

# The Way Home

The Massachusetts Balance of State Continuum of Care's  
Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth and Young Adult  
Homelessness

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## Key Terms

**Balance of State (BoS):** The Massachusetts Balance of State Continuum of Care (also identified by HUD as MA-516) is the regional planning body which coordinates housing and services funding for families and individuals experiencing homelessness in dozens of communities in Essex, Middlesex, and Norfolk Counties.<sup>1</sup> The BoS is the recipient of HUD YHDP funds. In this document, the Balance of State is referred to as both the BoS and the CoC.

**Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI):** Community Teamwork is a private nonprofit Community Action Agency, a Regional Housing Agency, and a Community Development Corporation. Community Teamwork is a lead partner to the BoS in this YHDP process.

**Continuum of Care (CoC):** A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts there are 15 CoCs eligible to apply for money from HUD to help people experiencing homelessness. Each of the 15 CoCs serves a unique geographic area with HUD asking the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to be responsible for addressing homelessness in their area.<sup>2</sup>

**Coordinated Community Plan (CCP):** A Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) serves as a community's blueprint for preventing and ending youth homelessness. The CCP is the result of a comprehensive planning process that brings together diverse stakeholders to develop a coordinated community response to youth homelessness. The CCP lays the groundwork for implementation of a community's vision for preventing and ending youth homelessness, reflects authentic youth engagement and voice, establishes a community-wide commitment to equity, and provides a framework for investment in youth-driven projects to respond to locally-defined challenges and needs.<sup>3</sup>

**Equity:** Whereas 'equality' implies that all parties have the same resources or opportunities, 'equity' recognizes that many individuals have experienced historic exclusion and systemic injustice, and therefore may require adjustments in their treatment in order to address these imbalances.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/doc/continuum-of-care-service-areas/download>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/continuum-of-care-programs-coc>

<sup>3</sup> <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-YHDP-Foundations-and-Beyond-Coordinated-Community-Plan.pdf>

**Positive Youth Development (PYD):** Per youth.gov, “PYD is an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.”

**Trauma-Informed Care (TIC):** A trauma-informed framework recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma and its impact on YYAs; integrates knowledge about trauma into practice; and avoids re-traumatization.<sup>4</sup>

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** HUD is the executive department of the U.S. federal government which administers federal housing and urban development laws. HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD works to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business<sup>5</sup>

**Youth Action Board (YAB):** The YAB is a group of young people with lived experience who have received services from CoC providers, and who are invested in making change within the youth homelessness system. The primary goals of the YAB are to disrupt stigmatization of YYAs, foster community-wide awareness of youth homelessness, build a supportive community for YYAs from diverse backgrounds, and generally advance the CoC’s work to end youth homelessness.

**Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP):** YHDP is a HUD-developed and funded initiative. The goal of the YHDP is to support selected communities, including rural, suburban, and urban areas across the United States, in the development and implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Additionally, HUD is committed to sharing that experience of YHDP communities and mobilizing communities around the country toward the same end.<sup>6</sup>

**YHDP Region:** The geographic subregion of the BoS covered by this YHDP

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/about-the-trauma-informed-care-implementation-resource-center/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hud.gov/about/mission>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/yhdp/>

process, consisting of the towns of Acton, Ashby, Ayer, Bedford, Billerica, Boxborough, Burlington, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Dracut, Dunstable, Groton, Lawrence, Lexington, Littleton, Lowell, Maynard, North Reading, Pepperell, Reading, Shirley, Stoneham, Stow, Tewksbury, Townsend, Tyngsborough, Wakefield, Westford, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn, all in Massachusetts. These towns and cities fall within Middlesex County.

## Introduction

**The Way Home** is a coordinated community plan (CCP), which serves as a roadmap to end youth homelessness and prevent future instances of youth homelessness in what is primarily the northern region of Middlesex County. This plan is the product of a robust community-wide planning process, and it reflects the community's deeply held commitment to optimize our collective response to youth homelessness.

The CCP covers the Northern Region of the CoC, which includes 32 Massachusetts cities and towns (below).

- Acton
- Ashby
- Ayer
- Bedford
- Billerica
- Boxborough
- Burlington
- Carlisle
- Chelmsford
- Concord
- Dracut
- Dunstable
- Groton
- Lawrence
- Lexington
- Littleton
- Lowell
- Maynard
- North Reading
- Pepperell
- Reading
- Shirley
- Stoneham
- Stow
- Tewksbury
- Townsend
- Tyngsborough
- Wakefield
- Westford
- Wilmington
- Winchester
- Woburn

The CCP planning process was funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). In the fall of 2021, the Massachusetts Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) was awarded **\$6,055,727.29** through the YHDP, which provided the opportunity to engage the community in this planning process. Through the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022, the CoC partnered with Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI) and the CoC's Youth Action Board (YAB) to engage youth homelessness providers and community leaders in a robust, equitable, and collaborative planning process. The process utilized technical assistance, provided by the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) and True Colors United (TCU), whose guidance and YHDP expertise were integral and invaluable to the development of this plan.

The voice of YYAs is baked into this plan. The foremost experts on YYA homelessness are the young people with lived experience themselves, and as such YAB members were key stakeholders and decision makers in the planning process. Their participation grounds the CCP in the reality of their experience and therefore is best positioned to maximize the impact and effectiveness of this plan. The Planning Committee places the utmost importance on authentic youth collaboration, which is when YYA are provided safe, respectful, youth-centered avenues to express themselves, share their experiences and unique knowledge, ask for assistance, demonstrate their strengths as equal members of the

community, and make decisions that shape the systems they interact with. It requires that YYAs have an active voice and say in governance decisions that directly affect their stability, opportunities, and pathways to success. The YAB emphasizes that engaging YYsA from different backgrounds and lived experiences (including LGBTQ+, BIPOC, parenting YYA, and YYAs with disabilities), with an intentional focus on accessibility and equity, is critical to authentic youth collaboration. Our YHDP processes, and in turn, this plan, were created to uphold the principles of authentic youth collaboration. Older adult allies on the Planning Committee received training on adultism in order to support this environment.

Community members with a vested interest in ending youth homelessness comprised the Planning Committee. The planning process was led by a core group of individuals known as the Leadership Committee. (More on this in the Governance section.) Together, the Planning Committee formed focus groups which informed the bulk of the contents of this plan, including developing a vision statement which frames our work; goal statements which define our ideal system; and objectives and action steps which guide how we will arrive at the ideal system. All of this work is centered in the needs of the community, as explained in the needs statement. To ensure that we achieve our goals in a manner that supports YYAs and engages them as true collaborators, we have developed guiding principles and a decision-making framework. The plan ultimately arrives at recommendations for additional projects for the youth homelessness system to pursue and implement, including through YHDP project funds.

## **Community History and Context**

The geographic region covered through this plan falls entirely within the jurisdiction of the CoC. However, several key communities within the region's youth homelessness system were merged into the Balance of State region more recently in 2020. The merger of these regions represents an opportunity for the youth homelessness resources currently clustered in Lowell and Lawrence to be leveraged and replicated across the wider region, with attention given to the unique needs and assets of each community, which range from rural towns to cities. This merger also presents the opportunity to grow the geographic footprint represented in the YAB's membership. At the time of writing, the YAB is predominantly constituted of YYAs from Greater Lowell and Lawrence. It is a goal of the YAB to expand across this region.

## **Vision Statement:**

Through a well-coordinated, community-wide response that centers youth voice, the MA BoS CoC will prevent youth homelessness and ensure that all youth who do experience homelessness have equitable, low-barrier access to a variety of



safe and stable housing solutions that offer individualized, youth-driven supports of their choice.

## Guiding Principles

The Planning Committee developed and adopted the following principles to ground this work:

**Youth Collaboration:** Our CCP will be developed in partnership with young people with lived experience. We will create a safe space to amplify youth voices in developing youth-specific strategies.

**Equity and Inclusion:** The goals and action steps in our CCP will seek to advance equity in our coordinated community response and be inclusive of populations who have historically experienced inequities in our system.

**Innovation:** We seek to create innovative solutions to ending youth homelessness.

**Low-Barrier, Flexible Access:** Strategies developed through YHDP will be accessible by remaining low-barrier and having flexible entry.

**Community Engagement:** We commit to engaging the broader community to destigmatize youth homelessness and coordinate with various stakeholders.

**Youth Advocacy:** The CCP will help provide youth and young adults with tools of self-advocacy as a form of self-help. Youth will be provided the platform and space to learn how to safeguard and defend their rights through awareness, discussion, and activities that foster youth understanding of social systems, institutions, and policy. Youth will be empowered to challenge and disrupt their conditions of disenfranchisement.

*(References to the HUD-defined required principles can be found in the Appendices.)*

## Statement of Need

This plan is a data-driven response to evidenced community needs, including the needs of individuals for programming; the need to fill gaps in our existing coordinated community response; and the needs of sub-populations who are either over-represented within the youth homelessness population, or who are particularly vulnerable in a homelessness situation. This plan also addresses how the community will improve data quality and system capacity to identify and assist YYAs experiencing homelessness (see Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps). This Statement of Need section presents high level trends concerning the YYAs who experience homelessness. Detailed data on the conditions of homelessness, bucketed by planning topic areas, are found in the Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps section, in order to clearly demonstrate how this plan strives to meet community needs. We examined data from the Balance of State Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) (October 2020 through September 2021); Community Teamwork's internal case management system (2021); 2020 Census data; and the HUD Stella database.

## Limitations

Some considerations when reading this data are that Community Teamwork's geographic footprint is wider than the YHDP community, and that Stella data, which is CoC-wide, also covers a larger geography. There also exist gaps in our understanding of the number of YYAs in our system who are at-risk of homelessness. For example, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) only reports an aggregate total of youth served, and so region-specific data is not available. The CoC does not collect pregnancy status on any programs in the region (there are currently zero Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs in the region, which would require this data). Not all programs for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness provide data in HMIS. Due to these constraints in data, certain special populations such as minors and YYAs experiencing unsheltered homelessness may be underreported in this data. Youth at-risk of homelessness are also likely to be underreported, as they may never enter the current databases used by the youth homelessness system. This affects our ability to accurately target the number of YYAs who need services, as well as the type of services necessitated by their unique needs. The annual Youth Count is a Massachusetts-wide data collection initiative that seeks to fill in some of these data gaps.

Based on the experience reported by CTI in creating and developing programming, which was previously nonexistent in the Greater Lowell community, we anticipate that once more programming is established and providers gain a word-of-mouth reputation of being safe and helpful to YYAs, more YYAs will present as in need of services. Over the period spent implementing CCP activities, we expect to rapidly grow in our knowledge of this

population, particularly in currently under-served communities.

Through the YHDP implementation, the community seeks to improve identification of special populations. This will help us to ensure that these individuals are accessing YHDP projects and other youth-specific services outlined in this plan. Specific activities can be found most directly in the Prevention, Intervention, and Stable Housing Action Step 1.2 and the Racial Equity and Justice Action Steps 2.1 and 2.3. Generally, one of the Planning Committee's core objectives is to increase the coordination of services across providers and systems (education, juvenile justice, and child welfare), and improved data collection, and data-driven implementation, are central to this objective.

### **Current youth-specific crisis housing resources are as follows:**

- About 30 beds of crisis housing (including emergency shelter and transitional housing).
- About 51 units of housing supports (all rapid rehousing-type models).
- The total number of housing supports includes 25 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV).

### **Current youth-specific housing supports are as follows<sup>7</sup>:**

- Short- to medium-term housing supports include 53 beds.
- Long-term housing supports include 23 beds.

### **Key trends in quantitative data are as follows.**

#### **Some populations are particularly vulnerable.**

- **Unaccompanied YYAs experiencing homelessness:** HMIS data shows that one YYA under age 18 entered the homeless system from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. This person was a pregnant young person who entered EA shelter. In the YHDP region, 33 YYA households (73 persons) served were unaccompanied, and in the entire CoC, 364 YYA households served were unaccompanied. Given the very small number of unaccompanied YYAs who are minors, we believe that there are constraints to the data collection likely resulting in this number being underreported.
- **Unaccompanied YYAs at-risk of homelessness:** CTI reports that 54% of YYA served all-time, or approximately 320 YYAs, have system involvement, including child welfare or the justice system. More information from the education, child welfare, and juvenile justice

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<sup>7</sup> Housing Inventory Count (HIC) 2021, and Community Teamwork's 2021 program data.

information is below.

- **Pregnant and parenting YYAs experiencing homelessness:** One-third of YYA households in the entire CoC (127 total) consist of YYAs who are pregnant or parenting.<sup>8</sup>
- **Pregnant and parenting YYAs at-risk of homelessness:** CTI reports that 200 pregnant and parenting YYAs served in FY21 were at risk of homelessness.

### **There is a large population of YYAs experiencing homelessness in our system.**

Of the 73 YYAs and persons in YYA households served in the system:

- 33 heads of households were young adults 18-24 years old.
- In all project types, there are 29 HoHs who are parenting, with a total of 73 individuals (including 36 children aged 0-5) in these households.
- 29 HoHs and adults were female, suggesting a high rate of single mothers among this group. 83% of these households access shelters and transitional housing types.<sup>9</sup>
- 86% of YYA HoHs identify as female; 14% identify as male.<sup>10</sup>
- 1 household was categorized as 'unsheltered' prior to entering the youth homeless system.<sup>11</sup>
- 9 students experiencing homelessness were unsheltered during the 19-20 academic year. This is a decrease from 19 students the previous year.<sup>12</sup>

### **YYAs experience homelessness for a variety of reasons, with some key trends.**

Of the 364 youth and young adults served:

- 61% were experiencing homelessness for the first time.
- 39% reported having a household member with a disability.
- 12% were fleeing domestic violence.

### **YYAs experience long lengths of time in homelessness.**

- On average, YYAs are in the system for 660 days.
- 20% of YYAs are considered long-term stayers, experiencing more than one year of homelessness.
- CoC-wide, BIPOC individuals experience longer stays in homelessness while engaging in our homeless system.

### **YYAs at risk of homelessness may interact with other systems of care beyond the CoC.**

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<sup>8</sup> HMIS 10/1/2020-9/30/2021

<sup>9</sup> HMIS 10/1/2020-9/30/2021

<sup>10</sup> HMIS 10/1/2020-9/30/2021

<sup>11</sup> HMIS 10/1/2020-9/30/2021

<sup>12</sup> Reported by LEAs to the Department of Education.

- The Massachusetts Juvenile Court reports that 27 youth aged 13-17 were subjected to a Child Requiring Assistance petition for “runaway.”<sup>13</sup>
- In its FY21, DCF reported serving 93,802 families and young adults. This includes 44,465 children aged 0-17 in its FY21. Furthermore, 2,766 youth aged 18-23 accessed housing, education, and employment-related services and assistance.<sup>14</sup>
- In school year 19-20, 1,032 students were at risk of homelessness in Lowell and Lawrence. The majority of these students (82%) were in the Lowell Public Schools system. Of this total, 93% of students were categorized as ‘doubled up.’<sup>15</sup>

### Key trends in qualitative data are as follows.

- Overwhelmingly, a lack of livable wages coupled with a lack of affordable rental housing create barriers to accessing and maintaining safe, stable housing. We see this trend among older adult populations as well, but youth-specific barriers also include a lack of rental history, lack of work history, low credit scores, and Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORIs).
- BIPOC YYAs are overrepresented in the homeless population. This speaks to both systemic injustices that cause more BIPOC individuals to become homeless, as well as the institution-level inequities which impact BIPOC individuals’ success in moving through the homelessness system toward stability.
- Many YYAs have experienced trauma, often as a result of their experience with homelessness, and have social-emotional wellbeing needs related to this trauma. The Planning Committee emphasizes the need to incorporate the principle of trauma-informed care across all youth-serving activities.
- YYAs need youth-friendly, safe, crisis housing options. This includes gender-affirming services and beds.
- YYAs are vocal in their need for mental health services and services supporting their social-emotional wellbeing, safe and trusted environments, and gender-affirming services. They also express challenges in advocating for and receiving the services they need, namely stigmatization and poor past experiences with older adults.
- Permanent connections, such as parent engagement and natural supports, can have a significant positive impact on YYAs ability to maintain stable housing. However, barriers to permanent connections can include health concerns including social anxiety, housing instability,

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<sup>13</sup><https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/drap4687/viz/DemographicsofChildRequiringAssistanceFilings/CRACasesbyAge>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcf-annual-reportfy2021/download>

<sup>15</sup> Reported by LEAs to the Department of Education.

food insecurity, lack of mentors, and stigmatization.

- YYAs may experience challenges in navigating the paradox of their housing instability/homelessness negatively impacting ability to obtain/maintain education and employment, while at the same time, a lack of education and employment can in turn impact housing stability.
- Similarly, it can be difficult for YYAs to work enough hours to afford their rent and expenses, while also working toward their academic goals.

## **Reflections**

As a result of this data analysis, the Planning Committee engaged in system modeling discussions in order to establish a more dedicated youth-serving system rooted in data evidencing specific needs. Specific activities speak to having more robust upstream problem-solving conversations to prevent YYAs from ever entering the homeless system; for instances when YYAs do become homeless, establishing quicker connections to housing supports and wraparound services in order to reduce the length of time they spend in homelessness; and generally creating more youth-specific services and increasing system-wide accessibility of services, particularly for YYAs outside of the hubs of Lowell and Lawrence.

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

With the examination of the most pressing needs facing YYAs in our YHDP region, including the strengths and gaps of our current resources through system modeling planning meetings, the Planning Committee developed the following goals to fill gaps and meet these needs. These goals were designed with the intent to advance our vision for our community; as such, they guide our work toward an ideal state and are intentionally high-reaching. Within each goal, the Planning Committee developed objectives and action steps to serve as a more detailed map to inform our progress toward meeting these long-term goals. This plan also includes a timeframe for implementation, understanding that many of these activities will be ongoing.

These goals are organized in five topic areas:

- **Prevention, Intervention, and Stable Housing**
- **Racial Equity and Justice**
- **Education and Employment**
- **Permanent Connections**
- **Health and Wellbeing**

## Timeframes

The following pages suggest action steps to carry out these goals, within a reasonable yet assertive time frame. Throughout, you will see time frames organized as 'short' (to be implemented within less than one year), 'mid' (to be implemented within one to two years), and 'long' (to be implemented in over two years) term. Most of these activities are designed to be maintained on an ongoing basis.

## Responsible Entities

Upon entering the project applications and implementation phase of the YHDP, the Planning Committee will transition from its current role at the time of writing, as a planning body, into the entity responsible for the ongoing implementation of this plan. The Committee will ensure that the projects are carried out in a way that is consistent with the vision, principles, and activities outlined through this planning process. The Planning Committee may also convene additional entities, such as subcommittees, to be tasked with carrying out the specific action steps detailed in the following pages. In general, we anticipate that providers applying for individual projects will be responsible for the on-the-ground work of carrying out activities, while the Committee will provide guidance and, potentially, interpretation of this plan.

## Prevention, Intervention, and Stable Housing

### **Goal Statement**

Establish robust identification efforts and a coordinated system that prevents homelessness among youth whenever possible and ensures that all youth have equitable access to low-barrier, safe housing and supports that meet their unique needs.

### **Needs, Systems Gaps, and Vulnerable Populations**

Among all YYAs who entered the youth homelessness response system:

- 40% exited to permanent destinations, like their own apartment or living with family that was intended to be long-term.
- 8% returned to the homeless response system within 6 months of exiting.
- 20% were considered long-term stayers, experiencing more than one year of homelessness.

The Prevention, Intervention, and Stable Housing focus group also cited barriers to accessing and maintaining safe, stable housing such as: a lack of living wages and steady income; lacking resources or guidance to access housing; lacking a rental history; low credit scores; CORIs; availability of safe, youth-friendly shelter beds; high cost of rents, including move-in expenses; transportation; and needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The group also identified the following gaps in resources: a shortage of youth-friendly facilities; a shortage of housing vouchers; and more resources dedicated toward helping YYAs navigate these systems, including in schools and through outreach activities, especially in identifying YYAs experiencing unsheltered homelessness. YYA subpopulations identified as being most at risk include BIPOC populations, LGBTQ+ identified YYAs, pregnant and parenting YYAs, youth who have been trafficked or are at risk for trafficking, and YYAs at risk of becoming homeless. For YYAs at risk of homelessness, the focus group cited the following resources as having the most potential to help these individuals: welcoming affordable housing options, trauma-informed solutions, no-barrier emergency housing, family intervention supports, and tenancy supports such as educating housing providers. For YYAs who have been trafficked or are at risk for trafficking, the group recommends education and employment support, life skills supports, and commercial sexual exploitation programming. It is critical that providers adopt a positive youth development approach, and that each YYA is supported to develop their case management plan and set goals at their own volition, rather than through a prescriptive process.

### **Objective 1**

Improve early identification efforts and prevention supports.

### **Action Step 1.1**

Identify or create prevention programs that include a support system as a way to prevent homelessness for youth and young adults. Includes increasing training for educators, education stakeholders, and system stakeholders (such as child welfare and juvenile justice system representatives) on YYA homelessness awareness; and strengthening and increasing partnerships between YYA housing providers and system partners for warm handoffs and continuity of care; and decriminalizing school grounds and substance use.



	<p><b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.2</b>  Improve cross-system collaboration to develop protocols to identify and support young people in other systems of care (such as child welfare and the juvenile justice systems) experiencing housing instability. Protocols will improve information sharing and create spaces for cross-system coordination. Includes implementing a universal intake form and database across systems for continuity of care and referrals; and increasing trained staff presence for all partners.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2</b>  Develop equity-centered, low barrier (Housing First), safe and stable housing options.</p>	<p><b>Action Step 2.1</b>  Ensure equitable access to housing options by improving the Coordinated Entry System experience for youth and young adults, including reconsidering the vulnerability indices for inclusivity for special populations, such as justice system involved YYAs.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.2</b>  Engage in policy advocacy to ensure housing opportunities require minimal eligibility requirements and documentation barriers. Includes tracking housing discrimination cases, educating housing providers on YYAs’ unique needs, providing education to YYAs regarding housing rights, and advocating for fair housing at a state and local level.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.3</b>  YYA-serving programs will provide post-move in tenancy supports, such as financial management and property care, to</p>

	<p>help young people feel stable in their housing.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.4</b>  Partner with providers who have experience and expertise serving LGBTQ+ identified young people and pregnant and parenting youth to develop targeted housing models.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.5</b>  Increase availability of sponsor-based/master leased housing options for young people with tenant screening barriers.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.6</b>  Develop a committee to explore the host homes model.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
<p><b>Objective 3</b>  Support youth and young adults in accessing the services they need to resolve their housing crisis.</p>	<p><b>Action Step 3.1</b>  Create youth-specific crisis housing options, such as youth-specific emergency shelter, host homes, and/or transitional housing.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 3.2</b>  Increase availability of one-stop resource centers to meet basic needs such as food, hygiene, and laundry and connect to services such as legal services and navigation in housing, education, and employment pathways.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Long-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>

	<p><b>Action Step 3.3</b> YYA-serving programs will connect young people to free or affordable transportation options. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 3.4</b> Identify solutions for youth who are in need of state photo identification while receiving services at the Mill You (CTI, Lowell) but do not have a way to obtain proof of residency. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
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## Racial Equity and Justice

### Goal Statement

Create an equitable system that includes welcoming and accessible environments, targeted strategies for people who have historically experienced inequities in our system, and creating institutionalized practices for building anti-racist systems, organizations, and services that are representative of, and led by, the populations we serve.

### Needs, Systems Gaps, and Vulnerable Populations:

Black and Latinx YYAs are overrepresented in the homeless population. When compared to 2020 census data in Massachusetts, we found the following discrepancies of representation by race:

- White, Non-Hispanic/Latinx individuals account for 61.6% of the general population, but only 28% of YYAs experiencing homelessness.
- Black, Non-Hispanic/Latinx individuals account for 12.4% of the general population, yet 32% of YYAs experiencing homelessness are Black, Non-Hispanic/Latinx.
- Hispanic/Latinx individuals account for 18.7% of the general population, yet White, Hispanic/Latinx individuals alone account for 27% of YYAs experiencing homelessness.
- CoC-wide, some BIPOC individuals (specifically Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander populations) experience longer stays in the homelessness system than White individuals.

The Racial Equity and Justice focus group also noted that, because of gaps in data collection, we do not know whether Lowell has a higher rate of Asian-identifying YYAs experiencing homelessness than the rest of the YHDP region, given that Lowell has a high rate of Asian residents, particularly due to refugees from the Cambodian diaspora relocating in Lowell.

The focus group identified the following barriers to achieving an equitable youth homelessness system: stigma concerning race as well as mental health, particularly from older adults; lack of 24-hour mental health crisis supports; inequitable outreach regarding available resources; and environments conveying judgment and a lack of trust for YYAs' lived experiences. Adultism and ageism were identified as key barriers to achieving equitable, non-discriminatory systems. For example, the bias from landlords experienced by young adults seeking housing. Needed resources in the community, which currently do not exist or are inadequate to meet the need, include: reparations, representation among service providers, platforms for advocacy, fair housing supports, and increased communication and warm hand-offs among providers. The group also expressed a desire for redistributing power by building YYA and BIPOC representation on boards, committees, and local government. When carrying out this plan, the group recommended considering the special needs of the following subpopulations: BIPOC individuals, specifically Latinx, Black women and mothers; newcomer populations such as immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; YYAs with CORIs, formerly incarcerated YYAs, and those at-risk of or involved in violence; YYAs whose primary language is not English; and those of historically excluded/persecuted faiths such as Judaism and Islam.

<p><b>Objective 1</b> Create welcoming, accessible, and youth-led environments.</p>	<p><b>Action Step 1.1</b> Hire non-judgmental, empathetic, and diverse staff committed to racial equity and justice work. Develop YYA-centered policies that write youth voice and participation into the hiring process. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.2</b> Hire multilingual staff, including English-learning staff. Activities will include prioritizing language accessibility in the posting, marketing/outreach, and hiring process. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.3</b> Create opportunities for young people to lead and facilitate workshops and support groups on racial justice-related topics. Activities will include offering training to YYAs on meeting facilitation <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.4</b> Compensate young people for all participation in system planning, program development, and any other related work. <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2</b> Develop targeted strategies for people who have historically experienced inequities in our system.</p>	<p><b>Action Step 2.1</b> Analyze current data available and conduct qualitative data collection to understand who has experienced inequities in our system. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.2</b> Create universal guidelines to support system partners and</p>

	<p>service providers in youth engagement.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.3</b>  Develop infrastructure/process to regularly evaluate equitable outcomes in partnership with young people.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.4</b>  Offer financial supports such as credit repair and tax education throughout YYA programming.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.5</b>  Ensure housing solutions are centered in equity by supporting YHDP projects to develop equitable policies and practices, and developing continuous quality improvement methods with an equity lens.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
<p><b>Objective 3</b>  Institutionalize practices for building anti-racist systems, organizations and services.</p>	<p><b>Action Step 3.1</b>  Youth-serving programs will hire more staff who are representative of the population served by reducing barriers to employment such as offering flexible work schedules and culturally-inclusive paid holidays and utilizing equitable recruiting practices.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 3.2</b>  Create opportunities for youth and youth providers to participate in affinity groups to reflect on experiences and strategize anti-racism work.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.</p>

	<p><b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 3.3</b> Involve young people in the development or review of policies and procedures of YYA serving organizations and programs.</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term.</p> <p><b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
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## Education and Employment

### Goal Statement

Our community will support all youth in gaining the knowledge to explore, identify, and achieve the educational and employment goals of their choice.

### Needs, Systems Gaps, and Vulnerable Populations:

Community Teamwork's 2021 program data shows that 62% of YYAs have obtained a GED or high school degree, and 17% are currently in college or secondary education. The Massachusetts Department of Education reports that some 1,625 students (all ages) in the YHDP area experienced homelessness during the 19-20 academic year. This is an increase of nearly 29% since the 17-18 academic year.

The Education, Employment, and Permanent Connections focus group named barriers to YYAs reaching their education and employment goals, namely: mental health concerns, citizenship status, lack of work history, substance use disorder, missing vital documents, availability or accessibility of childcare, abuse, transportation, lack of supportive services to obtain and maintain employment, and feelings of fear, self-doubt, and lack of trust. Some participants noted the paradoxes of housing instability/homelessness negatively impacting the ability to obtain/maintain education and employment, while lacking education and employment can in turn impact housing stability. Similarly, participants noted that the high cost of living and low wages at times necessitate working more hours than is sustainable for also seeking education. The group recommends that the community builds up resources such as drop-in services (as modeled by Community Teamwork's Mill You program), mental health supports, employer training on YYA homelessness, increased training and awareness for educators and school administrators, assistance securing transportation and vital documents, paid apprenticeships and internships, and life skills and goal setting programming. It is critical that providers adopt a positive youth development approach, and that each YYA is supported to develop their case management plan and set goals at their own volition, rather than through a prescriptive process.

The group also identified the following subpopulations as being particularly vulnerable: YYAs at risk of homelessness, BIPOC YYAs, LGBTQ+ identified YYAs, YYAs with substance use disorder, pregnant and parenting YYAs, YYAs with criminal backgrounds, veterans, and survivors of intimate partner violence and other forms of abuse. The group also noted the following needs:

- YYAs at risk of homelessness need transportation options, access to basic needs, support in navigating systems, and youth-friendly, safe shelter options.
- YYAs with substance use disorder need employers and programs who are trained and willing to support their recovery schedule, and recovery homes with built-in services to assist with making and achieving education and employment goals.
- BIPOC YYAs need culturally and linguistically sensitive services, representative curriculum in education, and diverse/representative educators.
- LGBTQ+ identified YYAs need diversity in the workplace and school, including representative educators, transgender and gender-affirming care, and transition support for individuals and families.



- YYAs with criminal backgrounds need support in overcoming CORIs and opportunity gaps due to their background, such as employer stigmatization.
- Pregnant and parenting YYAs need childcare, parenting classes, sick childcare and off-hours childcare, and flexible schedules.

**Objective 1**  
Support youth in knowing of and accessing education and employment supports.

**Action Step 1.1**

Partner with networking groups to host fairs, trainings, courses, and other network events to help young people find their interests and connect with professionals in various fields.

**Timeframe:** Short-term.

**Responsible Entity:** To be determined upon project implementation.

**Action Step 1.2**

Incorporate partnerships and collaborate with workforce development programs.

**Timeframe:** Short- to mid-term.

**Responsible Entity:** To be determined upon project implementation.

**Action Step 1.3**

Provide specialized support for youth experiencing housing instability in applying for financial aid and scholarships, including support in other languages. This includes building partnerships for referrals as well as building in-house capacity.

**Timeframe:** Short- to mid-term.

**Responsible Entity:** To be determined upon project implementation.

**Action Step 1.4**

Centralize information about education and employment related resources, including information in multiple languages.

**Timeframe:** Short- to mid-term.

**Responsible Entity:** To be determined upon project implementation.

**Objective 2**  
Create environments where young people can achieve educational and employment goals.

**Action Step 2.1**

Create housing options for students on an education or career pathway, such as community college and vocational students, that can also reduce barriers like transportation.

**Timeframe:** Mid-term.

	<p><b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.2</b> Partner with schools and homeless liaisons to address the disproportionate discipline of Black, Indigenous, and other students of color. <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.3</b> Provide life skills classes or coaching. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
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## Permanent Connections

### Goal Statement

All youth will be supported in having the opportunity to build positive, healthy relationships that help establish permanent ties to their communities of choice; which may include biological or chosen family, peer mentors, and other permanent connections.

### Needs, Systems Gaps, and Vulnerable Populations:

Community Teamwork’s 2021 program data highlights the following characteristics of program participants:

- 7% reported having juvenile justice involvement.
- 55% reported having family issues.
- 1% reported they experienced commercial sexual exploitation/sex trafficking.
- 50% reported having child welfare involvement.
- 20% were LGBTQ+ identifying.

The Education, Employment, and Permanent Connections focus group reported that YYAs experience the following barriers to making permanent connections: mental health concerns including social anxiety, housing instability, food insecurity, lack of mentors, and stigmatization. Some participants noted that for YYAs experiencing sustained housing instability and frequently moving, it can be difficult to form meaningful relationships. Similarly, some YYAs do not have the capacity for consistency and availability due to their housing situation. Relationships with older adults were also cited as complicated; some mentioned that the quality of case managers and their engagement can be lacking, while other adults have given YYAs reasons to distrust all adults. Still other adults may enforce their biases or judgment. The group identified the need to increase the following resources in the community: mental health resources, transportation and accessibility supports, strengthened partnerships and warm hand offs among service providers, peer mentoring programming, and culturally sensitive resources. The group also identified the following subpopulations as being particularly vulnerable: YYAs at risk of homelessness, BIPOC YYAs, LGBTQ+ identified YYAs, YYAs with substance use disorder, pregnant and parenting YYAs, YYAs with criminal backgrounds, veterans, and survivors.

### Objective 1

Create opportunities for youth to foster permanent connections.

#### Action Step 1.1

Train YHDP project staff to utilize and nurture natural supports, such as through family reunification, particularly for minors.

**Timeframe:** Short-term.

**Responsible Entity:** To be determined upon project implementation.

#### Action Step 1.2

Connect with organizations to give youth participants access to community-oriented spaces such as recreation centers, “maker spaces”, and community groups.

**Timeframe:** Short-term.

	<p><b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.3</b> Develop a program to identify and train peer mentors. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.4</b> Foster community awareness to de-stigmatize homelessness, educate community members on the mutual benefits of ending homelessness, and build more supportive communities. <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid- to long-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
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## Health and Wellbeing

### Goal Statement

All youth and young adults will have equitable access to affordable, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed resources to support their health and wellbeing.

### Needs, Systems Gaps, and Vulnerable Populations:

The Health and Wellbeing focus group cited the following barriers for YYA in reaching and maintaining positive health outcomes and wellbeing: personal health awareness and education; complexities in navigating the healthcare system; stigmatization (including regarding homeless/housing unstable status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity) long provider waitlists; limited non-emergency services outside conventional business hours; lack of trauma-informed providers; negative prior experience with providers; insurance issues; lack of housing stability when in recovery from procedures; inadequate mental health resources; the trauma of experiencing housing crisis; scheduling/priority challenges with school and work; the trauma experienced during COVID-19; and generational trauma, especially for BIPOC YYAs. Gaps in the existing system include: trauma-informed training for local providers; comprehensive, evidence based health education curriculums in schools; youth-friendly rehabilitation and detox services; an ‘invitation to change’ approach; mental health resources for crisis situations; youth support groups; youth-friendly resources for survivors of violence and abuse; increased number of respite beds for YYAs; culturally sensitive health resources; supports for vicarious trauma experienced by provider staff; drop-in mental health supports; availability of clinicians in the workforce; increased representation among care providers; mobile crisis response teams instead of a police response; and various types of mental health engagement options (such as group therapy, family therapy, outpatient/partial programs).

The group also identified the following needs among particularly vulnerable subpopulations:

- YYAs at risk of homelessness need increased access to basic needs and supports, increased mental health supports, and scheduling flexibility and drop-in services.
- BIPOC YYAs need culturally and racially responsive and sensitive health supports, and representative/diverse provider staff.
- LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming YYAs need competent, gender-affirming healthcare, community advocates in the healthcare field, and safe, gender-affirming shelter spaces and beds.
- Pregnant and parenting YYAs need more accessible and affordable childcare options, postpartum supports, reunification supports, basic needs and hygiene items for their children, and parenting skills supports.

### Objective 1

Increase availability of and access to crisis and non-crisis health resources.

### Action Step 1.1

Coordinate with schools to hire/recruit mental health workers in youth and young adult serving programs.

**Timeframe:** Long-term.

**Responsible Entity:** To be determined upon project implementation.

	<p><b>Action Step 1.2</b> Partner with local health alliance and health centers to build knowledge of existing resources across the region. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.3</b> Provide walk-in mental health support services. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.4</b> Partner with the juvenile justice system, including law enforcement, to improve mental health related crisis response. <b>Timeframe:</b> Long-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.5</b> Offer workshops for youth and young adults about how to apply for and use health insurance. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.6</b> Offer groups or fun workshops centered on mental health as a welcoming, non-stigmatizing resource to improve one’s mental health. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 1.7</b> Identify free, non-gendered sexual health resources. <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term. <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
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	<p><b>Action Step 1.8</b>          Develop crisis housing and permanent housing supports for pregnant and parenting youth with services tailored to support the health of parents and children.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Long-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2</b>          Integrate health and wellbeing supports into youth and young adult serving programs.</p>	<p><b>Action Step 2.1</b>          Create opportunities for young people to engage in positive outlets, discover passions, and express themselves through their interests.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.2</b>          Support spaces that serve youth and young adults in showcasing art that reflects the hardship and celebrates the perseverance of LGBTQ and Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) experiences.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Long-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.3</b>          Youth and young adult serving programs will support youth in developing self-care practices as part of their service provision.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.4</b>          Integrate peer supports into programming to provide general support like assisting youth with going to health-related appointments.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.5</b>          Provide program staff with trauma-informed care and cultural</p>

	<p>sensitivity training.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.6</b>  Create opportunities for young people with lived experience of homelessness or housing instability to enjoy activities together.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short- to mid-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p> <p><b>Action Step 2.7</b>  Create opportunities for young people with lived experience  Ensure that all YHDP-funded program staff are trained in how to connect youth to substance use treatment if/when they want it.  <b>Timeframe:</b> Short-term.  <b>Responsible Entity:</b> To be determined upon project implementation.</p>
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## Governance & Decision Making

To ensure that this Plan was developed in keeping with our guiding principles of youth collaboration, equity and inclusion, and innovation, we developed the following framework for governance:

**Planning Committee:** Consists of the total group of various stakeholders such as representatives from the YAB, CoC leadership, youth service providers, and system partners, such as representatives from the McKinney-Vento program and the Department of Children and Families. This is the decision-making body for the CCP and the types of projects to be funded through the YHDP. The Appendices includes a roster of committee member names as well as a stakeholder list which details the sectors involved in planning.

**Leadership Committee:** Includes representatives from the YHDP Lead Agency (CTI), CoC leadership, YAB, and technical assistance providers. The role of the Leadership Committee was to provide guidance and facilitation for the YHDP process, and pull together the information generated by the other bodies into what is now this Plan.

**Focus Groups:** The Planning Committee members joined focus groups to brainstorm ideas around needs, goals, objectives, and action steps for each topic area.

**Youth Action Board:** Includes YYAs with lived experience and expertise of homelessness. They contributed to the brainstorming of needs, goals, objectives, and action steps for each topic area.



We followed a consensus-based decision-making process when deciding what would be included in this plan. The Leadership Committee convened the full group of Planning Committee members, prepared agendas and facilitation notes for meetings and focus groups, facilitated meetings and focus groups, and facilitated the consensus process. While this body was responsible for moving this process forward, the Leadership Committee did not have sole decision-making. Content was generated at the YAB and Focus Group level, which was then brought to the Planning Committee to review and give final approval.

For each decision made, all Planning Committee members were asked to either 1) agree, 2) agree with reservations, 3) stand aside, and 4) block. A choice to agree or agree with reservations signals a choice to approve and implement the item being decided. A choice to stand aside means that while the individual defers their choice, they consent to the item being approved and implemented. Finally, any individual choosing to block has the ability to prevent the item from being approved and implemented. This decision-making structure gives the most agency to individuals, whose voices might otherwise be diluted through a majority vote process.

## New Projects

As a result of months of planning meetings and focus groups, the Planning Committee arrived at recommendations for new projects. This process entailed reviewing trends in the community’s needs; identifying current system gaps and strengths; reviewing the flow of how YYAs currently access resources; generating solutions to meet the needs in light of gaps and strengths; ranking solutions by priority; and checking for consensus in adopting these ideas.

The Planning Committee recommends the following projects to best meet the needs of YYAs in our community and optimize our youth homelessness system.

Project
Youth Navigation
Crisis Transitional Housing
Flexible Housing Options (TH-RRH)
Joint TH-RRH for Pregnant/Parenting Youth
Rapid Rehousing
SRO Style Permanent Supportive Housing

While these projects were designed to provide guidelines for projects to be funded through HUD’s award of \$6,055,727.29 (to be spent over a 24-month period), the Planning Committee understands that the actual cost of scaling up these projects to the entire YHDP committee may likely exceed this award. As such, this plan serves as guidance for projects to be implemented, as well as current projects, in alignment with the YHDP process, principles, and best practices. Some funding of this award is reserved for the Planning Grant to implement the Plan, as well as ongoing compensation for YYA participation.

In awarding and distributing these funds, DHCD will undergo a procurement process to solicit organizations to operate these projects within the design elements outlined below. DHCD is represented on the Leadership Committee, and as such developed their procurement process with the guidance of the YHDP process as well as technical assistance. Providers who will apply for projects were recused from the procurement development process.

## Youth Navigation

Youth Navigation will help YYAs connect with the services they need to end their housing crisis. The project will consist of mobile staff who provide navigation services from their initial touchpoints with the homeless response system until they are enrolled in a housing program or permanently housed through other resources. Mobile staff will have the ability to meet youth and young adults in a variety of settings, such as locations where unsheltered YYAs may be residing.

Services may include assisting YYAs with:

- Diversion/housing problem solving conversations
- Connecting with crisis housing options
- Completing Coordinated Entry assessment
- Accessing transportation
- Supporting youth to reduce housing barriers, like obtaining an ID, resolving debt/arrears, etc.
- Connecting with resources to meet basic needs
- Crisis Transitional Housing

## Crisis Transitional Housing

This program will provide youth-specific crisis housing and services that would be immediately available to all young people entering homelessness, including minors. Funding will provide single-site units with staffing onsite 24/7. Through this model, YYAs will be offered supportive services that aim to quickly move youth into stable housing, including clinical supports.

## Flexible Housing Options (TH-RRH)

The goal of this project is to provide immediately available, flexible housing options open to all youth and young adults at imminent risk of homelessness or literally experiencing homelessness. Services are defined as youth-driven and individualized, using a progressive engagement approach, with low ratios of staff to participants.

- Transitional housing portion: provides immediately available, temporary crisis housing with the ability to provide shared or single site units
- Rapid rehousing: provides short to medium-term rental assistance and service supports; master-leasing model; would request to go up to 36 months of rental assistance

## **Joint TH-RRH for Pregnant and Parenting Youth**

This community found that they had a significant gap in both crisis housing and permanent housing options that were designed to meet the needs of young families. The goal of this project is to provide immediately available crisis housing to pregnant and parenting youth, providing a longer on-ramp to rapid rehousing. Services will be tailored to pregnant and parenting youth, such as connection to affordable child care, parental skill-building, and fostering community connections

Some of the key elements of this project include:

- Transitional housing: provides immediately available, temporary crisis housing with service supports
- Rapid rehousing: provides short to medium term rental assistance and service supports; household holds the lease

## **Rapid Rehousing**

This program would provide short to medium-term rental assistance and services in an apartment of the participant's choosing.

Supportive services offered will support youth in keeping their housing, and may include transportation, budgeting, employment/education connection, community integration/intentional community, and connection to mental health supports

## **SRO Style Permanent Supportive Housing**

This project will provide ongoing (not time-limited) rental subsidy and service supports. Available to households who have a member with a disability.

Single Room Occupancy housing where someone has their private, lockable room but shares the kitchen and/or bathroom spaces. Alternative: shared housing.

Services would foster connections with the community, access to education and employment, health and wellbeing supports, conflict resolution/peer mediation, and support groups.

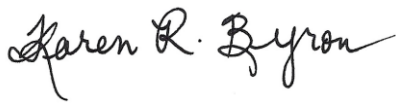
## HUD Required Signatures

In Section III.F.b of the FY 2018 YHDP NOFA, HUD requires that representatives of the Continuum of Care, Public Child Welfare Agency, a Local Government Agency, and the Youth Action Board, participate in the planning process, approve of the coordinated community plan, and provide a signature verifying their approval. The purpose is to ensure broad partnership and shared ownership in a program that crosses multiple sectors and jurisdictions.

We, the representatives of these entities, verify that our agencies have participated in the planning process, reviewed this document, and approve of this document as the northern region of the Balance of State Continuum of Care's coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness.

We commit to supporting the implementation of this plan. We will work to ensure that its values and principles are upheld and that we remain reliable partners to the many stakeholders who have invested so much time and effort in its creation.

Signed by the following HUD required representatives:



05/12/2022

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DHCD; Balance of State Continuum of Care: Karen Byron, CoC Supervisor

Date

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MA Department of Children and Families: Linda Spears, Commissioner

Date



05/12/2022

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Department of Housing and Community Development, Gordon Calkins

Date

## HUD Required Signatures (Cont.)

Signed by the following YAB representatives on May 11, 2022:

Cassidy Peinert  
Cassidy Peinert

Diamond Redding  
Diamond Redding

BILLY CAPELO SONFAOIS  
DONGSON

Billysonfaois

Caroline Martinez  
Caroline Martinez

Kassandra Rivera  
Kassandra Rivera

Anthony Pires  
Anthony Pires

Paul Goulk

Amara Kamara  
Amara Kamara

Paul Goulk

Allahna Rodriguez  
Allahna Rodriguez

Genesis Otero  
Genesis Otero

Marilyn Mbombo  
Marilyn Mbombo

Jesalina Sabater  
Jesalina Sabater

Devin Chetra  
Devin Chetra

Ashley Asuncion  
Ashley Asuncion

## **Appendices**

<b>HUD-Required Principles</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Planning Team Sector Matrix</b>	<b>41</b>



## HUD-Required Principles

Mentions of the HUD-required principles can be found on the following pages:

### **USICH Youth Framework and Four Core Outcomes:**

- **Stable housing:** pp. 15-18
- **Permanent connections:** pp. 26-27
- **Education/employment:** pp. 23-25
- **Social-emotional well-being:** pp. 28-31

### **Special Populations Impact & Strategies**

- **LGBTQ+:** pp. 12, 15, 17, 23, 26, 28-30
- **Gender non-conforming:** pp. 12, 28-30
- **Minors:** pp. 9-10, 26, 35
- **Justice involved:** pp. 10, 15-16, 26, 29
- **Foster care involved:** pp. 10, 15-16, 26

**Equity:** pp. 7-8, 15-16, 19-22, 28

**Positive youth development (PYD):** pp. 8, 15, 23

**Trauma informed care (TIC):** pp. 12, 15, 28-30

**Family engagement:** p. 12, 26

**Housing First:** pp. 15-16

**Unsheltered homelessness:** pp. 9-11, 15, 35

**Youth choice:** pp. 8, 23, 26

**Individualized and client-driven support:** pp. 8, 35

**Social and community integration:** pp. 12, 26, 36

**Coordinated entry:** pp. 16, 35

## Planning Team Sector Matrix

Sector	Organization	Role
Youth Action Board (required)	Youth Action Board	Decision-Making Entity
Local and State Government	Department of Mental Health, DHCD	Planning Committee Members, Leadership Committee Members (DHCD)
Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Agencies	Vinfen, Department of Mental Health	Planning Committee Members
Affordable Housing Providers	Community Teamwork	Planning Committee Members, Leadership Committee Members
Early Childhood Development and Child Care providers	Community Teamwork	Planning Committee Members, Leadership Committee Members
Local and State Educational Agencies	McKinney Vento program liaisons, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Planning Committee Members
Institutions of Higher Education	Middlesex Community College, UMass Lowell	Planning Committee Members
Non-Profit Youth Organizations	Community Teamwork Youth Services Program	Planning Committee Members, Leadership Committee Members
WIOA Boards and Employment Agencies	MassHire, YouthBuild Lowell	Planning Committee Members
Organizations that serve culturally specific (Black, Latino, Indigenous, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, etc) communities	New American Center	Planning Committee Member