

Young Adults Who Experience Homelessness or Housing Instability and Exchange Sex To Meet Their Basic Needs: Findings & Recommendations

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Foreword

There is significant overlap among the populations of young adults (defined for these purposes as ages 18 -24) who experience homelessness and those who exchange sex to meet their needs. In the 2021 MA Youth Count, 17% of all young adults experiencing homelessness ---**one out of every six**--- reported having ever exchanged sex to meet their needs.¹ However, these co-occurring experiences are not always identified by providers. [The MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness](#) discusses how this subpopulation often goes undetected, saying “It is believed that the [HUD Point in Time Count]² and Youth Count miss these youth as they are not in shelters or the typical places that youth experiencing homelessness congregate.”³ Furthermore, even when these young adults are identified, providers are not always aware of or equipped with the appropriate resources to best serve these young people.

[The Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission](#)⁴ undertook this project to better understand the ways that homeless youth programs and services that receive funding from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services are also meeting the needs of young adults in these programs who exchange sex or sexual content to meet their needs. While there are many approaches to this issue, the Commission attempted to take the most inclusive approach possible, integrating multiple perspectives and insights from providers and individuals who work with young adults. Because of the diversity of opinion on this issue – how and why young people find themselves in these challenging situations- the team focused its attention on how homeless youth service providers could be better equipped and trained to support young people. Ultimately, there was shared agreement that this subpopulation of young adults needs improved access to harm reduction-oriented, trauma informed supports, services, and resources to improve their mental, physical, and social well-being. This report does not make judgments on the diversity of opinions nor the difficult challenges these young people face; rather it provides recommendations on the supports and resources young people need to be safe and welcomed by EOHHS youth services providers and other state agencies as they navigate a system that is not always prepared to provide the right support. This report has been viewed and vetted by the many stakeholders involved (see Appendix A), and the Commission is proud to submit this work for broader review.

¹ The MA Youth Count is an annual statewide survey used to learn about the scope and needs of youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness. For more information, see https://mahomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/images_exec_summary-1.pdf

² The HUD Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. For more information, please see <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/>

³ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-state-plan-to-end-youth-homelessness/download>, pg. 56

⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission>

Introduction

"I think I was 12 the first time [I exchanged sex]. I needed a place to stay...It met my needs. I had been in the system a long time and it never felt safe. It ended with me being on the street. I would rather be in the street than in some home with people who are unsafe. This led me to live this lifestyle where I exchange sex to meet my needs. I had a mother who did the same thing, it was normal for me." -Young Adult

The purpose of the MA Special Commission on Unaccompanied and Homeless Youth (UHYC) is "to study and make recommendations regarding services for unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, [and] to ultimately provide comprehensive and effective responses to the unique needs of this population."⁵ Within the population of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, there are a number of subpopulations that require special attention and more tailored support; one of them being young adults (ages 18-24) who are exchanging sex to meet their needs. As such, the UHYC engaged in research to gain a better understanding of this subpopulation, to gain insight on EOHHS⁶ funded Homeless Youth Service Providers' current methods of serving young adults who are exchanging sex to meet their needs, and to develop a coordinated state effort to better equip these providers to improve outcomes for this subpopulation.

It is important to note, practices and resources designed to meet the needs of young adults who exchange sex to meet their needs must be available to all young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Many of these young adults may not want or choose not to disclose their experiences, and should not have to disclose them in order to get the help they seek. A "targeted universalism"⁷ approach would encourage organizations to set and achieve universal goals for all clients; similarly, a "universal supports" approach would offer relevant supports to all young adults, regardless of their disclosure of exchanging sex to meet their needs. These approaches would fill gaps for this vulnerable, and often hidden, subpopulation while ultimately making experiences of homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring for all young adults who seek help.

Definitions

For this project we created the term "**Young adults who have exchanged sex to meet their basic needs**" (YA-ESN) to encompass young adults (ages 18-24) who are being exploited or trafficked, young adults who exchange sex, sexual favors, or sexual content for things they need such as housing, and young adults who consensually choose to do sex work. Note, the scope of this project and subsequent recommendations do not include youth who

⁵ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission>

⁶ EOHHS: MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services

⁷ <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism>

are under age 18 as there are different legal implications for minors than for individuals who are over 18⁸.

Additionally, though this report also uses the terms defined below, it is important to note that individual experiences are often much less clearly delineated:

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC): According to both National and MA General Law, CSEC is a commercial transaction that involves the sexual exploitation of a child, or person under the age of consent (16 years of age). It includes activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person. CSEC also includes situations where a child, whether or not at the direction of any other person, engages in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value, which includes non-monetary things such as food, shelter, drugs, or protection from any person. In Massachusetts, CSEC is considered child abuse and mandated reporters are required to file a 51A report upon the suspicion of CSEC. Filing the 51A report initiates a specialized multidisciplinary response that survivors of CSEC are entitled to. In Massachusetts, the element of coercion does not need to be present for a child to meet the definition and be considered a commercially sexually exploited child.^{9,10,11}

Sex trafficking: According to MA General Law, sex trafficking is when an individual “knowingly: (i) subjects, or attempts to subject, or recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides or obtains by any means, or attempts to recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide or obtain by any means, another person to engage in commercial sexual activity, a sexually-explicit performance or the production of unlawful pornography in violation of chapter 272, or causes a person to engage in commercial sexual activity, a sexually-explicit performance or the production of unlawful pornography in violation of said chapter 272; or (ii) benefits, financially or by receiving anything of value.”¹² Federal law states that sex trafficking is: “a) when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”¹³

⁸ This is defined as Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children; defined below. Though the Commonwealth determined that a young person can consent to have sex at age 16, sexual exploitation/trafficking is considered by the Commonwealth of MA to be an act of violence and a crime against anyone under the age of 18.

⁹ MA General Law, <https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlexvii/chapter119/section21>

¹⁰ National Institute of Health, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5673585/> (OJJDP, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/commercial-sexual-exploitation-children>)

¹¹ As noted above, this report does not address the needs of sexually exploited children, as it focuses on young adults between 18 - 24 years of age.

¹² MA General Law, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/human-trafficking-statutes-102-018>

¹³ <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking>

Sex work: According to The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Gender and HIV/AIDS: “A broad definition of sex work would be: ‘the exchange of money or goods for sexual services, either regularly or occasionally, involving female, male, and transgender adults... where the [individual] may or may not consciously define such activity as income-generating...”¹⁴

Methods

Consultants engaged multiple stakeholders, asking them about current practices, knowledge, and recommendations for working with YA-ESN. (A complete list of stakeholders may be found in [Appendix A: Stakeholders](#)). This engagement process included:

- 1) One-on-one informational interviews with Homeless Youth Providers (See [Appendix B: EOHHS Funded Homeless Youth Providers](#) and [Appendix C: Key informant interview guide](#))
- 2) A survey of stakeholders (See [Appendix D: Stakeholder Survey](#))
- 3) Focus groups (See [Appendix E: Provider Focus Group Guide](#))¹⁵ with:
 - a) Providers who serve individuals who have been commercially sexually exploited
 - b) Providers who serve individuals who identify as sex workers
 - c) Service providers working with young adults who experience homelessness
- 4) Focus groups with young adults that self-identified as having ever exchanged sex to meet their needs¹⁶ (See [Appendix F: Young Adult Focus Group Guide](#).)

The subsequent findings and recommendations then went through two rounds of review from the above stakeholders (See [Appendix G: Feedback Review Guide](#)), including with young people with lived experience of ESN. Finally, the resulting recommendations were reviewed by staff from each named state agency in order to refine the following final recommendations.

¹⁴ UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Gender and HIV/AIDS (2005), from its fact sheet "HIV/AIDS, Gender and Sex Work"

¹⁵ Note, some of these providers also identified as having lived experience in these areas

¹⁶ The YA-ESN for these focus groups were recruited from EOHHS funded Homeless Youth Providers

FINDING 1: Youth Homelessness Service Providers are not consistently meeting the sexual health needs of young adults who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

When asked: “How well do you think your program meets the sexual health needs of your clients?” 52% of surveyed providers indicated “not at all” or only “slightly.”

When youth homelessness service providers were asked about services and supports offered to YA-ESN, we found that the overall sexual health needs of young adults utilizing these programs were not being met. Typical support in this area might include: asking clients about their sexual risks, offering sexual risk reduction materials (such as condoms, lubricant, dental dams etc.), and training staff on sexual health topics.

Specifically, even though 77% of homeless youth service providers reported being trained in Harm Reduction:

- Only 63% of Homeless Youth Service Providers reported that their program currently distributed condoms
- 27% of Homeless Youth Service Providers did not distribute any type of safer sex supply at their program
- Only 40% of Homeless Youth Service Providers distributed other supplies such as internal condoms, latex free condoms, or lubricant
- 52% reported no training on HIV/STI prevention
- 71% reported no training on sex positivity
- 55% reported no training on LGBTQ+ sexual health

Young adults reinforced this finding, saying, “[Organizations should be] more inclusive about the kinds of protections offered. I am a lesbian, I didn’t have protection/access to dental dams.” and “[Organizations should provide] a more in depth educational discussion [about sexual health]. I want to learn more about PrEP¹⁷ and HIV. I never learned about those.” Though some programs - most specifically those that are part of HIV Prevention or LGBTQ+ services- had a specific focus on and fluency in sexual health topics, most of the programs whose primary focus was providing services to young adults experiencing homelessness or housing instability did not consistently address this issue.

¹⁷ PrEP, short for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, is a medicine people can take to prevent HIV. See also [MA Department of Public Health HIV PrEP informational webpage](#)

Recommendations to Address Finding 1

1. Require all EOHHS funded Homeless Youth Providers to provide access to safer sex supplies in their programs, including at drop in centers and during street outreach as applicable.
 - a. To support access, EOHHS should connect providers to the Department of Public Health (DPH) Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences (BIDLS) to assess access to distribution of supplies for safer sex supplies, resources and referrals
 - b. To minimize shame and stigma, encourage programs to place safer sex items in discreet locations, such as the bathroom or another place that affords privacy to those accessing items
2. Connect with DPH's Office of HIV/AIDS (OHA), BIDLS, Community Health Education Centers (CHEC) or other organizations that offer training to explore existing sexual health education trainings and assessments that can be tailored to youth homelessness providers (especially gender inclusive and trans friendly assessments that are based in harm-reduction and sex positive approaches).
 - a. Include sexual health training in recommended trainings for providers working with YYA experiencing homelessness
3. Homeless Youth Providers should partner with BIDLS-contracted providers that provide¹⁸ PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) and PrEP (Pre- Exposure Prophylaxis) to reduce the risk of HIV infection.¹⁹

¹⁸ A list of BIDLS-contracted PEP and PrEP providers may be found here:
<https://www.mass.gov/hiv-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep/locations>

¹⁹ For more information on the PrEP Drug Assistance Program (PrEP DAP) may be found at
<https://crine.org/prepdap>

FINDING 2: Young Adults experiencing homelessness have limited financial resources and exchanging sex allows them to attain funds to meet basic and other needs. Marginalized populations, including young adults of color, trans-identified young adults, or those without legal status, face compounded challenges of obtaining income.

"I was 21 and got out of jail. I didn't have anywhere to stay, and couldn't see my kids. I was in a bad mental state. I felt desolate. I did it [exchanging sex] so I could get money for hotels, new clothes so I wouldn't be judged for looking homeless. It's hard to breathe sometimes when you're homeless. I would dress up and look nice. It gave me the opportunity to shower, and get interview clothes. Eventually I got a housing voucher. I had it for 5 months before I found a place, and the whole time I used exchanging sex to "get spiffy" for landlords and pay for CORI checks, and try to flourish. Even with working - I made \$300 a week. Exchanging sex I could make that in two hours. Money over mind. It's something I wish I never did." -Young Adult

Many young adults and providers identified that a major factor in a young person exchanging sex was a lack of funds to consistently pay for basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, medication, and other necessities. One provider commented, "[Exchanging sex] is a way people get by, make money, and survive." One focus group participant explained that for them, "[exchanging sex] is all for temporary needs, sometimes it's just for breakfast." Another young adult shared, "When I was exchanging sex I was using the money to pay for "protection" and a car to sleep in."

Recommendations to Address Finding 2

In order to increase the opportunities that young adults have to attain income or otherwise meet their needs, we recommend increasing young adults' access to financial and other resources. Special attention must be paid to young adults who are part of marginalized populations, as their access to financial resources is even more limited by systemic and structural challenges such as prejudice, racism, homo- and trans-phobia, and legal issues.

1. Increase access to federal and state benefits and entitlements by training and connecting providers to the state and local point-people responsible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)²⁰, the Residential Assistance for Families in

²⁰ Note: for individual youth who are not parents, SNAP is the primary DTA program that they would be eligible for, unless a young adult also has a documented disability and is eligible for EAEDC

Transition (RAFT) program, Fuel Assistance, Mass Health, and Social Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)

- a. For SNAP benefits, strengthen the existing connections between Homeless Youth Providers and Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)-Homeless Liaisons. The DTA-Homeless Liaisons are the key points of contact for the shelters and housing services providers in the local areas and are available to provide information and client support for individuals eligible for, or in receipt of, DTA benefits.
2. Strengthen connections between Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Youth Services (DYS) area offices (including DCF Adolescent Units) and Homeless Youth Providers to better support young adults aging out of state custody, including helping them sign up for the benefits to which they are entitled. Additionally, encourage youth and young adults who meet the criteria for sustained connection to DCF to access services or re-engage in services. If youth are determined eligible for sustained connection with DCF ensure youth and young adults are accessing housing resources including but not limited to housing vouchers, Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers²¹ where available, Housing Consumer Education Centers services, Housing Support and Stabilization services, etc.
3. Explore piloting direct cash transfers for this subpopulation among a few EOHHS-funded homeless youth providers; consider how much income support would be needed to offset income made from ESN.
4. UHYC to assess the geographic distribution of low-threshold drop-in centers for young adults, and where gaps exist, EOHHS, DHCD, and DMH may consider co-investing funding towards the creation of such drop-in spaces to meet basic needs and create spaces of inclusion and belonging. If possible, operate and staff some drop-in centers to be open 24/7.
5. Require EOHHS-funded homeless youth grantees to have low-barrier access to basic needs supplies in every region (via drop in centers/street outreach or office-spaces); ensure that supplies are presented in gender/sexual expression affirming ways (i.e.: not having a drawer labeled “feminine products” but rather “menstrual products”).
6. Connect with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and MassWorkforce’s Title I Youth Program²² including Youthworks, regarding supportive employment pathways for YYA experiencing homelessness so that they can find and

²¹ https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi

²² <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworkforce-resources-wioa-title-i-youth-program>

maintain long-term employment at sustainable wages. This could include paid job training with trauma-informed support around employment. DTA-Homeless Liaisons can also connect eligible individuals with SNAP Path to Work.²³

7. At annual monitoring, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) should encourage shelters and congregate housing programs to offer flexibility with curfews as they are able for individuals who are employed with non-traditional or fluctuating hours, so YAs can maintain their income while in shelter.

FINDING 3: Providers serving youth experiencing homelessness are not consistently identifying YA-ESN, and young adults should not need to disclose ESN to receive appropriate support.

“Someone came to us and wanted help getting out. They didn't want to make a police report, there was a lot of concern there. They are also working on getting citizenship paperwork and a green card - [they were] concerned about this negatively impacting citizenship. What they wanted was support and someone to talk to. We ended up referring to the Violence Recovery Program at Fenway. They were worried about having phone numbers, so we got them a new phone that the exploiter didn't have the number to. Then we did safety planning. They were scared they would be found. The person didn't know where they lived, but she was scared they could find her so we moved them to a youth shelter for a few weeks. Once they cut ties with this person (new phone number, shutting down all social media accounts, etc.) they were able to stop communication [with the person that was exploiting them].” -Provider

*“As a male, reaching out for help was just as traumatizing as the act of exchanging sex.”
- Young Adult*

Most homeless youth serving organizations are not consistently identifying young people who engage in ESN. Almost 50% of the surveyed Homeless Youth Providers reported “not ask[ing] about exchanging sex during intake or other data collection points” and 40% reported that they have not received training on “Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking” or “Understanding and Responding to Victims of sexual exploitation.” The majority of surveyed Homeless Youth Providers also reported that “more resources” (73%) and “more connections to other providers” (54%) would improve their ability to support YA-ESN.

²³ <https://www.snappathtowork.org>

However, young adults and some providers highlighted that there are many reasons why YA-ESN would not want to disclose this information to providers and should be able to access needed resources regardless of disclosure. Reasons young adults might choose not to disclose ESN can include, but are not limited to: fear of judgment, concerns about confidentiality, a lack of trust, shame, or a worry that DCF might be called (on behalf of their children if they are parents). One young person stated that *“It was easier coming out as not straight than it was to talk about exchanging sex.”* A provider underscored this sentiment by saying, *“How will knowing the information [about if they are exchanging sex to meet their needs or just having sex for other reasons] change the resources they are getting? If they need safe sex supplies, housing, or employment, they should get it regardless of **why** they need it.”*

Recommendations to Address Finding 3

1. As referenced in the beginning of this document, all programs working with young adults experiencing homelessness are encouraged to take a “universal supports” approach, offering relevant services to all young adults, even if they do not disclose ESN.
2. Create a state-wide resource guide for support services for all YYA experiencing homelessness and include information on drop-in centers, income support, sexual health, domestic and sexual violence resources. Ensure this resource is available online and widely distributed, so that YYA have direct access to it.
3. Recommend questions, based on national best practices, that programs can include in their intake or assessments to appropriately assess clients’ experiences with ESN.²⁴ Consider consulting with My Life My Choice²⁵, who has trained DMH, DCF and DYS as well as recommended intake questions to these state agencies. In developing or utilizing such questions, the following groups should be consulted: people with lived experience, Homeless Youth Providers, domestic violence organization, sexual violence organizations, trafficking/exploitation organizations, sex worker support groups, youth violence, DMH, DCF, DYS, DPH/BSAS, and others.
4. Build capacity of providers and organizational leaders who are serving youth experiencing homelessness through a comprehensive training program including: how to recognize and respond to signs that a young person may be engaging in ESN; how to

²⁴ [My Life My Choice](#) suggests the following intake questions: 1) Have you ever had to exchange sex for money food shelter drugs etc.? 2) Have you ever gone missing from care/home for a period of time where an adult did not know where you were? (Runaway) 3) [If they answer yes to either previous question] During that time were you ever coerced or manipulated into exchanging sex for anything of value? 4) When young people go missing often they have to do things they may not normally do to survive. What did you have to do to survive?

²⁵ <https://www.mylifemychoice.org/>

provide appropriate supports for YA-ESN; compassionate, trauma-informed care; harm-reduction; and appropriate services and referrals.

5. Establish partnerships between Homeless Youth Service Providers and Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence programs/to be able to offer warm handoffs for YA-ESN.
6. Re-examine Youth Count questions on YA-ESN and update as appropriate.

FINDING 4: Young Adults, especially YA-ESN, struggle to obtain and sustain housing for reasons that include the existence of a criminal record and the need to document their income. Landlord prejudice and racism may exacerbate these issues.

"I've never even tried to get housing because I didn't want to jump through hoops for them, like proving income... there are so many things they ask of me that I can't get done immediately, like proving that I even was homeless" - Young Adult

Most young adults working with EOHHS-funded homeless youth programs experience challenges in obtaining and sustaining housing, and such challenges are often magnified for YA-ESN, as they may not have documentable income or may have a criminal record. One provider summarized this barrier saying, *"If this is about them getting into their own housing, do they have an employment record to reference? People have to demonstrate ongoing documented income to sustain the unit."* These challenges may be further compounded by citizenship status or issues of prejudice and racism. One young adult expressed *"...not only am I a male but I am a male of color. When I went to receive services and got frustrated I was assumed to be aggressive and hostile. They gaslight my reactions."* Low-threshold housing (sometimes referred to as a "Housing First" model), which provides housing with minimal pre-conditions, provides a promising approach for housing young adults who have exchanged sex to meet their needs. One provider in Massachusetts suggests, "Requiring people to undergo multiple difficult change processes while houseless, or requiring those change processes as a condition of housing, is misguided... moralism. Beyond any ethical consideration, it also sets people up to fail. Housing is a human right, and no one should be houseless because they are a person who uses drugs or a person who exchanges sex to meet their needs."

Recommendations to Address Finding 4

1. Discuss with EOHHS homeless youth grantees and DHCD how to develop more low-threshold housing that utilizes harm reduction and trauma-informed approaches and supports.
2. Encourage organizations to pursue Master Leasing as an intentional strategy for overcoming housing prejudice and racism, as well as a strategy to house YYA with criminal records or income documentation challenges. When possible and sustainable, encourage organizations to turn over the master lease to the individual so that they can be on the lease.
3. To better understand the housing support needs of YA-ESN, pilot a housing stability assessment with YYA who have experienced homelessness and ESN. Assess if there are areas of support more frequently flagged by YA-ESN.
4. With providers and YA-ESN, identify any policies in housing (both subsidized housing and market rate units) that may affect YA-ESN (such as rules about overnight guests etc.). Work with a legal team to identify when these policies are inappropriate, illegal, or should not be used in evictions.
5. Provide YYA with resources for CORI and re-entry support such as CORI-sealing clinics and expungement, including for juvenile records, and be able to explain to YYA why it can be beneficial to do so.
6. Ensure all programs have access to a “Know Your Rights” training for YYA, in order to help YYA avoid unnecessary criminal charges. These trainings should be applicable to all YYA who are experiencing housing instability, and should include a special section on ESN-related issues.
7. Improve wait times for housing opportunities; including supporting programs to have a landlord engagement strategy and housing search supports.
8. Identify barriers to obtaining and sustaining housing for YA-ESN with a particular focus on youth of color, and other marginalized populations.

FINDING 5: Young Adults, especially YA-ESN, struggle to obtain appropriate and accessible behavioral health (mental health and substance use) support.

“The first time I exchanged sex to meet my needs is when me and my ex- boyfriend got kicked out of his mother’s house after a big event happened. I just lost my daughter, and we were both pretty messed up and had no money. He always made jokes about me [exchanging sex]. Then when I didn’t have a place to go he brought it up doing it, and I said I need a place to sleep. So he said he ain’t going to pay for the car for me to sleep in no more. So I agreed to do it, and it just helped me not be on the streets. I was 19 when I first started [exchanging sex to meet needs] and I was struggling with alcohol so I was always drunk doing these acts, and I would just need to smoke weed to sleep. The money also helped me get things for my daughter, and prove that I had an income to try and get her back. If not prove, [at least] show I had money.” - Young Adult

“[I need} a therapist. Like an expedited therapist. A lot of times you have to do what you have to do to survive, but it weighs on your mental. But every day when I used to do this... I think about how I am only doing this because I have to right now. Therapy takes just as long as housing to get.” -Young Adult

Access to culturally and developmentally appropriate mental health and substance use treatment programs can be challenging for all young adults. Young adults who experience homelessness or housing instability face additional access challenges, as one provider said, *“It is difficult to remain in contact with mental health providers when in the chaos - [people need] transportation, and a safe place to connect.”* Young adults who have exchanged sex to meet their needs often face even further challenges of stigma and judgement, as well as the need for providers who are knowledgeable in the specific challenges this population faces. One provider commented, *“There are very few trauma focused mental health providers in our community - never mind those that understand and treat complex PTSD.”*

Recommendations to Address Finding 5

1. Encourage DMH and BSAS to continue contracting with experts in the field, such as My Life My Choice, to develop and continue to offer training for both Mental Health and Substance Use professionals (including Medicated-Assisted Treatment providers) on how to address the needs of YA-ESN within a harm reduction framework. Ensure that the intersections of mental health and substance use are addressed.

2. Strengthen partnerships with DMH and DPH/BSAS to improve access to appropriate support and treatment options for all YYA –such as educating Homeless Youth Providers to refer YA to the [MA Substance Use Helpline](#), the EOHHS Behavioral Health Help Line (to be implemented in FY23), and other available behavioral health supports for YA-ESN.
3. Encourage DMH and BSAS staff and programs to continue training on how to work with and support YYA, including YYA who are ESN. This training should be designed in consultation with organizations led by people with lived experience of both housing insecurity and exchanging sex to meet their needs.
4. Under the leadership and guidance of people with lived experience, encourage the EOHHS-funded homeless youth regions to establish and publicize a network of peer support groups and other supports led by those with lived experience for YA-ESN, which may be more accessible than traditional mental health services.

Conclusion

This document reflects 18 months of research, discussions, and information gathering on the needs of young adults who experience homelessness and exchange sex to meet their needs (ESN). It highlights the need to better support YA-ESN in the areas of sexual health, stabilizing income and meeting basic needs, obtaining housing, and connecting with behavioral health supports. It also reveals that we need to strengthen multi-system partnerships, as the expressed needs of this population transcend the silos of organizations and state agencies. The focus of this project was to identify areas where EOHHS homeless youth service providers and other state agencies could better support young people who are experiencing this situation, and we believe the findings and recommendations, when implemented, offer ways that providers can yield more thoughtful and trauma-informed services, referrals, and resources. An in-depth and full discussion of the findings and recommendations with the Commission will guide the next steps for implementation.

The authors of this report are indebted to the many individuals and organizations who contributed to the findings and recommendations. Providers from across the Commonwealth graciously shared their time and knowledge, assisting us in recruiting youth focus group participants, completing the provider survey, participating in interviews and focus groups, and many follow-up conversations. We have been inspired by the program staff's tireless work, dedication, and deep commitment to providing the best care possible to youth experiencing homelessness. We also are appreciative of the staff from numerous state agencies who took the time to review this document and share their expertise. Most importantly, we are deeply grateful to the young adults who participated in the focus groups and conversations - you shared your experiences, struggles, and successes with us, and have helped us understand nuances in the issue that we might have otherwise missed. Your insight, courage, and tenacity continues to motivate us to create a system where youth homelessness is rare, brief and a one-time event, and where young adults are able to have their needs met with true choice and agency.

APPENDICES

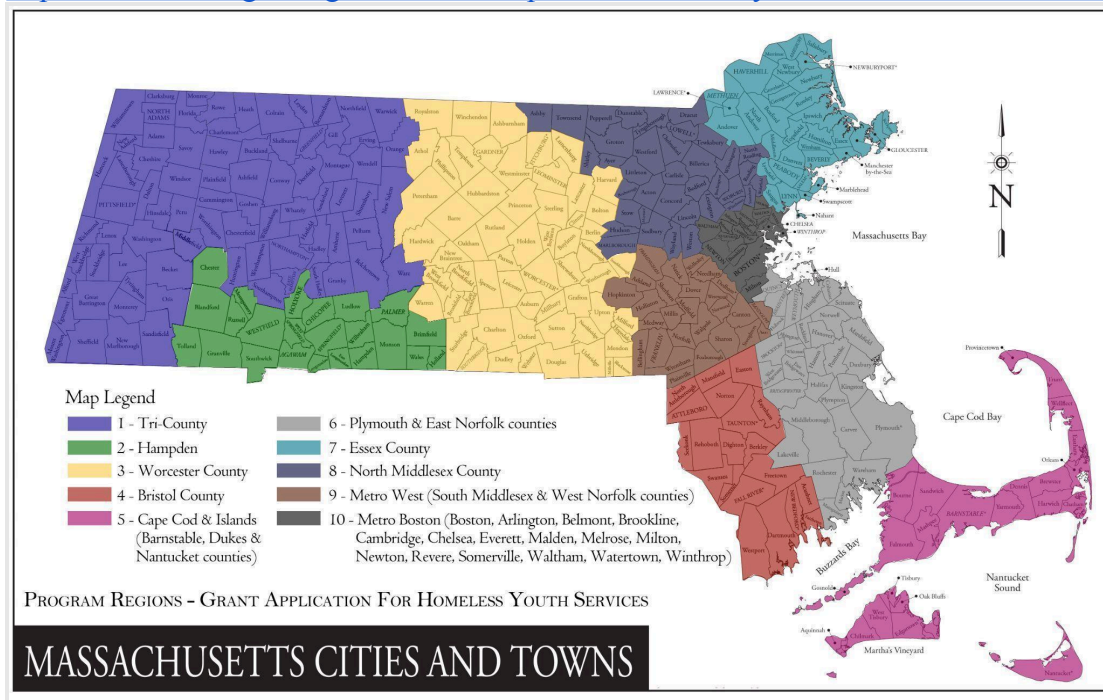
APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDERS

- Barnstable County
- Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority
- Bridge Over Troubled Waters
- Catholic Social Services
- Center for Human Development
- Community Action of Pioneer Valley
- Community Teamwork Inc (CTI)
- DIAL SELF
- EOHHS Office of Children Youth and Family
- Father Bills and Mainspring
- Gandara Center
- Haven Project
- Living In Freedom Together (LIFT)
- LUK
- Lynn Housing and Neighborhood Development (LHAND)
- MA Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- MA Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)
- MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- MA Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- MA Department of Public Health
 - Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences (BIDLS)
 - Bureau of Substance Use Services (BSAS)
 - Office of HIV/ AIDS (OHA)
- MA Department of Youth Services (DYS)
- My Life My Choice
- Old Colony YMCA
- Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) program of the Children's Advocacy Center of Suffolk County
- SMOC
- Steven Procopio, LICSW
- The EVA Center
- United Way
- Wayside Youth and Family Services
- Whose Corner Is It Anyway
- Youth on Fire

APPENDIX B: LIST OF EOHHS FUNDED HOMELESS YOUTH PROVIDERS

Region	Regional Homeless Youth Lead Agency
Three County	Community Action Pioneer Valley
Hampden County	City Of Springfield
Worcester County	LUK
Bristol County	Catholic Social Services
Cape and Islands	Barnstable County
Plymouth County	Father Bills and Mainspring
Essex County	LHAND
North Middlesex County	Community Teamwork Inc
Metro West	SMOC
Metro Boston	Bridge Over Troubled Waters

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission/locations>



APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviews to understand Massachusetts homelessness and housing providers working with young adults who have exchanged sex for money or other needs

Questions:

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, your role, and the organization you are connected to?
2. What populations do you serve? What is the age range that your organization (or program) serves?
3. To your knowledge, does your organization serve young adults who have exchanged sex for money or other needs?
4. Identification - *Laws and policies change once an individual turns 18, and this project is focusing on 18-24 year old young adults because they are not protected by the same laws as minors. With that in mind, identifying YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs can sometimes be a challenge for homelessness service providers. I am going to ask you questions regarding identification.*
 - a. How are these YYA currently being identified in your program?
 - i. Do you ask about this in your intake forms?
 - ii. Where and how does it come up? If so, is the information included in any data collection?
 - b. How might different subpopulations need different approaches for identifying sexual exploitation (*such as gender, LGBTQ+, Black and Indigenous, non-English speaking, and immigrant youth.*)
 - c. How can we improve confidence among various *subpopulations* to be willing to disclose their experiences of exchanging sex to be identified? In your experience, what has worked?
 - d. Are there specific screening questions for identification that you recommend homeless youth programs use?
5. What to do when identified -*once young adults are identified, we know the next steps can be unclear...*
 - a. When a homeless youth service provider interacts with a young adult who is or has been commercially sexually exploited, what are the first steps that you would recommend?
 - b. Does your organization use a harm-reduction approach? What does that look like when applied to the exchange of sex or sexual content for things they need?

- c. What if young adults are not ready or are scared to exit the commercial sex trade, and if so, what are some ways that providers can still support them?
- d. What if young adults are *choosing* to exchange sex? What are some ways that providers can support them?
- e. What are the most significant barriers to working with/engaging with YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs?

6. Housing challenges

- a. What are the specific barriers for the YYA population who has exchanged sex for money or other needs in regard to *obtaining* housing?
- b. What are the specific barriers for YYA exchanged sex for money or other needs population in regard to *maintaining* housing once housed?
- c. What are some innovative and successful ways to overcome these barriers?
- d. Are you aware of any innovative or successful programs (in MA or elsewhere) that work well to assist YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs at *obtaining* housing?
- e. Are you aware of any innovative or successful programs (in MA or elsewhere) that work well to assist these YYA with *maintaining* housing once housed?

7. Sub-population questions

- a. What are some barriers to working with/engaging various subpopulations?
 - i. Specifically, what are some barriers to working with and engaging male, or nonbinary young people who are often under-identified/ or underrepresented?
- b. What are some strategies that you can recommend to better serve these sub-populations?
- c. Are there ways that services and policies should be tailored to gender?
- d. Are there ways that services and policies should be tailored to race or ethnicity?

8. Follow-up services for YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs

- a. Where would you refer these YYA for ongoing services with housing, healthcare, etc.?

- b. Are there other services available in MA for YYS who exchange sex that you know of, and who is eligible to be served?
 - i. Age range, gender, other sub pops?
- 9. Trainings: Federal guidance highlights the importance of training providers to specifically work with this population
 - a. What trainings are you aware of that specifically addresses the exchange of sex for money or other needs? What trainings would you recommend for Homeless Youth Service Providers?
 - b. Do these trainings address young adults (or just minors)?
 - c. Do these trainings address housing needs and special considerations?
 - d. Is there one place where all of this information sits?
- 10. We are specifically looking at the connection between youth homelessness and YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs. What do you think other youth homeless service providers (YHSP) need to know about this population? What do some youth homeless service providers miss when interacting with this population?
- 11. Magic wand questions
 - a. What would you want to add to your programming to provide more support and pathways for identified YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs? (Think big!)
 - b. If you could make 3 recommendations to improve the state's housing outcomes for YYA who have exchanged sex for money or other needs, what would they be? (Dream big!)
- 12. I am going to be conducting a statewide survey of Homeless Youth Providers, as well as a focus group with young adults who have experienced homelessness and have lived experience. What questions do you think it would be helpful to ask either group?
- 13. Are there any other providers/experts in this area that I should interview?
- 14. Is there anything else you would like me to know that I have not asked?

Conclusion: We have come to the conclusion of the interview and I would like to take a moment to thank you for your time and all that you do!

APPENDIX D: STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

SURVEY TOOL for understanding ways Massachusetts homelessness and housing providers are working with young adults who exchange sex to meet their needs (YA-ESN)

Project summary: The MA Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth is trying to better understand how Massachusetts homelessness and housing providers are working with young adults (age 18 - 24) who exchange sex for money or other needs. As part of this work, we will also be asking broader questions to better understand the approaches providers take in meeting the sexual health needs of young adults experiencing homelessness. We know that young adults who experience housing instability and homelessness are more likely than their housed peers to exchange sex for something they need, and hope that with this project, we can improve the ability of homeless youth service providers to identify, serve, and ultimately improve outcomes for YA-ESN including obtaining and maintaining safe and stable housing.

For this project, we define **sexual health** as health as “a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.” (World Health Organization https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/gender_rights/sexual_health/en/)

For the purpose of this project, we use the term “**young adults who have exchanged sex to meet their needs**” (YA- ESN) to encompass young people who are being exploited or have been trafficked, young adults who exchange sex or sexual favors (including sexual images or sexual content) for things they need such as housing, and young people who consensually choose to do sex work. We will ask some questions specific to each category, and some that apply more generally.

For this project we are using the following definitions, that include ways that people define themselves and are defined by others:

Commercial sexual exploitation of children(CSEC) is a commercial transaction that involves the sexual exploitation of a child, or person under the age of consent. (18 years of age). It include activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person. CSEC also includes situations where a child, whether or not at the direction of any other person, engages in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value, which includes non-monetary things such as food, shelter, drugs, or protection from any person.

(National Institute of Health <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5673585/>) (OJJDP, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/commercial-sexual-exploitation-children>)

Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion. Inducing a minor (person under 18)

into commercial sex is considered human trafficking regardless of the presence of force, fraud or coercion.

(US Justice Department <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking>)

Sex work is the consensual provision of sexual services by people who are over the age 18 for money and/or goods. Sex workers are women, men and transgendered people who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services, and who consciously define those activities as income generating even if they do not consider sex work as their occupation. (World Health Organization https://www.who.int/hiv/topics/vct/sw_toolkit/115solution.pdf)

Organization & Staff Questions

1. What is your role at the organization?
 - Direct Service/ Case Manager
 - Program Manager/ Supervisor
 - Senior Leadership
 - Administration
 - other

2. What geographic area does your organization serve? (check all that apply)
 - ☐ Berkshires area / Three County
 - ☐ Springfield area/ Hampden County
 - ☐ Worcester area
 - ☐ Bristol County/ New Bedford, Fall River
 - ☐ Plymouth County/ Quincy, Brockton
 - ☐ North Shore/ Essex County
 - ☐ Lowell area/ North Middlesex County
 - ☐ Framingham area/ Metro West
 - ☐ Metro Boston
 - ☐ Cape and Islands
 - ☐ Other

3. What ages does your organization serve (check all that apply)
 - a. Under 18
 - b. 18 - 24
 - c. Over 24

4. Based on what staff are openly sharing, how much do you feel that your program staff is representative of clients in terms of

	1= not at all	2 = a little bit	3= somewhat representative	4 = very representative	Unsure
Race/ Ethnicity					

Lived Experiences of homelessness					
Sexual orientation					
Gender identity or expression					
Lived experience of intimate partner violence					
Lived experience of sexual violence					
Lived experience of family violence					
Lived experience in exchanging sex for needs					

5. Does your program conduct outreach? (check all that apply)

- a. Street-based outreach on foot
- b. Street-based mobile outreach (ie: medical van, resource van or needle exchange van)
- c. Events
- d. Social media
- e. Word of mouth
- f. Print/radio advertisements
- g. We do not do outreach, but get referrals from organizations that do outreach
- h. No outreach
- i. Other:_____

Sexual Health Questions

For the following questions, please answer as best you can as you think about the **program** you work in (rather than the entire agency).

6. How comfortable are you in asking and talking about the sexual health needs of clients?

Rank 1 - 4; 1 = very uncomfortable, 4 = very comfortable

7. How well do you think your program meets the sexual health needs of your clients?

(Rate 1 - 4, 1 = not at all; 4 = very well)

(Add Comment section)

8. Do you have connections to a provider for PEP/ PrEP (pre and post-exposure prophylaxis)?
- Yes
 - No
 - unsure

9. Does your program distribute the following safer sex supplies?

Item	yes	no	Unsure
External condoms			
Internal condoms			
Lube			
Latex free condoms			
Other (write in)			

10. Where are these supplies located? (check all that apply)

- Staff desk
- Bathroom
- Main area
- "Condom Corner"
- Not sure
- We do not distribute safer sex supplies

11. Who pays for the safer sex supplies?

- Our program budget
- We get them from the Department of Public health
- We get them from a local clinic
- Other
- Not sure

12. We ask questions about sexual health and sexual risk in our intake, including things like gender preference of partners, condom usage, and history of STD/STI and most recent STI testing.
- Rank 1 -4, with 1 being “We do not ask any questions about sexual health” 2 = “we ask a few sexual health questions” 3 = we ask some questions about sexual health 4 = we do a thorough sexual health risk assessment at intake
13. I have received trainings on the following topics while working at this program (chart with yes/no/ not sure)
- Harm Reduction
 - HIV / STI prevention
 - Sex Positivity
 - Sexual Violence
 - Intimate partner violence
 - LGBTQIA+ sexual health
 - Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking
 - Understanding and Responding to Victims of sexual exploitation
 - Trainings specifically about girls
 - Trainings specifically about boys
 - Other
14. Who provided the trainings you received?
15. My program is connected with a health provider for sexual and reproductive health needs, including STI/ HIV testing.
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

Identification Questions

16. Does your program ask questions about YA exchanging sex to meet their needs (YA-ESN) during intake or other data collection points?
- Yes, it is mandatory
 - Yes, it is optional
 - We do not ask about YA-ESN during intake or other data collection points
- If yes, when do you ask these questions?
17. We ask about the following issues during intake or assessment (Check all that apply)
- ☐ Exchanging sex to meet needs
 - ☐ Sexual exploitation or trafficking
 - ☐ Sex work
 - ☐ Sexual risks
 - ☐ Substance use
 - ☐ Domestic violence / intimate partner violence
 - ☐ Sexual violence
 - ☐ Other:_____

18. If you ask questions about YA who are exchanging sex to get their needs met, what are the specific questions that are asked?

a. SHORT PARAGRAPH

19. If you ask questions about sexual exploitation or trafficking, what are the specific questions that are asked?

a. SHORT PARAGRAPH

20. If you ask questions about domestic or intimate partner violence, what are the specific questions that are asked?

a. SHORT PARAGRAPH

21. How often do you work with YA who you identify as:

	1= never	2 = rarely	3 = sometimes	4 = often
Exchanging sex to meet needs				
Being sexually exploited or trafficked				
Doing sex work				
Using substances				
Experiencing domestic violence				
Experiencing sexual violence				

22. What would improve your ability to identify young adults who are exchanging sex to meet their needs within your programs services? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Receiving trainings from people who have lived experience in exchanging sex to meet needs
- ☐ Asking questions about exchanging sex for money, drugs, or a place to stay
- ☐ Improving the comfort of discussing the issue for case managers
- ☐ Being better informed on how and where to reach YA-ESN
- ☐ More staff training
- ☐ More staff awareness
- ☐ More state guidance
- ☐ More conversations around this topic with staff
- ☐ More resources
- ☐ Improving clients comfort in self-reporting
- ☐ Improving sexual health culture in our programs
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None of these

23. Overall, how comfortable are/ would the staff in your program staff/ case managers be in asking 'Have you exchanged sex for food, money, drugs, or a place to stay? (1 -4. 1 = uncomfortable; 2 = Somewhat uncomfortable; 3 = Somewhat comfortable 4 = comfortable)

24. How often do you identify the following subpopulations as YA-ESN?

	1= Never	2= rarely	3 = sometimes	4 = often
Girls/ women				
Boys/ men				
Straight				
LBGQI				
Transgender				
Nonbinary				
BIPOC				
Non-English speaking				

Services, Connection & Resources

25. What are the primary services YA-ESN requests?

- housing
- transportation,
- sexual / reproductive health services,
- case management
- Other:_____

26. Do you notice any difference in what YA- ESN requests when compared with other YA?

27. What would improve staff's ability to provide outreach to connect with YA-ESN? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ More state guidance
- ☐ More resources
- ☐ More training
- ☐ More awareness
- ☐ Hiring staff with lived experience of ESN (general positions that people with lived experience are hired into)

- ☐ More outreach
- ☐ More connection to other providers
- ☐ Hiring peer specialists (positions specifically for peers with lived experience)
- ☐ Improved intake questions
- ☐ Improved organizational culture around sexual health
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None of these

28. What language/terms does your program use to describe YA-ESN? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Sexually exploited
- ☐ Trafficked
- ☐ Sex worker
- ☐ People who trade sex/in the sex trades
- ☐ People in the sex industry/workers in the sex industry
- ☐ Young adult that exchanges sex to meet their needs
- ☐ Prostitute/prostituted person
- ☐ Victim
- ☐ Survivor
- ☐ Other: _____

29. When you identify that a young adult has exchanged sex to meet their needs, what types of services or referrals do you offer? (check all that apply)

- Anti-Exploitation/Anti-Trafficking/Exit Organizations (for example, My Life My Choice, LIFT, Eva Center)
- Sex Worker support organization (for example, Sex Workers Outreach Project Boston, Whose Corner Is It Anyway, Massachusetts Sex Worker Ally Network, SWAN)
- Health clinic
- Sexual Violence Organization
- Domestic Violence Organizations
- Safety Planning
- Problem Solving/ Diversion
- Mental health supports
- None
- Other

30. What gets in the way of supporting YA-ESN? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ not knowing what to do
- ☐ Lack of information about trafficking & exploitation
- ☐ Lack of information about young adults who trade sex to meet their needs
- ☐ Lack of relationships with the young adults
- ☐ lack of resources
- ☐ lack of training
- ☐ lack of staff with lived experience of ESN
- ☐ Fear of liability
- ☐ Uncomfortable issue

- ☐ We don't serve YA-ESN
- ☐ We don't know how to help
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other: _____

31. Are there things that your program/ agency does that you think help make YA feel safe to disclose if they are exchanging sex to meet their needs? (short paragraph answer)

32. What would improve your ability to serve YA-ESN?

- ☐ More state guidance
- ☐ More resources
- ☐ More training
- ☐ More awareness
- ☐ Hiring staff with lived experience of ESN
- ☐ More outreach
- ☐ More connection to other providers
- ☐ Hiring peer specialists
- ☐ Improved intake questions
- ☐ Improved organizational culture around discussing sexual health
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None of these

33. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

34. Are you willing to be contacted for additional information?

If so, provide your name and contact information

35. Is there anything else that you would like the UHY commission to know about young adults exchanging sex to meet their needs and/or more broadly the overall sexual health needs of young adults experiencing homelessness?

36. The rest of this survey has been about young people over 18. This final question is specifically about minors. If you learn that a minor is exchanging sex to meet their needs, which of the following do you do: (check all that apply)

- a. File a 51a on behalf of the child
- b. Call or refer to an agency that specifically works with exploited/ trafficked young people
- c. Assess their safety
- d. Refer to a health clinic
- e. Refer to sexual violence organization
- f. Refer to sex worker support organization
- g. We do not encounter minors who are exchanging sex to meet their needs
- h. I do not know what to do when working with a minor who is exchanging sex to meet their needs
- i. Other

APPENDIX F: YOUNG ADULT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Focus Group Guide for YYA-ESN

Introductions:

We hope that your experiences you share today can be an asset in helping us improve homeless youth service providers' ability to identify and work with young adults who have exchanged sex for meeting their needs, so that we can improve outcomes.

Before we begin, we want to emphasize that everyone in attendance at this meeting has exchanged sex or sexual content (online or over the phone) to meet their needs, or for goods or money. There is absolutely no judgment in this space about having done this. It is important that we feel comfortable sharing openly about this so that homelessness providers can be better prepared to serve this population.

(Review Definitions)

At the end, I will be putting a link to the google form in the chat to collect basic demographics & your payment options. You will be paid a stipend of \$50 through venmo, paypal, or cashapp after the completion of the FG.

Ground rules section:

The topic today is incredibly sensitive, and we want to recognize that now and make sure we are intentional about the way we are communicating together here. If anyone at any time needs to take a break and step away, please feel free to do so to take care of yourself. First, what do you all need from each other and from us to have a good conversation today?

After they add, then:

Be respectful

Judgment free zone

Do not publicize what others share here

Take space, Make space

One person at a time

Confidentiality

Cameras off so people's faces

Don't comment on other people's stories

Before we get started are you comfortable being recorded on this Zoom call? Having a recording will help ensure that my notes accurately reflect your words. My notes will only be shared with the state team. Thank you.

Introductions:

1. I would like for us to start by sharing your name, pronouns, age, what is one thing that makes you happiest?

2. Where are you currently living or staying in Massachusetts, and where did you come from before there?
3. Why did you relocate?

Now we will be moving in to some questions about services and needs:

4. What are the needs of young adults (YAs) that are experiencing homelessness?
 - a. How and where are you getting these needs met now?
 - b. What needs are not being met?

What about specific needs of YAs that exchange sex to meet their needs?

 - c. How and where are you getting these needs met now?
 - d. What needs are not being met?
5. What about sexual health needs, specifically? (such as testing, access to protection etc)
 - a. How and where are you getting these needs met now?
 - b. What needs are not being met?
6. Can you name any specific services organizations that you know of that are available to young people that exchange sex to meet their needs?
 - a. Which services have you used the most, and why?
 - b. Which services have you heard about, but not used?
 - c. If you chose not to use them, why not?
 - d. Are there any particular providers that are known to be especially frequently bad?/good?
7. Talk about a time when you felt satisfied with the support/help from a service provider. What did you specifically like about them?
8. What problems and hurdles do you run into when trying to get support/help from service providers?
9. How does your identity (race, gender, intersection of both) impact how you received services?
10. How does your identity (race, gender, intersection of both) impact your experience of exchanging sex for needs?

This next set of questions is about how staff and service providers treat you when they find out you have exchanged sex to meet your needs, and how you wish they would treat you.

11. In your opinion, what qualities should a service provider show when working with young people who have exchanged sex?

- a. Do you feel as if most service providers you have met with have shown these qualities?
- 12. How often are you asked whether you have exchanged sex to meet needs by service providers?
- 13. What would increase trust and comfort to disclose to service providers?
- 14. Do/ did you feel supported by homeless youth services providers when you self-report that you are exchanging sex to meet your needs?
 - a. If yes, can you name some of the things the provider does to make you feel that way?
 - b. If no, can you name some of the things that the provider does that turn you away?
 - c. If unsure, what are ways that you would like to receive support?

Before we close out, we wanted to give space to share specific experiences or stories that you might want to share if they haven't come up already. Please share only as much as you are comfortable sharing, but there is no judgment in this space and everyone in attendance (including facilitators) has exchanged sex or sexual content to meet their needs.

- 15. Is there anything else you want to share about your personal experiences with housing insecurity or in exchanging sex to meet your needs that you think could be helpful to others?
- 16. If comfortable, can you share the reason you first exchanged sex to meet needs? Can you talk about how old you were, or what was going on in your life?

Now lets move into Magic Wand question

- 17. If you had the power to change or re-build organizations working with young people experiencing housing insecurity who have exchanged sex, what would you do differently?
- 18. Is there anything else you would like me to know that I have not asked?

Conclusion:

We have come to the conclusion of the focus group and I would like to take a moment to thank all of you for your time and all that you do!

If you need to get more support around this subject, here is a list of youth homelessness service providers you can reach out to:

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission/locations>

APPENDIX E: SERVICE PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

AGENDA for ESN feedback sessions (90 min)

- 1) Welcome & Purpose of meeting
- 2) Review Definitions
- 3) Break out groups (no more than 10 min): This is to get you all thinking about and in the space of this conversation. We aren't looking for the right answers here. Think about young people who are experiencing homelessness and have exchanged sex to meet their needs.
 - a) What do you see?
 - b) What are their needs?
 - c) What challenges do you face in serving them? In identifying them?
- 4) Go through findings ONE AT A TIME
 - d) Finding & data
 - e) Reactions --
 - i. Does this ring true?
 - ii. What would you add to this?
 - iii. Have we missed anything?
 - f) Recommendations
 - iv. Would these recommendations improve the problem?
 - v. What other recommendations would you add?
- 5) What did we miss in our current findings/ recommendations?

APPENDIX G: ESN FEEDBACK REVIEW GUIDE

1. Welcome, Purpose & Process

- a. What are we doing in this meeting and how did the document get to this point

2. Group agreements

- a. Be respectful
- b. Judgment free zone
- c. Do not publicize what others share here
- d. Take space, Make space
- e. One person at a time

Last time, those who attended added:

- a. Confidentiality
- b. Cameras off so people's faces
- c. Don't comment on other people's stories

Anything else?

3. Introductions: Name, Pronouns, Race, Age, any other identities you'd like to welcome into this meeting (background, indigenous heritage, etc.)

4. Document Review:

Each section: Does this ring true? Anything wrong/missing? What gets a gold star?

Would things change if this recommendation was implemented?

- a. Finding 1:
- b. Rec 1:
- c. Finding 2:
- d. Rec 2:
- e. Finding 3:
- f. Rec 3:
- g. Finding 4:
- h. Rec 4:
- i. Finding 5:
- j. Rec 5:

5. That's all, folks!