**October 2019**

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Massachusetts**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

**Overview:** The MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness includes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also establishes that the first step towards achieving this vision is for both the State & each Region to understand the demographics of youth & young adults (YYAs) experiencing homelessness and the resources designed to serve them. To this end, in 2019, the MA Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness required each of the ten regionally funded partners to complete a community needs assessment.

**Findings:** On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts; of these, 465 were individual unaccompanied YYA and 615 were pregnant and parenting.1 Over the course of that same year **3,789** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness were identified by programs in MA.2 These YYA find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

In Massachusetts, **Black YYAs are over 4x more likely to experience homelessness** as compared to the overall population of YYAs, with the greatest disparities in Plymouth County where Black YYAs are over 7x more likely to experience homelessness.4,5 **Latinx YYAs are 2x more likely to experience homelessness in MA** with the greatest disparities in the Metro West region where Latinx YYAs are 8.5x more likely to experience homelessness.4,5

**Statewide 24% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.3**

**The statewide average age at which YYAs report leaving the home of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7**3**.** Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, in 2018 there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide; 218 of these students (42.4%) youth were identified in Essex County.6 Additionally in 2018, 51% of unaccompanied YYA in Worcester reported foster care involvement, which was nearly double the state rate of 26.4%.3

In 2018, **60%** of all identified YYAs experiencing homelessness in MA were **pregnant and/or parenting.**1,2100% of these were in emergency shelter.

[1] 2018 HUD PIT Count; [2] FY18 Statewide HMIS + FY18 provider data; [3] 2018 MA Statewide Youth Count; [4] FY18 Statewide HMIS; [5] 2018 US Census data for 15-25 year olds; [6] MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Ed 2017-2018

**Addressing the Findings**

***Note: Direct youth involvement is essential in the development and implementation of all resources and actions noted below.***

**Housing** MA currently has 440 housing units specifically for YYA + 89 YYA-dedicated emergency shelter beds.2 **To reach the goal of ending YYA-homelessness, ICHH estimates that we need to add an additional 1,180 YYA-dedicated units over the next five years to end homelessness for YYAs who would not stabilize without housing assistance.** These units should consist of a broad array of models in urban, suburban & rural communities. Also, every Region must assess if programs provide access to housing resources at equitable rates and achieve equitable outcomes for YYA across races and ethnicities.

**Awareness and Early Identification**

YYA report not knowing what kinds of services exist and where to turn for help. The ICHH recommends the **creation and launch of an empowering, trauma-informed youth homelessness awareness campaign** targeted to YYA, providers, and the general public. Regions also need to **continue partnering with a broad array of stakeholders and educate them about YYA homelessness and resources.** Such partnerships must include DCF, DYS, DTA, LGBTQ organizations, schools, and healthcare providers. Materials and staff support must be available in both English and Spanish. Finally, there is a need for **an improved identification and service protocol for minors** as a means to both prevent experiences of homelessness and to serve them as quickly as possible when they are already experiencing homelessness.

**Transportation**

YYAs & providers report that a lack of accessible & reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities.The ICHH recommends i**mproving access to transportation by reviewing existing programs, identifying gaps and opportunities for expansion, coordinating among regional transportation authorities, and investing in innovation and flexibility.**

**Employment Opportunities**

Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The ICHH recommends **developing a state-wide hiring and retention strategy for YYA experiencing homelessness** in close partnership with the Office of Workforce Development.

**Substance Use & Mental Health Support** Many regions reported both a lack of services available and long waitlists for YYAs who sought out treatment for substance use and/or mental health disorders. **The ICHH recommends a coordinated effort with both DPH/BSAS and DMH to improve support of YYA in existing substance use and mental-health programming and to create new YYA-dedicated resources where appropriate.**  While MA supports housing first strategies to ending homelessness, there is a need to improve access to behavioral health supports so that YYAs may better maintain stable housing and employment.

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Three County**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Three County region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows Three County and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **24 of these YYA were found in Three County.**

Over the course of a year there are at least **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in MA and at least **101 in Three County.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“… I did not choose to be living in a car ...* ***Please understand that I am scared. I am frightened. I am confused. I just want help****. “ - YYA in Three County*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| **LGBTQ+ YYA are particularly high-risk of homelessness. In Three County, 27%** of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, which is slightly higher than the 23.7% statewide average. *“Our LGBTQ youth will do anything to avoid adult shelter. They will stay anywhere else”* - Homeless Service Provider in Three County |

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| **Both statewide and in Three County, Black YYAs are 4x more likely to experience homelessness as** compared to the overall population of YYA.  **Latinx YYAs are 5X more likely to experience homelessness in Three County** which is significantly higher than the statewide rate where Latinx YYA are twice as likely to experience homelessness as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide. Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 34 of these youth were in Three County.  *“I was half a year from turning 16 when I became homeless. There was nothing I could do to prevent it. I had no family. I had no friends I could stay with.” - YYA in Three County* |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are only 56 housing units specifically for YYA in Three County. This region currently has no emergency shelter options specifically for YYAs. Assess whether programs provide access to housing resources at equitable rates and achieve equitable outcomes for YYA across races and ethnicities.

**Substance Use & Mental Health Support**

In Three Co, 21% of YYA self-identified their mental health & 13% self-identified their substance use disorders as disabling conditions. This is likely a significant undercount.

**Transportation**

YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities.

**Employment opportunities**

Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores.

**Early identification and system-coordination**

There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships with DCF, DYS, LGBTQ organizations, schools, and healthcare providers. Materials and staff support must both be available in English and Spanish. *“If a person becomes homeless, we have failed. From a wellbeing...and from a fiscal standpoint, the earlier we can become involved, the more effective it will be.” -provider*

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Hampden County**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Springfield/Hampden County region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows Hampden County and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

The scope of the problem:

**This region has the 2nd highest number of YYA experiencing homelessness in MA.**

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **120 were found in the Hampden County Region**.

Over the course of a year there are **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in MA and at least **509 in the Hampden County Region.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“Young people experiencing homelessness fly under the radar.”*

*- Springfield Homeless Service provider*

*“When I became homeless, I went a long time without eating. I didn’t want to put that burden on other people…. people thought I had an eating disorder.” - Young Adult in Hampden Co*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| **LGBTQ+ YYA are at particularly high-risk of homelessness.** According to the 2018 statewide youth Count 23.7% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, and 13% in the Hampden County region. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are over 4x more likely to experience homelessness** as compared to the overall population of YYA in Massachusetts, and nearly twice as likely to experience homelessness in the Hampden Co region. **Latinx YYAs are twice as likely to experience homelessness both in Hampden County and statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide. Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 29 of these were in the Hampden County Region. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are 5 programs & 63 beds specifically for YYA in this region, 12 of which are YYA emergency beds. A crisis-residential facility is under development in Springfield, but more beds are needed throughout the region. *“We have a [housing] list, but all the lists have waiting lists” - provider*

**Transportation**

YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities

**Employment opportunities**

The poverty rate in Hampden County is 23% for YYA; nearly double the national average (12.3%).

Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores.

**Early identification and system-coordination**

There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers.

**Increased Awareness**

YYA are flying under the radar & report not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. Materials and staff support must both be available in English and Spanish.

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Worcester County**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Worcester County region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows Worcester County and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **139 were found in the Worcester region.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

Over the course of that same year there **3,789** unaccompanied YYA were identified as experiencing homelessness in MA and a**t least 376 in the Worcester Region.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“How can I get a job if I don't even got a place to shower or sleep or eat? There’s a hundred of other kids like me sleepin’ in these buildings and no one [cares].” -Young Adult in Worcester*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count 24% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, and 21% in the Worcester Region. |

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| **Black YYAs are 4x more likely to experience homelessness in MA as** compared to the overall population of YYA. While this is lower in Worcester, Black YYA are still nearly twice as likely to experience homelessness as compared to other YYAs.  **Latinx YYAs are 2X more likely to experience homelessness both in Worcester County and statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide and slightly younger in the Worcester Region (16.3)  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 68 of these were in the Worcester Region, which is the second highest total in Massachusetts.  Additionally, in the 2018 YouthCount **51% of unaccompanied homeless YYA in Worcester Co. reported foster care involvement**, which is nearly double the state rate of 26.4%. |

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| In MA **60% of all identified YYAs who experiencing homelessness are pregnant and/or parenting, and 40% of all identified YYA in Worcester Co were pregnant and/or parenting**. 100% of these YYA were in shelter. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing:** There are currently 74 transitional housing units and 4 host homes for YYA in Worcester County. Additionally, there are 5 YYA Rapid rehousing units. This region currently has no emergency shelter options specifically for YYAs, and more permanent housing options are needed throughout the region.

**Substance Use :** Worcester Co has the second largest number of YYA who identified as homeless upon enrollment into the substance use treatment system. Additionally, “family substance abuse” was repeatedly stressed as problematic as as a precursor to homelessness.

**Transportation:** YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities

**Early identification and system-coordination:** There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, healthcare providers, and libraries. Materials and staff support must both be available in English and Spanish.

**Increased Awareness:** YYA are flying under the radar & report not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. There is an additional need to educate regional stakeholders about YYA homelessness and resources.

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Bristol County**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Bristol County Region engaged in a community needs assessment to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them.

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **59 of these YYA were from Bristol County**. Over the course of that same year **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness were identified by programs in MA and **104 in Bristol County.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count 23.7% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, but only 9% chose to identify as LGBTQ in Bristol County. There is a need for providers to improve their data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity in order for the region to better understand the scope of this population and resources needed to serve them. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are 5X more likely to experience homelessness in Bristol County** as compared to the overall population of YYA. This is higher than the statewide rate where Black YYA are 4x more likely to experience homelessness. **Latinx YYAs are nearly 3x as likely to experience homelessness in Bristol County and twice as likely statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide.  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 61 of these were in Bristol County. **This region has the 3rd highest number of unaccompanied minors identified in schools statewide.** |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing:** There are only 8 YYA-specific transitional housing units and 11 permanent supported housing units for YYA in Bristol County. While this region also has 6 emergency shelter beds at Killian’s House specifically for YYAs, there was an identified need for more emergency beds as well as more permanent housing options throughout the region. Currently only 1% of all beds in Bristol County are designated for YYA.

**Substance Use & Mental Health:** Bristol County is tied for having the third largest number of YYA who identified as homeless upon enrollment into the substance use treatment system. Additionally, in the 2018 Youth Count, nearly all YYA surveyed in this region self-identified as having unmet mental health needs.

**Transportation:** YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities.

**Early identification and system-coordination:** There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers.

**Increased Awareness of Resources:** Many YYA reported not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. Materials and staff support must both be available in English and Spanish. YYA reported that “*other supports could have helped… if I had known [how to access them]*.”

**Youth Action Board (YAB):** YYA in Bristol County expressed both a need and desire to create a YAB, where youth who have experienced homelessness have a say in regional planning efforts.

**Ending Youth Homelessness on the Cape & Islands**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Cape and the Islands engaged in a community needs assessment to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them.

On a single night in 2018 **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **27 on the Cape & Islands region.** Over the course of that same year **3,789** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness were identified by programs in MA and **88 on the Cape & Islands Region.** These YYA find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“Homelessness leaves you in the dust, and then you struggle to catch back up.” - Youth on the Cape*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count 23.7% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, and 11% in the Cape and Islands. There may be a need for providers to improve their data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity in order for the region to better understand the scope of this population and resources needed to serve them. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are 4X more likely to experience homelessness both statewide as well as on the Cape & the Islands** as compared to the overall population of YYA. **Latinx YYAs are 5.5x more likely to experience homelessness on the Cape & the Islands and twice as likely statewide**. |

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| The average age at which YYAs report leaving the house of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide. Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 10 of these youth were identified on the Cape & the Islands. |

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| In 2018, **60% of all identified YYAs who experiencing homelessness are pregnant and/or parenting and 25% on the Cape**. 100% of these YYA were in shelter. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are currently no housing units or emergency shelter options specifically for YYA on the Cape and Islands, and more permanent housing options are needed throughout the region. Housing YYA currently experiencing homelessness is an attainable goal if the region starts with resources targeted for those with the highest need, while simultaneously working to address the more systemic challenges, including the shortage of affordable housing.

**Early identification and system-coordination:** There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability. Such support must include stronger partnerships among service providers, the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, and DCF, DYS, LGBTQ organizations, schools, and healthcare providers. Materials and staff support must be available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

**Transportation**

YYA & providers report that a lack of accessible & reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities. This is especially true for YYA living on the Islands.

**Employment Opportunities** Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority of YYA will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores.

**Authentic Youth Voice in Decision Making:**

Direct youth involvement is essential in the development and implementation of all resources and actions above. YYA who have experienced homelessness on the Cape & Islands expressed a desire to have a voice in regional planning efforts.

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Plymouth County**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Plymouth County region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows both Plymouth County and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

The scope of the problem:

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **69 of these YYA were in Plymouth County**.

Over the course of that same year **3,789** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness were identified by programs in MA and **154 in Plymouth County.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“I don’t really know what to do next. I am in the shelter and I hear about housing opportunities but I am nervous... What do I say to a landlord? I don’t make enough money to pay rent even if I get some help to move in. ” - YYA in Plymouth Co*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count **27% of all YYAs in experiencing homelessness in Plymouth County identify as LGBTQ**, which is slightly higher than the 23.7% statewide average. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are more than 7X likely to experience homelessness in Plymouth County** as compared to the overall population of YYA. This is higher than the statewide rate where Black YYA are 4x more likely to experience homelessness. **Latinx YYAs are twice as likely to experience homelessness both in Plymouth County and statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide.  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and only 17 of these youth were in Plymouth County schools, which are some of the lowest numbers identified in the state. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are currently 8 YYA-designated shelter beds and 41 housing units for YYA in Plymouth County

**Transportation**

YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities.*“If I am going to look for a training program or a job then I will need help with transportation. I don’t have any money and I am staying at the shelter. I need a monthly pass to get around, I don’t want to work near where I live in shelter”. -YYA in Plymouth Co*

**Employment opportunities**

Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores. *“I am willing and able to work. The problem for me is that I am not trained in anything. So, I keep hearing that I need to take job skills training programs but most of those don’t pay you while they train you. And, there is no promise of work after the training has ended. It’s very frustrating”. -YYA in Brockton*

**Early identification and system-coordination:** There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers. Materials and staff support must both be available in both English and Spanish.

**Increased Awareness of Resources:** Many YYA reported not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. YYA reported that “*other supports could have helped… if I had known [how to access them]*.”

**Ending Youth Homelessness in Essex County**

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Essex County region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows both Essex County and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

The scope of the problem:

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **49 of these YYA were in Essex County**.

Over the course of a year there are at least **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in MA and at least **136 in Essex County.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“I’ve [been] homeless...I’ve been sleeping in my car…people are laughing“ - YYA in Essex County*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count 24% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, and 21% in Essex County. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are 5X more likely to experience homelessness in Essex County** as compared to the overall population of YYA. This is higher than the statewide rate where Black YYA are 4x more likely to experience homelessness. **Latinx YYAs are slightly more likely (1.2%) to experience homelessness in Essex County and twice as likely statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide.  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and **218 of these students were in Essex County, comprising 42.4% of all identified unaccompanied minors in schools statewide.** |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are currently no housing units or emergency shelter options specifically for YYA in Essex County, and more permanent housing options are needed throughout the region. There is also a reported need for more housing search specialists.

**Substance Use & Mental Health:** Essex County is tied for having the third largest number of YYA who identified as homeless upon enrollment into the substance use treatment system. In focus groups with providers, “family substance abuse” was repeatedly stressed as a precursor to homelessness. Additionally, both providers and YYA reported that the mental health supports and resources in the region were inadequate.

**Transportation**

YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities

**Employment opportunities**

Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores. *“It’s hard when you have jobs but all your money is going towards food, towards gas to keep warm because you’re in your car sleeping, during blizzards, during rainstorms…It’s hard.” - YYA in Essex County*

**Early identification and system-coordination**

There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers.

**Increased Awareness**

YYA are flying under the radar & report not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. There is an additional need to educate regional stakeholders about YYA homelessness and resources.

*“Not being stably housed is a significant barrier for any individual, but many of the young people we are serving are experience this challenge alongside other significant challenges. None of them have recognized academic credential, and almost all are unemployed or work low-wage jobs. Often, they have no assets, no rental history or credit, and no positive adults relationships or support network, and so finding a path to stable housing is unclear.”****- Stakeholder in***  *Essex County*

**Ending Youth Homelessness in North Middlesex County:** A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the North Middlesex County region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows both North Middlesex County and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

The scope of the problem:

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **35 of these YYA were in North Middlesex County**.

Over the course of a year there are at least **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in MA and at least **101 in North Middlesex County.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“Promises should mean something. When people - whether friends, family, or service providers- say they will do something, they can’t let you down. [But] people let you down all of the time.”*  - YYA in N. MIddlesex

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count 23.7% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, and 18% in the North Middlesex Region. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are over 4x more likely to experience homelessness** as compared to the overall population of YYA in Massachusetts, and more than 3X as likely to experience homelessness in North Middlesex County. **Latinx YYAs are nearly twice as likely to experience homelessness in both No. Middlesex County and statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide.  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 22 of these were in the North Middlesex Region, which are among the lowest regional numbers of unaccompanied student minors identified in the state. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are 13 housing units for YYA in in the North Middlesex Region. This region currently has no emergency shelter options specifically for YYAs. Housing YYA currently experiencing homelessness is an attainable goal if the region starts with resources targeted for those with the highest need, while simultaneously working to address the more systemic challenges, including the shortage of affordable housing. The North Middlesex Region must also assess if programs provide access to housing resources at equitable rates and achieve equitable outcomes for YYA across races and ethnicities.

**Transportation**

YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities

**Employment opportunities**

Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores.

**Early identification and system-coordination**

There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers.

**Increased Awareness**

YYA are flying under the radar & report not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. There is an additional need to educate regional stakeholders about YYA homelessness and resources. Materials and staff support must both be available in English and Spanish.

**Ending Youth Homelessness in the Metro West Region:** A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Metro West region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows both Metro West and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

The scope of the problem:

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **230 of these YYA were in the Balance of State CoC which completely encompasses the Metro West Region**

Over the course of a year there are at least **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in MA and at least **100 in the Metro West region.** These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“Every place I’ve been there’s always an expiration date…I called shelters left and right all of them they are all full always FULL FULL FULL FULL. … and my family kept pawning me off between each other it was just not fun.”*

*Or*

*“my first year of homelessness when I started working I was couch surfing. I didn’t have a bank account yet let alone an ID. As soon as I got my bank account and ID [a realtor] said ‘oh you need 8 week of pay-stubs.’ I didn’t know that... I would’ve saved them. Any time I try and get housing it feels like I go ten steps forward and 20 steps back.”*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count **nearly 24% of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ** in both the Metro West Region and statewide. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are over 4x more likely to experience homelessness** as compared to the overall population of YYA in Massachusetts, and 3X as likely to experience homelessness in **in Metro West.**  **Latinx YYAs are 8.5X more likely to experience homelessness in Metro West, the highest disparity in homelessness identified among this population in the state.**  Statewide Latinx YYA are twice as likely to experience homelessness as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7 statewide.  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and 26 of these were in the Metro West Region. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing:** There are 6 YYA-specific transitional housing units and 20 permanent supported housing units for YYA in Metro West. While this region also has 4 emergency shelter beds designated for YYAs, there is an identified need for more emergency beds as well as more permanent housing options throughout the region.

**Transportation:** YYAs and providers report that a lack of accessible and reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities.

**Employment opportunities:** Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to maintain housing. The majority will not receive subsidized housing due to long waitlists, lack of housing stock, and low vulnerability scores.

**Early identification and system-coordination:** There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers. All providers must have some staff who are bi-lingual English and Spanish.

**Increased Awareness of Resources:** Many YYA reported not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. There is an additional need to educate regional stakeholders about YYA homelessness and resources. Materials and staff support must both be available in English and Spanish.

**Ending Youth Homelessness in the Metro Boston Region:** A snapshot of community need & recommendations

The *Massachusetts* *State Plan to End Youth Homelessness* describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” It also acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them.

In 2019, the Metro Boston region engaged in a community needs assessment process to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them. This allows both Metro Boston and the State to begin to offer a tailored response to address the challenge.

The scope of the problem:

On a single night in 2018, **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **409 of these YYA were in the Metro Boston region**.

Over the course of a year there are at least **3,408** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness in MA and **at least 1,631 in the Metro Boston region**. These young people find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

*“I wish my service providers could feel the way I feel physically [from] a lack of food and sleep and the loneliness” -YYA in Metro Boston*

**Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness**

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| According to the 2018 statewide youth Count **23% of YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ in both the Metro Boston Region** and statewide. There is a need for providers to improve their data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity in order for the region to better understand the scope of this population and resources needed to serve them. |

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| **Black YYAs experiencing homelessness are over 4x more likely to experience homelessness** as compared to the overall population of YYA in Massachusetts, and more than 3X as likely to experience homelessness in Metro Boston. **Latinx YYAs are nearly twice as likely to experience homelessness in both Metro Boston and statewide** as compared to the overall population of YYA. |

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| **MINORS:** The average age at which YYAs report leaving the households of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.2 in Metro Boston, which is younger than the statewide average of 16.7 years old.  Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, and only 29 of these were in the Metro Boston Region. |

**Where Additional Resources are Needed:**

**Housing**

There are 217 designated housing units for YYA in Metro Boston, and to $5mil funding award from HUD will an additional 150+ units over the next 5 years. However, very few of these units are within existing housing stock. There is a critical need for development of affordable housing units to pair with other housing support.

**Substance Use**

Metro Boston has the largest number of YYA who identified as homeless upon enrollment into the substance use treatment system.

**Early identification and system-coordination:** There is a need for improved identification and support of both minors and young adults experiencing homelessness & housing instability, including establishing stronger partnerships and possible data-sharing strategies with DCF, DYS, schools, and healthcare providers. There is an additional need for regional stakeholders to increase communication and resource-sharing across CoCs whenever possible.

**Increased Awareness of Resources:** Many YYA reported not knowing what services exist and where to turn for help. These resources must be made available in both English and Spanish.