco-system and said, *"to increase the stability of the child you have to increase the stability of the whole family."* Staff and youth requested specific support, such as a DYS housing specialist to help staff increase family housing stability. Other recommended housing supports include an

improved connection to community resources, short-term flexible subsidies, and access to culturally competent services, such as Caseworkers who are fluent in the language spoken at the home of DYS-involved families.

Finally, parents and caregivers often require additional support to create positive parent-child relationships grounded in developmentally appropriate expectations. Staff commented that some families had very strict rules and expectations that resulted in limited independence for their children, thus setting the stage for family conflict and unsuccessful reunification. There is a specific need for family support to set realistic expectations while also working to understand the youth's desired outcomes.

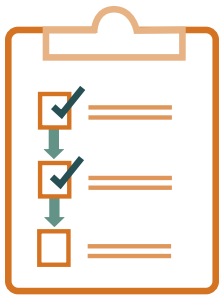
HOUSING RECOMMENDATION D: DYS supports families to increase their housing stability

Action 1. DYS enhances parenting support with additional resources in each region, such as developmentally appropriate expectations, family conflict resolution, and mediation skills.

Action 2. Ensure that all families have a DYS-contact who can communicate with them in their preferred language.

Action 3. Increase knowledge of community-based funding resources to meet short-term financial needs of families. (See also below: *Partnerships: Recommendation A: Action 1.* Rework existing positions within community contracts to include a "housing specialist" that includes training to help navigate housing challenges for individuals and families.)

"We advise parents that if they have a stable place, they should welcome their child back whenever possible."
—Director of Community Services



Transition Planning

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION: Enhance DYS transition and discharge planning

TRANSITION PLANNING FINDINGS A: Addressing housing stability in current DYS transition planning protocol

Transition Planning is the process of working with and preparing a young person for formal discharge from the agency as well as successful transition from one residential setting to another, including transitions back into the community and maintaining stability in the community. Securing safe and stable housing is often the most pressing issue facing youth when transitioning out of DYS custody and, therefore, it is essential to address housing during transition planning. In the issue brief *Key Elements of Transition Planning to Prevent Youth Homelessness* (part of a series released by The Coalition for Juvenile Justice), the Coalition describes how to plan for stable housing during transition planning. They write, “transition planning should address where youth will live after they exit custody, but should also work with the young person to identify and strengthen backup options in case their planning living arrangement doesn’t work out.”¹⁸ This planning must happen in partnership with the youth’s family whenever possible to better understand the stability of the family’s current housing situation as well as to help mitigate any concerns that the family may have regarding how re-entry may impact the family’s living situation. In a focus group, one youth underscored this concern saying that *“stability is having back up plans – so that if something happens, you don’t just go homeless.”*

“Nobody really coaches you on what to do in the real world – and it’s not easy to just jump in and figure out.”
—DYS-involved youth

Although all youth need transition plans, comprehensive plans are especially important for youth at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. To assess future risk for housing instability, suggested questions for Caseworkers to ask all newly committed youth may include¹⁹

- How long have you lived at your current address?
- How many times have you moved within the past 12–24 months?
- Has your family ever been evicted?
- Where does your family live now and how long will they be able to stay?
- Does your family feel safe and secure in that environment?

Currently, to support successful transitions back into the community, DYS requires caseworkers in partnership with Community Service Network teams²⁰ to develop comprehensive case management plans for every youth. Caseworkers must formally then check in with youth about what additional support they need at 90, 60, and then 30 days before their discharge from DYS.²¹ However, in focus groups, staff reflected that they sometimes struggle to create comprehensive and realistic plans with youth because of a lack of resources, capacity, and the youth’s reluctance to tell the truth to avoid undesired placements or negative consequences to the youth or their families. Youth expressed a strong desire to have a better understanding of their options, timelines, and additional safety net plans in the event that their primary housing placement plan falls through. Last minute changes and evolving family dynamics were identified as unknown variables that can halt or impede the planning process.

¹⁸ Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2016) “Key Elements to Transition Planning to Prevent Youth Homelessness.” Accessed September 9, 2018 from: <http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/KEY%20ELEMENTS%20OF%20TRANSITION%20PLANNING%20TO%20PREVENT%20YOUTH%20HOMELESSNESS.pdf>

¹⁹ Questions adapted from: Coalition for Juvenile Justice. “Youth Homelessness and the Juvenile Justice System: A Roadmap of What to Ask, Offer, and Expect from Referral to Reentry” Accessed September 18, 2018; http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/map_FINAL.compressed.pdf

²⁰ Community Services Network teams serve youth on an individualized basis in the context of their families and their community through a local District or Satellite Office as they prepare for re-entry to the community, during their time in the community, and as they continue to engage with DYS through their voluntary engagement in Youth Engaged in Services.

²¹ From 2017 DYS case management practice and procedure manual: “Initial transition planning begins at time of commitment to the Department of Youth Services ... Through the 90-60-30 transition planning process, DYS Caseworkers develop community-based case management plans outlining all necessary services to be delivered to youth and to ensure compliance with designated services. The Youth Service Coordinator establishes a viable menu of these services and maintains relationships with community partners who can provide primary and supplemental support services at all times. The Community Clinical Coordinator also assists in this effort with regard to accessing and establishing outlets to meet the behavioral health needs of all youth... [Staff should] make every effort to prepare youth for discharge even in instances in which the youth may present as ambivalent or uncooperative with the planning process.”

Additionally, “stay away zones” were identified in focus groups as significant barriers to a youth’s successful re-entry into the community. “Stay away zones” are when a youth is asked to stay a defined distance away from a specified person, persons, business, or location. These were reported to impact the ability to find work for both youth and their families, the use of reasonable public-transportation routes, the maintenance of their basic needs, and the ability to maintain connections to family and community spaces. Regardless of whether the stay-away zone is DYS-imposed or a condition of probation, for a youth to successfully comply with stay away zones, they must be adequately prepared and empowered to safely and responsibly navigate the resources of new neighborhoods and communities. There is a need to better prepare youth for transitions into the community, asking additional questions that might include “where are the areas you need to go to live your best life? If you cannot go there, how can you meet those needs elsewhere?” Staff and youth reported that currently such preparation rarely happens.

TRANSITION PLANNING RECOMMENDATION A. An improved transition planning (TP) protocol assesses and addresses long-term housing stability

Action 1. Ensure that transition planning consistently begins at intake.

Action 2. Ensure all Caseworkers assess housing stability at intake and that housing plans are consistently recorded and revisited at 90/60/30-day discharge planning meetings.

Action 3. Present a full spectrum of housing options in the community, with accurate expectations of how long things will take to put in place including plans for special populations.

Action 4. Ensure every transition plan includes at least one identified back-up housing plan in case the intended housing plan does not work out; these plans should include kinship options if available.

Action 5: Include clear communication and support to navigate “stay-away zones” in TP protocol.



TRANSITION PLANNING FINDINGS B: Addressing other core outcomes in current DYS transition planning protocol

In addition to housing, transition planning should assess and address outcomes for permanent connections, education and employment, and health and well-being. Defined below, these nationally adopted outcomes come from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) *Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness* that explains, “By positively impacting these outcome areas through interventions that target risk and protective factors, [the USICH] anticipates positive impacts on a range of broader life outcomes that signal healthy and productive transitions to adulthood.”²² While the *DYS Case Management Practice and Policy Procedure Manual* supports such interventions and advises discharge planning that includes many of these outcomes²³, there is currently no protocol for Caseworkers to systematically assess and address them.

CORE OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH FROM THE USICH *Framework for Ending Youth Homelessness*²⁴

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

²² U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. “Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action.” Accessed September 18, 2018 https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_Youth_Framework_FINAL_02_13_131.pdf

²³ From the *DYS Case Management Practice and Policy Procedure Manual*, page 85, “All youth transitioning from DYS custody will have housing, employment and/or vocational training in place; will have applied for MassHealth benefits through their 19th birthday; will have established linkage to a community health center or other primary care provider and will have other appropriate services in place as indicated by their individual service needs.... [Staff will] Ensure youth have their basic needs met such as food, stable housing, and behavioral health support, access to healthcare and employment and/or education. Youth must not be discharged to emergency shelters or homelessness.”

²⁴ *ibid*

TRANSITION PLANNING RECOMMENDATION B: Transitional Planning Protocol includes plans to improve other necessary outcomes for successful transition to adulthood

Action 1. Consistently assess and address youth’s permanent connections, education, employment, and health and well-being.

Action 2. Explore the provision of additional vocational training programs.

Action 3. When appropriate, incorporate mental health, substance use treatment and community-based connections into discharge planning.

Action 4. Explore how to best connect youth to mentors, either through the creation of DYS-specific programs or through partner agencies.



TRANSITION PLANNING FINDINGS C: Life Skills

Successful transition from childhood to adulthood is the defining developmental task of adolescence. This transition involves developing skills in a number of domains, and most programs that work with youth and young adults have some aspect of life skills development as either explicit or implicit goals. The DYS manual states that the “overarching goal of [statewide Community Service Network] is to go beyond accountability and recidivism reduction and to help DYS youth thrive as adolescents and young adults.” However, the current DYS life skills curriculum *Empower Your Future* focuses almost entirely on employment skills (Career Readiness, Work Values, Career Exploration, Job Readiness, and Obtaining and Retaining Work)²⁵, and does not include many of the skills needed for housing stability. In focus groups both DYS staff and youth frequently described this lack of housing-related life skills as a barrier to obtaining and maintaining housing. They suggested improving the DYS life-skills curriculum with the addition of topics such as understanding the housing search process, building a positive credit history, developing positive tenancy skills, managing a household budget, practicing responsible decision-making, and learning basic cooking skills.

“In the real world [I need to know] about how to budget and find a place to stay. That’s [stuff] I can actually use.”
—DYS-involved youth

“Most of our kids don’t have the life skills to live independently.”
—Director of Community Service

TRANSITION PLANNING RECOMMENDATION C: DYS prepares youth with life skills necessary to obtain and maintain housing

Action 1. Expand *Empower Your Future* curriculum beyond education and employment to train youth in life skills content that will prepare them to obtain and maintain housing, including budgeting, independent living, establishing or repairing credit history, and transportation.

Action 2. Integrate expanded *Empower Your Future* curriculum throughout the DYS housing and services continuum.

Action 3. Enhance tracking of youth participation in life skills programming.

²⁵ http://commcorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/resources_eyf-career-readiness-curriculum-guide.pdf



TRANSITION PLANNING FINDINGS D: Vital Documents

In focus groups, the survey, and interviews, both staff and youth articulated the necessity of having one’s vital documents in order to obtain housing, gain employment, and further education. However, staff also identified challenges with both obtaining and safeguarding these documents. In the staff survey, obtaining documents for youth born internationally was ranked as one of the greatest concerns due to the difficulty and sometimes impossibility of accessing non-US birth certificates. Both youth and staff reflected on the barriers encountered when families were unable to provide the necessary documents or approval to allow DYS to obtain social security cards and birth certificates for youth. In the staff survey, the vast majority (88%) of respondents indicated that obtaining a social security card was “sometimes” or “often a challenge”; 78% reported challenges with obtaining Photo IDs, and 77% reported challenges obtaining birth certificates. In focus groups, staff suggested that such concerns could be mitigated through virtual documentation storage²⁶ for youth who are committed to DYS. Additionally, staff suggested establishing a direct point of contact at agencies such as the MA Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) and the Social Security Office. In some regions, individual staff members reported that they have cultivated relationships with a manager at the RMV in order to facilitate DYS-youth obtaining documents; however, DYS should establish ongoing system-wide relationships that do not rest on the shoulders of individuals within the system.

“When you’re changing your address all the time, it makes it hard to prove your address. Then you can’t get your ID, and you don’t have the money to get your birth certificate. You can’t do anything to move ahead without those documents.”
—DYS Staff

TRANSITION PLANNING RECOMMENDATION D: All youth committed to DYS custody, are discharged with a copy of their birth certificate, state/REAL ID, social security card

- Action 1.** Develop, distribute, and monitor consistent policy and practice for obtaining and storing vital documents.
- Action 2.** At intake, begin work on acquiring original copies of youth’s vital documents including birth certificate, state ID, social security card, or necessary documentation support to improve residency status.
- Action 3.** Assess current practice and any logistical or liability challenges to DYS obtaining and storing original copies of vital documents.
- Action 4.** Designate a DYS Central Office point person for getting vital documents from other states/US territories/countries.
- Action 5.** Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Registry of Motor Vehicles to facilitate obtaining state IDs.

“Help me seal my record...it’s hard to do anything with a record.”
—DYS-involved youth

“It is challenging when the client is under 18 and the Registry of Motor Vehicles wants a parent’s signature and the parent is not involved.”
— staff survey



TRANSITION PLANNING FINDINGS E: JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL RECORDS

Most youth and staff reported that they had little knowledge or understanding of resources to support a youth’s record expungement. Despite one’s Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and juvenile records being barriers to obtaining stable employment and housing, transition planning rarely includes educating youth on how to seal or expunge their record. Sealing a record and learning how to mitigate one’s CORI becomes especially important for youth with adult charges, particularly when housing or employers perform background checks.

TRANSITION PLANNING RECOMMENDATION E: Juvenile and Criminal Records

- Action 1.** Ensure that Caseworkers are trained and understand their responsibility to direct youth on their rights and resources in the areas of expungement and sealing of their records, including realistic timelines and coaching youth on how to communicate during background checks.

²⁶ Blockchain technology is one example of virtual document storage.



Partnerships

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION: Strengthen interagency and community partnerships to improve housing placements and supports

PARTNERSHIPS FINDINGS A: Community Housing Resources

Community resources for improving housing stability exist throughout the Commonwealth. These organizations range from Housing Authorities and Housing Consumer Education Centers to local churches and community organizations. However, in interviews and the survey, staff reported mixed responses about their awareness of, connection to, and ability to work with such housing organizations and community programs. Staff reinforced this reality during focus groups as they described their relationships with community programs as often based on individual staff's knowledge and relationships rather than on systematic connections.

DYS Caseworkers do not need to develop comprehensive expertise in meeting all of the housing needs of families and youth; rather, they need to strategically and systematically partner with community experts and other agencies. Adding a Housing Specialist position into community contracts will allow each region to have its own expertise to support youth and families with housing search and placement in the most efficient and effective ways. A role of Housing Specialists will be to cultivate an inventory of available housing by reaching out to property owners and local housing resources. Additionally, they can familiarize youth with their rights and responsibilities as tenants and teach youth how to resolve issues with their landlords.

There is also an urgent need to develop working relationships with regional Housing Authorities (HA), as current DYS knowledge and limited relationship with HAs has unintentional negative consequences on the families of youth in their custody. In focus groups, staff and families voiced deep discouragement due to the misinformation and perceived prejudice that many HAs have with DYS-involved families. Families expressed that they are often forced to choose between reunification with their DYS-involved child or losing housing. While there are certain crimes that disqualify households from placement in federally subsidized units, having a working relationship may allow a DYS staff to mitigate CORIs and to dispel inaccurate interpretation of policies, especially when crimes must be sealed with a juvenile's record and legally cannot be used against them.

PARTNERSHIPS RECOMMENDATION A: DYS establishes partnerships with Community Housing Resources

Action 1. Rework existing positions within community contracts to include a trained Housing Specialist to navigate housing challenges for individuals and families.

Action 2. Build partnerships with local Housing Authorities with the intention of developing communication channels to support youth, as deemed beneficial and appropriate, upon re-entry into the community.

Action 3. Establish partnership with Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, to ultimately build partnerships with each CoC²⁷ that may include the allocation of housing resources.

Action 4. Establish partnerships with the multiple types of agencies listed in the Housing Guide, including housing search organizations, Housing Consumer Education Centers, and Regional Homeless Youth providers.

“Housing developments hear ‘DYS’ and assume felony... they won’t rent to us!”
—Family member of DYS-involved youth

²⁷ Continuum of Care (CoC): a HUD-recognized regional/ local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. CoCs are also the entities responsible for conducting the annual HUD point-in-time counts of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.



PARTNERSHIPS FINDINGS B: Other MA State Agencies

DYS staff suggested that the interactions with other systems of care are not always smooth due to the challenges of other agencies' staff misperceptions and unwillingness to work with DYS-youth and sometimes due to the misinterpretation of core differences in agency missions and mandates. Many DYS-involved youth are also involved with other state systems of care, including mental health services, substance use treatment services, and child welfare. In the staff survey, the majority (79.5%) of staff reported having worked with DCF (Department of Children & Families)²⁸. When asked about the barriers faced in working with DCF, the largest challenge (reported by 69% of respondents) was DCF closing a case once DYS is involved.

Academic services should be a major focus for all young people, as youth who have not completed high school have a 346% higher risk of experiencing homelessness.²⁹ This may be a bi-directional relationship, where youth who are experiencing housing instability are more likely to do poorly in school due to their lack of stability. All youth should have assistance re-engaging in school after the disruption of being in DYS-custody. The Department currently has Education and Career Counselors who assist youth with educational transitions back to the community. However, when asked about their connection to the McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons³⁰ almost 60% of DYS staff said they were unfamiliar with the services offered through this program. In addition to supporting youth to finish their secondary education, these liaisons can also help youth transition to college and to make connections to the Department of Higher Education's SPOCs (Single Point of Contact) at college campuses for post-secondary support³¹. During transition planning, DYS Education and Career Counselors, alongside other DYS staff, should contact local liaisons to coordinate school enrollment and support services upon release. Liaisons may be identified either through the State Coordinator for Homeless Children and Youth or from the local school district.

PARTNERSHIPS RECOMMENDATION B: DYS enhances partnerships and communication with other state agencies

Action 1. Examine current communication channels and partnerships with other state agencies, such as: Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Public Health (DPH)/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWFD), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Department of Higher Education (DHE), MassHealth, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), and the MA LGBTQ Youth Commission.

Action 2. Strengthen partnerships with DESE, with particular focus on developing working relationships with homeless liaisons at the district-level.

Action 3. Strengthen partnerships with DHE, with particular focus on developing working relationships with community colleges and their "SPOC".

Action 4. Connect to regional "SOAR"³² Specialists who can provide specialized assistance, including fast-tracking with SSI/SSDI applications.

²⁸ DYS program data show that 41% of DYS-involved youth are dually involved with DCF. According to the Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (JJEMS): 11% have an open Care & Protection case; 3% CRA; 3% voluntary, and 2% other.

²⁹ "Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America." Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M (2017). Accessed September 2, 2018, from <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>

³⁰ Youth in high-school who are being released from detention to an unstable living environment are eligible for support services by a homeless education liaison as authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act. Under this Act, youth are considered homeless who lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" which includes living doubled-up, in hotels, and in shelters. The educational portion of this act, called the "Elementary and Secondary Education Act" offers services via "homeless education liaisons" to help youth continue their education.

³¹ In order to offer students the necessary support at the college-level, many institutions have designated a SPOC as the on-campus point person for addressing students' needs. The SPOC assists youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability during matriculation and throughout their college career, helping students access a broad range of services both on and off campus.

³² Supplemental Social Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) is a program designed to increase access to SSI/SSDI for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, or a co-occurring substance use disorder. SOAR-trained case managers provide specialized assistance, including fast-tracking to submit complete and quality applications that are typically approved quickly.



System Enhancement

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION: Address DYS Systemic Challenges that impact housing outcomes

SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT FINDINGS A: Housing Data

As a part of DYS' commitment to improve housing stability for youth entering and exiting the system, there must be enhanced data collection on housing stability. There is currently no formal set of questions to assess the housing stability of youth committed to and exiting from DYS custody (suggested intake questions for housing are listed under Transition Planning Findings A). The full set of intake and exit housing assessment tools should be developed as a part of the re-developed transition protocol.

“We often don't know where they go [after exiting DYS].”
—DYS staff

SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATION A: DYS systematically collects housing data at intake and discharge

Action 1. Develop and implement assessment to be used at intake to assess youth for housing instability (risk and experience).

Action 2. Develop and implement assessment to be used at discharge to assess youth for housing stability.



SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT FINDINGS B: DYS Staff Awareness of Housing Resources

The DYS mission emphasizes providing a continuum of community-based services and ensuring that each youth can navigate through the service delivery system in their home community. While DYS has some local and regional partnerships with community housing resources, these partnerships are generally based on individual relationships rather than Department-wide training or MOUs. Additionally, though some Caseworkers and Family Engagement Specialists have some housing knowledge, there are currently not any positions either at DYS or within community contracts that focus solely on housing, in spite of the demand. In focus groups and interviews, both staff and DYS-involved youth reported significant need for assistance in locating, obtaining, and sustaining housing. Staff repeatedly voiced that they lacked sufficient knowledge of how to navigate the housing systems and community housing resources and that there is a need for Department-wide training to address such challenges. Training should be offered to all Caseworkers and Community Contract staff and focus on identifying housing instability and homelessness in the existing assessment tools, the benefits of addressing homelessness for reducing youth recidivism, and any new procedures DYS adopts to assist with system coordination.

Additionally, LGBTQ+-identified youth are more likely than their straight or cis-gender peers to experience homelessness and, if they do become homeless, are more likely to experience violence or exploitation. Safe, accepting, and affirming services and physical spaces for support are essential to serving this population. Both Housing Specialists and Family Engagement Specialists must be trained in both family support and housing resources to support the unique needs of these youth.

SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATION B: Department-wide training allows staff to understand, identify, and address housing instability

Action 1. Provide training that addresses the challenge of inconsistent awareness and perceived responsibility to address youth homelessness by current staff, including training on the newly created Housing Guide.

Action 2. In conjunction with newly created Housing Specialist positions (*Partnerships Recommendation A: Action 1*) train Family Engagement Specialists on state and regionally based family programs and supports, including resources and practices to support families dealing with eviction and relocation due to safety concerns and resources to support LGBTQ+-identified youth.



SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT FINDINGS C: Racial Equity

DYS has made significant strides toward improving racial equity in the Department. However, even with the current efforts, prejudice and discrimination were identified during interviews and focus groups as significant barriers to housing stability. Staff articulated the disproportionate challenges faced by Black and Latinx youth in regard to reentering the community and finding housing compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, youth identified racism and biases as a present issue while in DYS custody. Youth of color are disproportionately represented in DYS custody, and staff and youth suggested that youth of color may deal with implicit bias that ultimately impacts individual outcomes. DYS should intentionally and explicitly address these dynamics.

“There’s a history of housing discrimination in America... [and racism gets magnified] when there’s scarce resources. When a black voice calls for an apartment ‘no, there’s no housing!’ and when a white voice calls ‘yes, we have an apartment.’ That affects our kids too.”

—DYS Staff

SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATION C: DYS builds off existing racial equity work by improving staff ability to identify and address issues of disparity and equity as it relates to housing stability

The following action steps were adapted from the US Interagency Council on Homelessness informational brief “How to Address Racial Disparities in Your Community.”³³

Action 1. Assess whether DYS provides connections to services and housing at equitable rates and achieves equitable outcomes for youth across races and ethnicities.

Action 2. Assess whether youth experience different housing outcomes due to how DYS policies are enforced or enacted.

Action 3. Continue to train staff to identify and address disparities perpetuated by processes or barriers within DYS systems, services, and individual interactions.



SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT FINDINGS D: Youth Partnership

In youth focus groups, participants provided significant feedback and suggestions on individual programs and the DYS system more broadly. Though feedback mechanisms occasionally exist, it would well serve DYS to create a formal structure for this. This could be accomplished by creating Youth Advisory Boards (YAB) for individual and Department-wide programs.


SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATION D: DYS incorporates youth voice and feedback into its decision making

Action 1. Evaluate and create feedback mechanisms in DYS programs and the system as a whole.

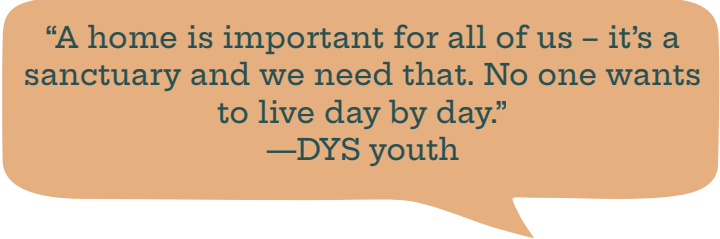
³³ “How to Address Racial Disparities in Your Community.” USICH. July 09, 2018. Accessed October 04, 2018. <https://www.usich.gov/news/how-to-start-addressing-racial-disparities-in-your-community/>.



Conclusion & Next Steps



From Surviving to Thriving is the first published strategic plan released by a juvenile justice agency that specifically addresses homelessness and housing instability. This Plan adds key qualitative data from the voices of youth and young adults, front line staff, and agency leadership, illuminating the statistics that connect juvenile justice involvement with housing instability, homelessness, and the increased risk of recidivism. These new insights have allowed DYS to set goals and identify key actions that will both improve housing outcomes and further the DYS mission to “make communities safer by improving the life outcomes for youth in [DYS] care.”



“A home is important for all of us – it’s a sanctuary and we need that. No one wants to live day by day.”
—DYS youth



Implementation of the Plan began before its public release. In October 2019, the Department was awarded a three-year Second Chance Act grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) that included funding for a “Housing and Transition Planning Specialist” to lead the implementation of the Plan. As a result of the Plan’s recommendations and guidance, in December 2019, DYS released a statewide request for proposals (RFP) for Independent Living Programs. In addition, to continue the support of the consultants who authored the Plan and to assist in its implementation, including the hiring of the Housing and Transition Specialist and staff training, the Department is seeking funds from the MA Executive Office of Public Safety & Security (EOPSS). DYS considers the Plan a living document and will regularly review outcomes and make updates to the Plan as necessary.

If DYS can reduce or eliminate experiences of homelessness among youth exiting custody through these programs and recommendations, it can better ensure that these young people have the opportunity to become the thriving members of their communities that they were meant to be.



Acknowledgements



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The authors would like to acknowledge the many people that contributed to this Plan. Thank you to the DYS staff who shared their time, expertise, and commitment to improving the stability and well-being of young adults and their families. **Most importantly, thank you to the dozens of young people who participated in the focus groups, as this Plan could not have been written without their incredible wisdom, insight, and vulnerability. We are grateful for their generosity, humbled by their experiences, and hopeful that this Plan will lead to improved housing stability for those who come after them.**

**“Stability means
hope for the future”**

—DYS youth



Action-Plan

The following table expands each recommendation into a series of action steps. Each outcome was derived from identified needs and is accompanied with short (1-year), medium (1- to 3-year) and long-term (3- to 5-year) actions to address the need alongside designated ownership. Achievement of outcomes will rely on an implementation strategy that takes advantage of federal, state, and local resource availability. It is important to note that the order of the outcomes and strategies below does not necessarily prescribe an order in which they must be completed.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Enhance the DYS continuum of housing models and the policies and procedures that support them						
OUTCOME	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS AND LEAD*	TIMELINE			
			Short	Medium	Long	Ongoing
Outcome A. Each region has a full continuum of housing programs that support transitions to independence with clearly defined policies and protocols for transitions	1. Re-develop the current PILP model into a Transitional Housing model. Explore the addition of offsite TH programs in every region. TH will be separate from Track II and ILPs.	Operations Team; Dir of Purchase and Service*	X			
	2. Current TILPs are reconfigured into ILPs, with at least 3 off-site apartments in every region	Operations Team; Dir of Purchase and Service*	X			
	3. Explore the addition of more regional TH and ILP beds for young women	Operations Team*; Dir of Purchase and Service	X			
	4. Explore the creation of a TH-RRH (transitional housing to rapid re-housing) program as a pilot model for DYS-involved youth	Deputy Commissioner of Operations*; Operations Team; Dir of Purchase and Service	X			
	5. Investigate opportunities for DYS youth who are parents to have housing that would allow their children to live with them. Examine policy implications to have DYS funding services for youth's children.	General Counsel*; Director of Policy and Training; Operations Team			X	
	6. Evaluate the reason for transition out of the current Track II, Pre-ILP/ILP as well as policies and practices to determine which policies result in the most successful outcomes from the program	Director of Research*; Operation Team	X			
	7. In tandem with revision of housing programs, ensure developmentally appropriate expectations for Track II, TH, and ILPs including exploring the implementation of Trauma-Informed Consequences	Director of Residential Services*; Director of Clinical Services*; Operation Team	X			
Outcome B. DYS Foster Care contracts and placements are systematically designed to support and prepare youth for independence	1. Evaluate community contracts current training and expectations of foster care placements with attention paid to differences between youth under 18 and over 18	Community Operations Monitor*; Operation Team	X			
	2. Monitor practice and procedures of foster care contracts	Community Operations Monitor*; Operation Team	X			
	3. Assess current utilization of foster homes in each region; consider rebranding foster care for over 18/ YES youth as "host homes"	Director of Purchase and Service*; Operations Team		X		

RECOMMENDATION 1: Enhance the DYS continuum of housing models and the policies and procedures that support them

OUTCOME	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS AND LEAD*	TIMELINE			
			Short	Medium	Long	Ongoing
Outcome C: The Kinship placement process is clear, consistent, and supports permanent connections.	1. Assess current practice on kinship placements and possible regional differences	Director of Community operations*; Directors of Community Services	X			
	2. Based on assessment, develop, distribute, and monitor consistent policy and practice for kinship placements	Director of Policy and Training*; Operations Team; Directors of Community Services; General Council		X		
	3. Develop framework for extended family mapping/"family find" process to be conducted at intake	Director of Community operations*; Director of Clinical Services; Operations Team		X		
Outcome D. DYS supports families to increase their housing stability	1. DYS enhances parenting support with additional resources such as: developmentally appropriate expectations, family conflict resolution, and mediation skills	Director of Clinical Services*; Director of Community operations; Family Engagement Services		X		
	2. Ensure that all families have a DYS-contact who can communicate with them in their preferred language	Operations Team*				X
	3. Increase knowledge of community-based flexible funding resources to meet short-term financial needs of families	Housing Specialists; Family Engagement Specialists				X

RECOMMENDATION 2: Enhance DYS transition and discharge planning

Outcome A. An improved transition planning protocol to assesses and addresses long-term housing stability	1. Ensure that transition planning consistently begins at intake	Director Of Community Operations*; Directors of Community Services				X
	2. Ensure all Caseworkers assess housing stability at intake, and ensure that housing plans are consistently recorded and revisited at 90/60/30-day discharge planning meetings	Director Of Community Operations*; Directors of Community Services				X
	3. Present a full spectrum of housing options in the community, with accurate expectations of how long things will take to put in place -Include plans for relationship with children as appropriate -Include plans for undocumented families -Include plans for youth connected to gun charges	Caseworkers*; Directors of Community Services				X
	4. Ensure every transition plan includes at least one identified back-up housing plan in case the intended housing plan does not work out; these plans should include kinship options if available	Director Of Community Operations*; Directors of Community Services				X
	6. Include clear communication and support to navigate "Stay-away zones" in TP protocol	Caseworkers*; Directors of Community Services; General Council				X

RECOMMENDATION 2: Enhance DYS transition and discharge planning

OUTCOME	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS AND LEAD*	TIMELINE			
			Short	Medium	Long	Ongoing
Outcome B. Transition Planning protocol includes plans to improve other necessary outcomes for successful transition to adulthood	1. Consistently assess and address permanent connections, education, employment, and health and well-being	Director of Clinical Services*; Caseworkers; Directors of Community Services				X
	2. Explore the provision of additional vocational training programs	Assistance Commissioner for Program Services*		X		
	3. When appropriate, incorporate mental health and substance use treatment and community-based connections into discharge planning	Director of Clinical Services*; Caseworkers; Directors of Community Services				X
	4. Explore how to best connect youth to mentors, either through the creation of DYS-programs or through partner agencies	Assistant Commissioner for Program Services*		X		
Outcome C. DYS prepares youth with life skills necessary to obtain and maintain housing	1. Expand <i>Empower your Future</i> curriculum beyond education and employment to train youth in life skills content that will prepare them to obtain and maintain housing, including: budgeting, independent living, establishing or repairing credit history, and transportation	Assistant Director of Education*	X			
	2. Integrate expanded <i>Empower your Future</i> curriculum throughout the DYS housing and services continuum	Assistant Director of Education*	X			X
	3. Enhance tracking of client participation in life skills programming	Assistant Director of Education*	X			X
Outcome D. All youth committed to DYS custody, discharge DYS with a copy of their birth certificate, state REAL ID, social security card	1. Develop, distribute, and monitor consistent policy and practice for obtaining and storing vital documents	Director of Policy and Training*; Director of Community Operations; General Counsel;		X		
	2. At intake, begin work on acquiring original copies of youth's vital documents including: birth certificate, state ID, social security card, or necessary documentation support to improve residency status	Caseworkers*; Directors of Community Services				X
	3. Assess current practice and any logistical or liability challenges to DYS obtaining and storing original copies of vital documents	Director of Community Operations*; General Counsel; CFO	X			
	4. Designate a DYS Central Office point person for getting vital documents from other states/US territories/ countries	CFO*	X			
	5. Create MOUs with RMV/DOT to facilitate obtaining state IDs	General Counsel*		X		
	6. Create a DYS Central Office point person for getting vital documents from other states/US territories/ countries	General Counsel*				
Outcome E. DYS supports youth to mitigate their CORI	1. Ensure that Caseworkers are trained and understand their responsibility to direct youth on their rights and responsibilities in the areas of to expungement and sealing of their records including coaching youth on how to communicate during background checks	Director of Community Operations*; Directors of Community Services; Director of Policy and Training				X

RECOMMENDATION 3: Strengthen interagency and community partnerships to improve housing placements and supports

OUTCOME	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS AND LEAD*	TIMELINE			
			Short	Medium	Long	Ongoing
Outcome A. DYS establishes partnerships with community housing resources	1. Rework existing positions within community contracts to include a trained "housing specialist" to navigate housing challenges for individuals and families	Director of Community Operations*; Operations Team		X		
	2. Build partnerships with local housing authorities with the intention of developing communication channels to support youth, as deemed beneficial and appropriate upon reentry into the community	Housing Specialists*		X		X
	3. Establish partnership with MA Department of Housing and Community Development, to ultimately build partnerships with each CoC that may include the allocation of housing	Housing Specialists*; Operations Team; Directors of Community Services		X		X
	4. Establish partnerships with the multiple types of agencies listed in the Housing Guide, including: housing search organizations, Housing Consumer Education Centers, and Regional Youth providers	Housing Specialists*; Operations Team; Directors of Community Services		X		X
Outcome B. DYS enhances partnerships and communication with other state agencies	1. Examine current communication channels and partnerships with other state agencies...	Executive Team*		X		
	2. Strengthen partnerships with DESE, with particular focus on developing working relationships at the district-level with homeless liaisons	Director of Educational Services*; Assistant Director of Educational Services; DESE				X
	3. Strengthen partnerships with DHE, with particular focus on developing working relationships with community colleges and their Single Point of Contact ("SPOC")	Director of Educational Services*; Assistant Director of Educational Services; DHE				X
	4. Connect to regional "SOAR" Specialists who can provide specialized assistance, including fast-tracking with SSI/SSDI applications	Assistant Commissioner for Program Services*				X

RECOMMENDATION 4: Address Systemic Challenges within DYS that impact housing outcomes

OUTCOME	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS AND LEAD*	TIMELINE			
			Short	Medium	Long	Ongoing
Outcome A. DYS systematically collects housing data at intake and discharge	1. Develop and implement assessment to be used at intake to assess youth for housing instability (risk and experience)	Director of Community Operations; Housing Specialists; Caseworkers	X			X
	2. Develop and implement assessment to be used at discharge to assess youth for housing stability	Director of Community Operations; Housing Specialists; Caseworkers	X			X
Outcome B. Department-wide training allows staff to understand, identify and address Housing Instability	1. Provide training that addresses the challenge of inconsistent awareness and perceived responsibility to address youth homelessness by current staff, including training on the newly created Housing Guide	Director of Community Operations*; Director of Policy and Training*		X		X
	2. In conjunction with newly created Housing Specialist positions (See Recommendation 3: Outcome A. Action 1) train family engagement specialists on state and regionally based family programs and supports, including resources and practices to support families dealing with eviction and relocation due to safety concerns; and resources to support LGBTQ+ identified youth	Director of Community Operations*; Housing Specialists; Family Engagement Specialists		X		X
Outcome C. DYS builds off existing racial equity work by improving staff's ability to identify and address issues of disparity and equity as it relates to housing stability	1. Assess whether DYS provides connections to services and housing at equitable rates and achieves equitable outcomes for youth across races and ethnicities	Director of Research*			X	
	2. Assess whether youth experience different housing outcomes due to how DYS policies are enforced or enacted	Director of Research*; Director of Community Operations			X	
	3. Continue to train staff to identify and address racial disparities perpetuated by processes or barriers within DYS systems, services, and individual interactions	Director of Community Operations; Director of Policy and Training; Deputy Commissioner of Operations		X		X
Outcome D. DYS incorporates youth voice and feedback into its decision making	Action 1. Evaluate and create feedback mechanisms in DYS programs and the system as a whole	Operations Team*		X		



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Numbers and Characteristics

Prevalence of Family and Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness

Prevalence estimates describe the size and scope of homeless populations and are often based on point in time (PIT) methods which count the number of individuals and households experiencing homelessness at a given point in time, or on a typical day. Unfortunately, the typical PIT counting methods only capture a portion of the total number of individuals or families experiencing homelessness. Currently, the PIT count required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) only count “literal homelessness” and do not include unaccompanied youth or families fleeing or attempting to flee dangerous living arrangements, those who are sleeping night to night between different homes and apartments (e.g., couch-surfing), those sleeping consistently in spaces too small or inappropriately configured to meet basic needs (e.g., doubled up), and those who do not want to be, or cannot be, identified by volunteers during these annual counts. In spite of these shortcomings, PIT counts provide useful data for tracking annual and geographical trends. Presented below are both national data and Massachusetts state level data for families with children and unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

Families with Children: Nationally, the 2017 HUD PIT count found that homeless individuals in families with children comprised one-third of the total homeless population. On average, a homeless family consisted of three people. Nationally, approximately 17% of homeless families with children were headed by a young adult head of household. More than half of all homeless families with children were in four states: New York (29% or 52,113 people), California (12% or 21,522 people), Massachusetts (6% or 11,298 people), and Florida (5% or 9,422 people).

Massachusetts experienced the largest national decline in homeless families from 2016 to 2017, with a 14% decrease (1,876 fewer people). However, even though Massachusetts experienced a decline this year, over the past ten years (2007 to 2017) the number of homeless people in families increased by 65% (4,463 people), an increase that is among the largest in the nation. Massachusetts is a “right to shelter” state for families that may account for the large increase in new homeless families. The “right to shelter” is a mandate that requires a state or municipality to provide temporary emergency shelter to every man, woman and child who is eligible for services, every night.

Preliminary data from the 2018 HUD PIT count identified 3,624 families with children and pregnant women in the MA Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter program, totaling over 11,000 individuals. Families also comprise more than half of the total homeless population in Massachusetts, making it one of only two states (New York is the other) in which families comprise more than 50% of the shelter population.

Unaccompanied Young Adults: Nationally, the HUD 2017 PIT count found 40,799 unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 25, representing just over seven percent of the total homeless population and eleven percent of people experiencing homelessness as individuals. The majority of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in this count were men or boys (62% or 25,131 people). Youth under age 18 are slightly more likely to be unsheltered (56%) than unaccompanied homeless youth age 18 to 24 (54%). In Massachusetts, the 2017 PIT count reported 469 unaccompanied youth in Massachusetts, or 7.6% of people experiencing homelessness as individuals; and of these young people, 62 (13%) were unsheltered, and 57 individuals were under the age of 18.

Nationally, the 2017 HUD PIT count reported that 25% of unaccompanied homeless youth are Hispanic or Latino, and this rate is even higher among unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth (31%). Nearly half of unaccompanied homeless youth are white (49%), about one-third (34%) are African American, and 10% Multiracial youth. While the HUD PIT data for Massachusetts has not been disaggregated for young adults, overall demographics (that include individuals, youth, and families) are as follows: 37% Hispanic or Latino, 33% African American, 60% White, and 8% all individuals experiencing homelessness identified as Multiracial. By comparison, in the MA Youth Count, Black, Latinx, and Multiracial respondents constituted over 55% of the respondents identified as homeless but only 46% of all youth surveyed. White respondents made up 31% of all youth surveyed and 27% of those experiencing homelessness. The MA statewide Youth Count has a different counting methodology than the HUD PIT count, most notably casting a broader net of youth to survey, which may account for the differences above.

In addition to point-in-time counts, annual estimates are also important for understanding the unaccompanied YYA population because these numbers 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 rather than chronic. In 2017, Voices of Youth Count --an initiative of Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, released a groundbreaking study on unaccompanied youth and young adults who were homeless in America: *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*. This national research effort conducted more than 4,000 in-person surveys of youth across 22 counties and estimated that over the course of a year 10% of 18 to 24 year olds and 1 in 30 of youth under the age of 18 experienced homelessness.

Prevalence of Youth Involved with the Justice System Experiencing Homelessness

Nationally: Voices of Youth Count found that 44% of youth experiencing homelessness had been in juvenile detention, jail, or prison and nearly 62% reported that they had been arrested at some point in their lives. Additionally, Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented in both the juvenile justice system and among YYA experiencing homelessness.,,

Massachusetts: In 2017, Massachusetts conducted its annual statewide youth count and 26.4% of YYA experiencing homelessness reported that they had been detained in a juvenile or adult corrections facility. These young people with juvenile or criminal justice system involvement also had an elevated likelihood of having slept in a place not meant for habitation the night before the survey, and they were also less likely than their homeless peers without justice-system involvement to utilize formal housing supports. The percent of respondents from the following CoCs exceeded the state rate of having ever been detained in the juvenile or criminal justice systems: Boston (32.3%); Hampden (28.8%); Lowell (29.6%); Lynn (33.3%); New Bedford (45.8%); and Three County (27.8%). Additionally, respondents with justice system involvement differ substantially from others experiencing homelessness in that 74% reported as male and 16% female, as compared to 40.3% female and 45.1% male of other YYA experiencing homelessness.

Appendix B: Interview Guide



Interview Guide for DYS Regional Directors of Community Services November 2018

OBJECTIVE:

There are 4 subpopulations of Youth and Young Adults (YYA) DYS works with that experience housing instability and homelessness:

- a. Unaccompanied Minors (youth under 18)- who cannot return to their family
- b. Unaccompanied Young adults (over 18)- who cannot return to their family
- c. YYA in Families (can be under or over 18)
- d. Pregnant and parenting female YYA

We wish to better understand how DYS staff currently understand and provide housing support to young people in the 4 above categories, including:

- a. **Awareness** of available resources
- b. **Availability** of resources (including existence, wait times)
- c. **Appropriateness** of resources
- d. **Exclusion** from resources (because of CORI etc)

I. Subpopulations and Available Resources

*challenges may include: individual, systemic, resource, and policy

1. Generally speaking, how aware are staff of the issues around homelessness and housing instability? (housing instability =couch-surfing, doubled up, etc)
How often does it come up for:
 - a. DYS youth under 18?
 - b. over 18?
 - c. YYA in families experiencing housing instability?
 - d. Pregnant or parenting YYA in custody?
2. Do staff notice differences in housing instability among YYA of color (including: YYA who are over 18/under 18/ in families etc.?)
3. Assessment: During transition planning, are staff assessing for housing stability, or are they only dealing with housing crisis situations at discharge?
4. Data: How/ where is data on housing instability captured? is it captured differently for different populations? (ie - YES Youth vs. active DYS Youth)
5. Awareness of resources: Where do staff go to for housing and/or homelessness resources and help?
Do they go different places/ use different resources for:
 - i. DYS youth under 18?
 - ii. over 18?
 - iii. YYA in families experiencing housing instability?
 - iv. Pregnant or parenting YYA in custody?

6. Under what circumstances are you/your staff connecting to the following:
 - a. DCF
 - b. Education: Homeless liaisons or college SPOCs
 - c. WIOA youth services
 - d. DMH
 - e. local Homeless youth resources

7. Accessibility and exclusion of resources: What have been the barriers to accessing housing resources?
 - a. DYS youth under 18?
 - b. over 18?
 - c. YYA in families experiencing housing instability?
 - d. Pregnant or parenting YYA in custody?

8. Under what circumstances are you/your staff referring to the following types of housing programs?:
 - a. Independent Living programs
 - b. Scattered site apartments
 - c. Group home settings

9. Challenges: What additional types of challenges do DYS YYA face with obtaining and maintaining stable housing? Are the challenges different for:
 - a. DYS youth under 18?
 - b. over 18?
 - c. YYA in families experiencing housing instability?
 - d. Pregnant or parenting YYA in custody?

10. Are there young people who are staying in custody simply because they have no other place to go? If so, can you find any similarities among these youth?

11. In your experience, are there many DYS involved young fathers wishing to be reunified/ housed with their children? If so, how does case management differ for these young men?

II. Moving Forward

1. After thinking through these subpopulations, what additional resources or support would be helpful to prevent and/or support DYS youth with housing instability and/or experiencing homelessness?
 - a. a resource guide
 - b. improved connections with the community
 - c. improved connections with other state agencies (DMH, DCF, DHCD, BSAS, etc)

Appendix C: Staff Survey



Introduction Statement:

We are working to develop a strategic plan to prevent homelessness and provide stable housing for young people served by DYS. In order to better understand the experiences and perspectives of DYS staff, we have created a survey. This 24 question survey will take about 10 minutes and is totally confidential. Your answers should be based on your experiences and insights, and do not require any specific data or knowledge.

In the survey, when “housing instability” or “homelessness” is discussed, we are referring to any time a young person does not have a safe, stable, or reliable place to stay. This includes couch surfing, bouncing from one friend or family to another, staying in a shelter, on the streets, or in a place not meant for human habitation (car, etc.). Additionally, we use the term “YYA” to refer to “youth and young adults” - any young person between the ages of 14- 24.

Thank you in advance for your time to complete this - we believe it will help provide better supports and services to DYS youth struggling with housing instability.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Ayala at ayala.livny.consulting@gmail.com

Survey Questions

- 1) What is your current role?
 - case worker
 - district manager
 - directors of community services
 - director of operations
 - regional director
 - youth service coordinator
 - Family engagement specialist
 - Community clinical coordinator
 - Mass Start Worker
 - Community contract manager
 - Other _____

- 2) How long have you been working with DYS?
 - 0-2 years
 - 2-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 10+ years

- 3) What region are you in?
 - Western
 - Central
 - Northeastern
 - Metro
 - Southeastern
 - Central office
 - Other _____

- 4) Overall, in your estimation, what percentage of the DYS youth experience homelessness or housing instability (either with their families or independently when they leave DYS services)?
- 0-10%
 - 10-25%
 - 25 - 50%
 - 50-75%
 - 75-100%
- 5) Of the DYS Youth who struggle with housing stability, what are the most common reasons? (check all that apply)
- Family rejection
 - Family's housing jeopardized by client (ie - too old to be on the lease, client CORI, etc)
 - Family housing instability
 - Unable to afford housing independently
 - Do not possess enough independent living skills
 - Lack of resources/housing options
 - Other: _____

Resources:

- 6) When you have a DYS client who is struggling with housing stability, how do you know where to turn for resources for them? (check all that apply)
- I call the resources that I am already familiar with
 - I ask a colleague (if yes, what role is that colleague in _____)
 - I contact our Youth Service Coordinator or other community contracted staff
 - I look at a resource guide (if yes, which one: _____)
 - I have no idea what to do
 - n/a I do not work directly with youth
- 7) What are the most common resources you use when faced with a DYS client with housing instability/homelessness? (check all that apply)
- DCF
 - DYS Foster Care
 - Track II programs
 - DYS Independent Living Programs
 - Community programs specifically for young adults experiencing homelessness (ie - DIAL-Self, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, LUK etc)
 - Community programs for general adult homelessness
 - Local Non-profit organizations
 - Another state agency (ie- DTA, DHCD, DMH)
 - Community homeless shelter
 - Extended Family
 - Keep them in DYS custody
 - Other _____ (please specify)
- 8) When you find a housing resource or program that is a good fit for your client facing housing instability, what is the average length of time from initial contact to entering that program/ getting housed? (pick one)
- Immediately
 - Within two weeks
 - 2 - 4 weeks
 - 1 - 3 months
 - 3+ months
 - Wait times are generally too long and client doesn't get into program

- 9) While waiting for a spot in a non-DYS housing program to open up, where do Youth (both committed and YES Youth) usually stay? (choose all that apply)
- Stay in DYS
 - Residential placement
 - Track 2
 - Foster Home
 - Independent Living Program
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Streets
 - Shelter
 - Unknown
- 10) How helpful would the following be: (1-5 scale for each, 1= not helpful at all, 3 = neutral 5= extremely helpful)
- An improved resource guide (possibly online)
 - More Family Engagement Specialists
 - Better connections with Housing Authorities
 - Better connections with other State Agencies (DCF, DMH, DHCD, DTA)
 - More of the current DYS resources so wait times are shorter (ILPs, Foster Care etc)
 - More geographic distribution of current resources (ie - more ILPs in my region)
 - Creating totally new kinds programs
 - Other: _____

Transition Planning:

- 11) How often do you use the DYS "Discharge Inventory" form? (5 pt scale = never, sometimes, always)
- 12) How much do you agree with the following statements: (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree)
- a) The current structure of transition planning puts enough emphasis on creating a plan for housing stability
 - b) The current structure of transition planning offers enough guidance for creating a plan for housing stability
- 13) What would help create more realistic or sustainable housing plans during transition planning? (check all that apply):
- More questions about housing on the Discharge Inventory
 - As part of Discharge Inventory, asking the youth to determine a back-up housing plan in case their stated plan doesn't work out
 - More questions about family housing stability (risk of eviction, homelessness, family inability to pay rent, living doubled up, etc.)
 - More questions about how likely youth is able to stay in housing for over a month
 - A more thorough kinship assessment
 - Other: (please write in)

Working with DCF

- 14) Have you worked with DCF to address DYS client needs? y/n
- 15) What percentage of your Youth are currently connected or are trying to connect to DCF?
- 0-10%
 - 10-25%
 - 25 - 50%
 - 50-75%
 - 75-100%
 - n/a - I do not work directly with youth

16) What are the most significant barriers you face in working with DCF? (check all that apply)

- I don't know who to contact
- I am unclear what DCF's role is or what they could offer to DYS youth
- They seem to not want to work with my Youth
- DCF closes cases once youth is committed to DYS
- Other: _____

Community Connections

In this section, we are trying to assess how connected DYS staff are with community-based programs that may offer support and resources around housing stability. For the following questions, we will list organizations/ types of agencies and ask some questions about your connection to them.

17) **McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison** (point person in schools/ school district who works with students experiencing homelessness - sometimes this is a specific position, sometimes it is an additional responsibility given to someone in the schools).

- a) I am aware of the programs and services offered (1= not aware 3 =neutral 5= very aware)
- b) I am connected to this program (1= not connected 3= neutral 5 = very connected)
- c) This program is willing to work with DYS Youth (1= not willing 3 = neutral 5 = very willing)

Comments:

18) **Community Programs working with young adults experiencing homelessness** (there are a number of programs, some funded through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services that specifically provide services to YYA experiencing homelessness. Some examples include: Haven Project, Tempo, Gandara, DIAL-SELF, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, LUK etc).

- d) I am aware of the programs and services offered (1= not aware 3 =neutral, 5= very aware)
- e) I am connected to this/these programs (1= not connected 3= neutral, 5 = very connected)
- f) This program is willing to work with DYS Youth (1= not willing 3 = neutral 5 = very willing)

Comment:

19) **Community Programs focusing on adult (18+) homelessness** (this includes emergency shelters, housing programs, and housing search organizations).

- g) I am aware of the programs and services offered (1= not aware 3 =neutral 5= very aware)
- h) I am connected to this/these programs (1= not connected 3= neutral 5 = very connected)
- i) This program is willing to work with DYS Youth (1= not willing 3 = neutral 5 = very willing)

Comment:

Vital Documents

20) How often do you have problems obtaining a client's vital documents? (1 = not a problem 3= neutral, 5= very often a problem)

- a) Social Security Card
- b) Birth Certificate
- c) Photo ID

21) What are the biggest barriers connected to a client's vital documents? (rank?)

- Safe storage of documents
- Getting documents from out-of-state
- Getting documents from out-of-country
- Getting documents from parents
- Not having original documents (when a copy is not sufficient to meet the needs, ie - most jobs require an original social security card)

Special Populations

There are some populations that may face additional challenges finding and sustaining stable housing.

22) How well do the current DYS-housing resources work for the following subpopulations?

1=Need something totally different 3= neutral 5= when the resources are available, they work well

- i) Females
- ii) Parenting/ pregnant females
- iii) Undocumented YYA
- iv) LGBTQ YYA
- v) Youthful offenders
- vi) YYA with sex offender charges

Other:

23) Is there anything else we should know as we help DYS to better support youth in care to obtain and sustain stable housing? _____(write in) _____

Appendix D: Focus group protocol- youth

DYS Client Focus Group Protocol



OBJECTIVES:

- > Answer the question: “What should DHS do to improve housing stability outcomes for DHS Youth? (until and past the age of 22)”
- > Get quotes that represent the experience of YYA in DHS
- > Deepen understanding on
 - Obstacles to housing stability
 - Transition Planning
 - Role of vital documents
 - What would help or improve DHS YYA access to housing support
 - Client identified system gaps
- > Obtain information necessary to craft recommendations

BRING:

- > Stipends and stipend receipts
- > Big post its
- > Markers (little and big)
- > Contact sheets
- > Post-facilitation questions
- > Clipboard and paper for note taking
- > Recording device
- > Name tags
- > Snacks

DYS Client Focus Groups

- I. **Introduction** – who we are and why we are doing this
- We are working with DHS to help figure out what DHS can do differently to help young people who are involved with DHS have and keep stable housing.
 - When we talk about “stable housing” we mean a place that people can stay at safely and predictably for a long period of time - not couch surfing, not hopping from place to place, not worried that you’ll be asked to leave at any moment -- stable, safe, and predictable.
 - Introduce our personal backgrounds - working with YYA experiencing homelessness & housing instability, helping to write plans for the state and city of Boston to prevent and end youth homelessness
 - Looking forward to getting their insight and feedback today

Individual introductions –

- Name, pronoun, and the Question of the Day
- Group agreements – ask them first what they need to have a good conversation, then offer these as suggestions (if they haven’t been mentioned already)
 - no judgment
 - confidentiality
 - no interrupting
 - respectful language
 - speak from your own experiences (use “I” statements) and share only what you feel comfortable sharing
 - nothing will offend us (the facilitators) – please give us honest feedback.

- Please take care of yourself
- Timing – our job is to have a good conversation and get you out of here on time – to do that we may have to cut you off to keep the conversation moving. Please don't take it personally!
- We will be recording – just for clarification of notes purposes. Is that okay? Your name will never be connected with what you say – it is all anonymous

II. Introductory Questions

Just to start the conversation —

- What have you noticed or see in terms of people involved with DYS and housing?

III. Systems Discussion

- The purpose of this conversation is to deepen our understanding of housing stability - what impacts it, what it impacts, and what some solutions might be.
 1. What does "Housing **Stability**" mean to you? What does it look like?
 2. What are the **barriers** to housing stability? What gets in the way?
 3. What are the **effects** of housing instability? What happens to people when they don't have a stable place to stay? What do people do when they don't have a stable place to stay?
 4. What are the possible **solutions**? What could DYS do to ensure folks coming out of the system have a safe and stable place to stay?

IV. Systems Experience

Next we are going to ask some questions that will ask you to reflect a bit on your transition planning experiences with your DYS caseworkers

- **Transition Planning** - we know that exiting out of DYS services can be both an exciting and stressful time. We know some folks, like yourselves, sign on for additional support through the YES program until they are 22. And then, in theory, you're an "adult" and just go out into the world. We know that not everyone actually has stable housing when they leave the system. We would like to talk a bit about how the transition from getting DYS services to being on your own could better support stable housing.
 - 1) Tell us about your planning to exit DYS services. What are the conversations (or paperwork?) that are happening as you are preparing to leave DYS?
 - Can you tell us specifically about the conversations involving housing? (Were/are there conversations about housing? How did/do the conversations help you think about housing options when you exit?)
 - Do you think you are effectively set up/being set up for housing stability right now? If so, how? ? if not, why not?
 - What do you think would help you and others like you be more prepared to transition from DYS to stable housing?
 - Do you feel like there is support if your housing plan doesn't work out?
 - do you have a Plan B. C and D?/How have you thought about back-up plans?
 - Resources: how have you gone about finding housing? what resources do you use? What information do you wish you had?
 - What information do you need/would you like to have about a program before going there? (we previously heard YYA said "this program isn't for people like me")

Role of vital documents - next we want to ask some questions about Vital Documents (ID, Soc security card, birth certificate etc.).

- Have you had any trouble getting or keeping your vital documents such as your ID, SS card, birth certificate?
- If yes - have these difficulties impacted your ability to get or stay stably housed? If so, how? (if they need prompting, --for example - you need Social Security Card original to get a job; need a job to pay rent -- if you can't get or keep your original Social Security Card it's hard to keep housing)
- How has your case worker been helpful in getting your vital documents?
- In terms of vital documents, is there anything else that would have been helpful to you or you think would be helpful to others?

V. Other Questions:

- What is something you wish people understood about YYA with experience in the DYS system?
- If we could get DYS to do one or two things that would really help young people involved with DYS get and keep stable housing, what would they be?

VI. Conclusion and Evaluation

- Thank you for your insight, time, effort and energy
- We are going to take all of this information, merge it with the information from focus groups all across the state and then use it to inform the recommendations to prevent homelessness among DYS-involved youth
- If you are interested in looking over the recommendations, feel free to keep in touch (pass around contact sheet). This information will be kept totally separately from the focus group information and will remain confidential.
- Plus/ Delta Evaluation
- Go around the room - each person share one thing they liked about the group, one thing they would change

Appendix E: Focus Group protocol- Staff



DYS Staff Housing Focus Group Protocol

OBJECTIVES:

- > Answer the question: “What should DHS do to improve housing stability outcomes for DHS Youth? (until and past the age of 22)”
- > Get quotes that represent the experience of DHS staff
- > Deepen understanding on
 - Obstacles to housing stability
 - Transition Planning
 - Role of vital documents
 - What would help or improve DHS YYA access to housing support
- > Obtain information necessary to craft recommendations

BRING:

- Sign in sheets
- Big post its
- Markers
- Contact sheets
- Post-facilitation questions
- Clipboard and paper for note taking
- Clipboard and worksheet for group activity (4 groups)
- Recording device
- Name tags
- Snacks

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

What:

- we are working with DHS to help figure out what DHS can do differently to help young people who are involved with DHS have and keep stable housing.

Define stable housing:

- when we talk about “stable housing” we mean a place that people can stay at safely and predictably for a long period of time - not couch surfing, not hopping from place to place, not worried that you’ll be asked to leave at any moment -- stable, safe, and predictable.

Introduce our personal backgrounds –

- working with YYA experiencing homelessness & housing instability, helping to write plans for the state and city of boston to prevent and end youth homelessness

looking forward to getting their insight and feedback today

Individual introductions –

- name, pronoun, and the Question of the Day
- **Group agreements** – ask them first what they need to have a good conversation, then offer these as suggestions (if they haven’t been mentioned already)
 - > no judgment
 - > confidentiality

- > no interrupting
- > respectful language
- > speak from your own experiences (use “I” statements) and share only what you feel comfortable sharing
- > nothing will offend us (the facilitators) – please give us honest feedback.
- > Please take care of yourself
- > Timing – our job is to have a good conversation and get you out of here on time – to do that we may have to cut you off to keep the conversation moving. Please don’t take it personally!
- We will be recording – just for clarification of notes purposes. Is that okay? Your name will never be connected with what you say – it is all anonymous

II. Activity – understanding Housing Stability: Meaning, Barriers, Effects, Solutions

Divide the room into 2 or 3 groups (groups of 2 or 3 individuals)

- Each group gets clipboard, worksheets, pen

We want to understand the differences in housing needs between YYA receiving DYS services that are under 18 and those that are over 18. We are going to do four rounds – each round you will be given a topic, and we want your group to come up with as many descriptors as possible. These will be “lightning rounds” where we will ask you to think quickly and creatively. We will essentially be asking about 4 topics – what does housing stability look like, what are the barriers to stability, what are the effects of instability, and what are some solutions that DYS can implement. We are asking about YYA who are not able to simply go back with their families of origin.

1) TOPIC ONE, ROUND ONE: 6 min

*“What does **housing stability** look like or mean for YYA receiving services from DYS?”*

Debrief: Go around the room, each group listing one item at a time (to maximize participation).

2) TOPIC ONE, ROUND TWO: 6 min

“What are the barriers to housing stability for YYA receiving services?”

Debrief: Go around the room, each group listing one item at a time (to maximize participation).

3) TOPIC ONE, ROUND THREE: 6 min

“What are the effects of housing instability on YYA receiving services (what are consequences to them AND what do they do to try and get their needs met)?”

Debrief: Go around the room, each group listing one item at a time (to maximize participation).

4) TOPIC ONE, ROUND FOUR: 7 min

“What are the possible solutions to housing stability for YYA receiving services that DYS could implement?”

Debrief: Go around the room, each group listing one item at a time (to maximize participation).

III. Systems Questions

Thank you for that. Next we’re going to go a little deeper and ask some questions about some of the current practices that affect housing stability for DYS youth.

A. Transition Planning

From the survey, we heard that:

- the Discharge Inventory Form is not often used (about 45% said that they used it “never” or “not often”.)
- About 1/3 of respondents felt that the current structure of transition planning doesn’t offer enough guidance for creating a plan for housing stability
- Creating more realistic or sustainable housing plans would be helped by
 - > Asking youth to determine a back up housing plan
 - > Asking more questions about family housing stability
- We also heard that the problem wasn’t so much in the planning, but rather in the lack of resources to connect youth to in order ensure stable housing upon discharge

1. *Does this sound right? Does it reflect your experience? What more do we need to understand about the challenges of Transition Planning?*
2. *If a "Housing Stability Discharge Guide" were to be created to support staff in working with Youth to ensure housing stability, what would you want included in it?*
 - a. *What do you think would make it actually usable and helpful?*
(if needed, can prompt that it would include a brief housing stability assessment, questions to prompt creating a "Housing Plan" with the youth, and a guide to accessing local resources – resources could include under/over 18, disabilities, SUD, regional contacts)
3. *What are the most common referrals you make now for your Youth in regards to housing stability?*
4. *If you refer a young person to a shelter (which is not ideal but sometimes is the only option), what does that look like? How do you present it to the client?*
5. *What else would support better transition planning? What else do we need to know/ understand?*

B. Vital Documents

We know that having original copies of vital documents (ID, Social Security card, Birth Certificate) can be very important in ensuring stability (such as getting jobs, housing applications etc.) for Youth.

From the survey, we heard that:

- Getting documents (especially SS cards) when parent is not cooperative is very difficult
- Getting documents from other countries (and then translating them) is very difficult
- Getting documents without proof of residential address is very difficult
- Storing the original documents is difficult

6. *What are some suggestions you have for how DYS could improve or better support this process? (may do in small groups or large group conversation)*

C. Independent Living Programs (ILPs)

A suggestion that came up consistently in the survey was the desire for more ILPs.

7. *Who do ILPs currently serve well?*
8. *Who do ILPs not serve well?*
9. *If there were more ILPs, what would happen? Would it impact the use of DYS Foster Care placements?*
10. *What happens when youth age out of ILPs? How do ILPs set them up for stable housing post DYS? (when they turn 22)*

D. General

We have covered a lot of ground today. Our last questions is both broad and specific –

11. *If DYS could do one or two things to help ensure housing stability for DYS Youth, what would you suggest? (go around the room, each person gives suggestions)*

IV. Conclusion and Evaluation

- Thank you for your insight, time, effort and energy
- We are going to take all of this information, merge it with the information from focus groups all across the state and then use it to inform the recommendations to prevent homelessness among DYS-involved youth
- If you are interested in looking over the recommendations, feel free to keep in touch (pass around contact sheet). This information will be kept totally separately from the focus group information and will remain confidential.
- Plus/ Delta Evaluation
 - Go around room - each person share one thing they liked about the group, one thing they would change

Appendix F: Family Advisory Council workshop questions



Small group discussion

Groups of 3 or 4, with note-taker (ideally: each group has one family member, one staff)

1. What are the ways involvement with DYS impacts housing? How has involvement been helpful? Unhelpful? (10 min)
2. What are the effects of unstable housing? (10 min)

REPORT BACK on Q 1 + 2

1. What are some suggestions or recommendations you would make to DYS for how to improve housing stability for DYS Youth? (10 min)
 - a. their responsibility is to the client. by default, often improving family stability improves client stability- but the client is the focus

REPORT BACK on Q3

Next Steps

- A. Alignment (or not) with findings from staff/ client Focus groups
- B. Next steps
 - Discuss next steps for this project

Q&A

Meeting Evaluation

Appendix G: Housing Models



This appendix presents some of the models that exist in the US for providing housing to young adults experiencing housing instability and homelessness. Each model can be implemented in many different ways and in many different forms, including differences in eligibility, length of stay, expectations, and exit processes. This appendix is intended to give DYS staff an overview of various youth housing models to inform future conversations.

Host Homes:

What is it: Host home models are formal or informal networks that focus on a collaborative approach to addressing housing instability between service providers and individual community members. Service providers or community organizations perform outreach to identify and recruit appropriate hosts within their community with the capacity to house clients for a finite period of time, while the client receives case management and service supports.

How it works: Service providers recruit volunteers to act as hosts that are able to offer shelter, food, and community supports. Effective host home model placements are reliant on youth choice and agency in the host selection process. Configurations range from informal faith-based, or community networks to more formalized service provider coalitions and organizations. Hosts are screened, trained, evaluated and resourced (monetarily or via network support) prior to hosting. Youth and young adult participants are responsible to case managers, as opposed to hosts, for their personal objectives, expectations and transition planning. Host home models are flexible and can be used as emergency crisis housing, transitional housing or as a supplement to family reengagement services.

Who is it for: This model works well for clients transitioning from foster care, special sub-populations and youth in need of short term stabilization support to transition to independent living or longer term housing placements. It can be particularly effective for younger clients, who operate well in a “home-like” environment with more familial dynamics.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Key distinctions of the host home model include a focus on positive youth development and relationship building, adult mentorship, cost effectiveness and require formal relationships with schools, child welfare, juvenile justice and other systems to run successfully. Host home models create positive client relationships with adult mentors while maintaining their connection to both community and services. Host homes offer a short-term response to crisis or temporary stability for clients in their transition to longer term housing placements.

For more information on Host Homes, see:

<https://www.pointsourceyouth.org/host-homes/>

<https://www.seattlemca.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/Host%20Home%20Program%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>

Transitional Housing:

What is it: Transitional Housing models are programs that offer young people housing for a finite time period while preparing them for independent living. This period usually lasts from 12-24 months, allowing time for clients to stabilize and plan their transition to independent living with the support of ongoing, collaborative case management. Transitional Housing models generally include conditions around budgeting and saving money, employment or educational goals, and participation in case management or substance use treatment services.

How it works: Transitional housing models offer stable housing, supplemented with additional wrap around services. These services include, but are not limited to case management, basic needs and groceries, mental health services, referrals and peer support networks. Youth and young adults using transitional housing focus on learning independent living skills, maintaining education or employment, while addressing other barriers or concerns they may have before being ready to transition to fully independent living. This model works by offering specific and

individualized care to youth and young adults through a variety of housing configurations ranging from dorm-style living to scattered site shared and single units. This model allows for a wide array of flexibility and supervision based on the needs and developmental stages of the youth and young adults.

Who is it for: Transitional housing models are highly effective for youth and young adults who belong to vulnerable subpopulations and transition aged youth. Transitional housing is also a model that works for youth and young adults who are likely to be able to transition to fully independent living with the proper supports. Ultimately, this model is a good fit for young people who are unlikely to have long-term involvement with social services after exiting housing instability.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Key distinctions of transitional housing models include flexible housing and supervision configurations, strong community-based exit planning and early supports to transition youth to independent living that focuses on the informed choice of the client. Clients are participants in the program design, objectives and rules.

For additional information on Transitional Housing, see:

Ending Youth Homelessness Guidebook Series: Promising Program Models

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Promising-Program-Models.pdf>

https://www.aliforneycenter.org/_aliforney/assets/File/TILHandbook2017.doc.pdf

Independent Living Programs

What is it: Independent Living Programs provide housing for young adults in non-supervised, minimally-restricted, furnished apartments where they can begin building the necessary skills for independent living. During their time-limited residence, youth receive services based on their unique needs. Usually, residents are required to engage in Life Skills workshops and classes, and meet with a Case Manager to track progress towards self-sufficiency. In this environment, young people make independent choices and have the opportunity to learn from mistakes, while still experiencing a safety-net of support.

How it works: ILP programs can take on many different forms and formats. Often, the agency holds the lease for the apartment and the young adults pays the agency “rent” of 30% of their income; in some programs, the rental fees are put into a savings account and returned to the participant when they are ready to move out. Sometimes, apartments are shared with other clients in the program; sometimes, the units are studios or one-bedrooms.

Who is it for: ILPs are usually targeted at young adults with the desire to live independently and who possess some basic skills that can be supported by non-residential staff. Some programs assess “readiness” for an ILP by looking at money management experience, education/employment stability, ability to take care of daily needs including hygiene, cooking, making and keeping appointments, and the young adult’s ability to cope with stressful situations. ILPs provide more privacy than Transitional Housing models, and given this, some ILPs will not serve young adults with significant substance use, mental health, or developmental disabilities.

Distinguishing Characteristics: ILPS offer more support than RRH programs, and are intentionally designed to support the transition to independent, self-sufficient living.

For more information on Independent Living Programs, see:

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/youth_homelessness.pdf

Rapid Rehousing:

What is it: Rapid Rehousing models are programs that offer immediate access to developmentally appropriate housing with low-barriers for program eligibility and no pre-conditions for program participation. This can often look like clients living in scattered-site apartments, with or without roommates. Rapid Rehousing offers an enormous amount of flexibility for clients, with elective but persistent engagement strategies around financial assistance, case

management, and mental health and substance use supports. Case management capacity is higher, offering more intensive and consistent support based on the client's developmental needs, focusing on independent living skills, lease and financial obligations, and service coordination as needed or requested.

How it works: The three core components of RRH are 1) housing identification, through relationships with landlords and housing authorities, 2) financial assistance with rental and move in costs, and 3) tailored client chosen case management services. Wrap around services and financial assistance are generally time-limited, with the goal being to transition clients into their own market price leases and out of services. RRH program models match clients with landlords in the community and create partnerships to support the transition to permanent housing. Case management and supports are reassessed with clients to ensure goals are being met and to support the client's ability to gain independence over time, avoiding long term service dependency.

Who is it for: This model works best for older young adults that are likely to transition and be able to sustain permanent housing after program support, in addition to parenting youth and young adults. This is a flexible option for young people who will likely transition out of dependency on social services. This is also an effective option for youth leaving time allotted transitional housing programs. Rapid Rehousing can also be used as a crisis intervention, particularly for young people who need light touch supports to regain independence.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Key distinctions of Rapid Rehousing models are that clients have choice in their housing, and it uses the Housing First approach with low barrier access to stable housing and centers client choice in service participation. Rapid Rehousing has proven to be effective in both rural and urban communities, is more cost effect than transitional housing and can be used as a crisis intervention. Rapid Rehousing supports client autonomy from the beginning, with tailored services that transition clients to fully independent, permanent housing.

For more information on RRH, see:

<https://www.pointsourceyouth.org/rapid-rehousing/>

Joint Component Projects: TH-RRH

What is it: Joint component projects are the combination of two existing housing models. Transitional Housing to Rapid Rehousing projects offer a low barrier crisis intervention using transitional housing programs first, and connection to longer term housing stability through rapid rehousing programs. This combination focuses on efficiency, creating short stays in the crisis portion of programming, and moving clients quickly to stable housing.

How does it work: The joint component TR-RRH model is intended to bridge the gap for unsheltered youth waiting to access rapid rehousing units, by taking the housing first approach.

Who is it for: This model targets youth and young adults that are currently unsheltered, have been experiencing homelessness repeatedly or for a long period of time, with high need or high vulnerability. This model also effectively serves young people who have experiences significant barriers in obtaining permanent supportive housing.

For more information on TH-RRH programs, see:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/news/snaps-in-focus-the-new-joint-transitional-housing-and-rapid-re-housing-component/>

<https://endhomelessness.org/scoop-transitional-housing-rapid-re-housing-joint-component/>

<https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/3250/what-is-a-joint-th-and-ph-rrh-component-project/>

<https://endhomelessness.org/the-joint-component-is-for-homeless-youth-too/>

Permanent Supportive Housing*:

(*though DYS will not be providing PSH, it is a model that is used by community providers and staff should understand what it is when interacting with community providers)

What is it: This model targets individuals with highest need in terms of service support.

Permanent supportive housing models use permanent rental or subsidized community housing placements, combined with ongoing, intensive community supports, services and case management with no limits on length of stay. This model provides consistent wrap around services, while allowing clients to access housing that is integrated in their communities.

How it works: Permanent supportive housing relies on strong, formal community partnerships between service providers, state systems, affordable housing providers, and community resources. Service engagement is voluntary, and available at a higher capacity, often offering 24/7 access to case management, mental health and substance use services. Housing configurations are flexible, and may be scattered site programs, integrated with voucher or project-based housing, or sponsored set-aside units within market rate rental buildings. This model provides more comprehensive wrap around services, and meet clients where they are developmentally, physically and psychologically. Client choice and specific needs determine housing placements, with a focus on keeping clients housed and engaged even after they transition out of young adulthood. Services are not conditional, and clients can continue to engage with or without active tenancy. Case management includes long term crisis management and tenancy preservation, with both on and off-site staff, and a higher level of service coordination.

Who is it for: Permanent supportive housing models are designed for clients with significant long term disabilities, previous history or higher risk of institutionalization, and chronic health conditions. This model supports young people with stable housing and service transition from young adulthood into adulthood, anticipating their continued long-term engagement with supportive services.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Permanent supportive housing models offer stable, supportive housing without time limit. This model fosters opportunity for transition to independence but doesn't require clients to obtain independent housing. Clients engaged in permanent supportive housing may retain their housing and services throughout their adult life and are anticipated to need some level of long term social service support.

For more information on PSH, see:

<https://www.cibhs.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/youthsh.pdf>

Appendix H: Types of DYS Foster Care



Intensive Foster Care: This service is designed to provide a home for a youth whose family placement is not viable when the youth is released from DYS assessment, revocation, residential care or any other out of home placement. These youth typically have completed the residential phase of their DYS commitment and have been assessed as ready to live safely in the community.

Respite Foster Care: a short-term (usually no more than 45 days) intensive foster care model with foster parent/s recruited and trained specifically for short-term emergency placements and transitions.

Relative Foster care: a placement of DYS youth in homes of related, but non-legal-guardian, family members. All of the Intensive Foster care services would apply to this type of foster home.

Enhanced Foster Care: The treatment intensity and supervision correspond to the offending behavior, the developmental history and youth behavioral and mental health needs. In some cases there may be medical complexities that require constant supervision and an increased skill on the part of the foster parent/s. DYS recognizes that these youth need enhanced comprehensive treatment under the direction and guidance of therapeutic foster parents that receive supervision from licensed counselors provided by the bidding agency.

