

Guideline for CAN YETI Discussion on Needs of Region to End Youth Homelessness

As a state, we're all working together to prevent and end unaccompanied youth homelessness by the end of 2020, making youth homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring. YETIs, CAN leadership, local providers, area youth, and other regional partners are crucial to achieving this goal. You know your communities best – what resources currently exist, local barriers to achieving our shared goal, the needs of your youth, and how to integrate best practices into your region. We are seeking to facilitate a discussion to understand the unique needs of your CAN. In addition, to identify localized strategies, new partnerships, and priorities for potential new resources. It's time to be innovative!

1. Engagement and Outreach

- a. How confident are you that you are reaching all youth and young adults?

While several young adults do attempt to access the GH CAN via the 211 coordinated entry system, the YETI recognizes that the majority of homeless/unstably housed youth (UHY) are not accessing this system or have tried to but have not been eligible for services. As was noted in Youth Action Hub's work with youth around youth's access to resources, there are many that are not even aware that housing/shelter resources can be accessed by calling 211, as well as those that would just prefer not to contact a "hotline" service for this type of help.

- b. What programs exist dedicated to outreach for youth?

There are 3 outreach-based programs that are specific to youth in the region:

- Peacebuilders
- The Connection
- Center for Children's Advocacy

- c. What engagement/outreach programs exist that include youth and have specific attention paid to youth?

- i. Path?

See answer to 1b. There are other homeless outreach providers in the GH CAN that do have interface with literally homeless youth as well, but those services are not specific to youth. The region recognizes the need for an increase in coordination and communication between those GH CAN Outreach providers and youth-serving agencies.

- d. Drop-in centers for youth /young adults? Formal or informal?

There are no current drop-in centers located in the GH-YETI region yet. It is recognized that organizations that serve young people for other needs aside from housing have the potential to serve as informal drop in centers. (ex: The Library, Our Piece of the Pie, etc). Those providers are currently beginning their involvement with the GH-YETI.

- e. If you could have drop-in places, where would be the best place to locate? How would youth get there?

As the Hartford Public Library is centrally located in the city and falls directly on public transportation lines, this would be one potential site. The presence of library staff and internet access make this a prime location to explore for use as a Drop In center of sorts. Ultimately, the GH YETI would seek feedback from youth with lived experience being homeless to make the most accurate determination of locations and businesses that they naturally utilized the most while they were unstably housed.

- f. Do mobile services exist in this region that serve youth (such as mobile food, mobile healthcare, etc.)?

Not currently.

- g. Where do unstably housed youth and young adults go for help in your region?

While many UHY may access the 211 system, it is recognized that youth tend to seek services from a variety of providers in the region. With internet searches and peer-network utilization being their primary means to determining which agencies to seek help from.

2. Triage

- a. Do you have coordinated access sites dedicated to young adults?

On June 12th, The Connection started as the GH-CAN's dedicated young adult CAN Assessment site. Due to limited staffing resources, this site is only available on Monday's from 12pm until 5pm for diversion/assessment appointments for youth age 18-24. So as not to have youth wait past 48 hours for their assessment, many youths are still booked for appointments at the Diversion Center as well.

- b. Diversion

- i. Do you have funding specific to youth/young adults for diversion?

At present time, there is no youth-specific diversion funds. In the past, The Connection has been able to utilize some of its outreach-based flexible funds for this but those resources are extremely limited and budget-pending.

- ii. Do you have funding for young families – be homeful funds?

Be Homeful funds are available as diversion funds for any families seeking diversion (not limited to young families). In addition, CHR and Mercy Housing and Shelter also have diversion funds that are available for youth and young families, although youth and young families are not prioritized for these resources ahead of any other households.

- c. Mediation services in the region – RHY? DCF? Other?

The GH CAN now has 2 staff trained in STRIVE (from The Connection) and youth outreach services at The Connection also provide mediation to UHY. There are also several mental health clinics located throughout the region that have the potential to perform mediation services as a billable service.

- d. Do you have navigators specific to youth?
There are no current navigators specific to youth in the region.
- e. Emergency Housing/Shelter
- i. Youth Specific (under 18)
The Bridge has a Basic Center grant that is able to provide emergency housing to youth under the age of 18, with parental/guardian consent.
 - ii. Young families
The Connection's young adult shelter services are able to provide emergency housing to single, parenting youth for up to 60 days.
 - iii. Young adult specific
The Connection currently operates an 18-bed young adult scattered site apartment-based shelter program. That shelter runs at capacity each night however and has proven to not be sufficient quantity to meet the need of the area.
 - iv. Serves young adults/youth but does not have special services dedicated to them
All GH CAN area shelters are able to serve young adults over the age of 18.
 - v. Serves adults but has specific accommodations such as private bathrooms, designated areas, etc. for young adults
None currently exist.
 - vi. Other emergency housing options used? (host homes, churches, relative search, DCF, DMHAS, CSSD, DOC)
There have been no other formal emergency housing options identified in the region for young adults. For youth under the age of 18, DCF does have resources regarding relative searches that can be used for youth that have been involved with DCF before. There are also SVIT beds that have the potential to be used by homeless youth provided their families are willing to engage in various services.
- f. If there are no shelter or emergency beds available, what do you do for the above populations?
For youth over the age of 18, they would follow the same process of all adults seeking shelter beds when there are none available (diversion, waitlist prioritization, outreach services, etc).
- g. What are some of the barriers to using these emergency housing options such as prioritization, specific demographic capacity, young adult choice - refusals?
Currently, being a youth offers no level of prioritization for shelter access in the GH CAN (with the sole exception of The Connection's YA shelter). Capacity is the primary barrier as

the existing shelters over full on the majority of nights and as beds do become available, there is a long list of prioritized adults/families that get first access to that bed. Many providers in the YETI have also noted that many youth also tend to refuse the existing adult shelter options, seeking longer-term housing that is viewed as being more safe and more independent than what existing adult shelters offer.

h. Transitional Housing Usage

i. What are your TH resources in your region?

1. Criminal justice?

None identified.

2. HHS funded?

The Bridge operates a HHS-funded Transitional Living Program for single young adults age 18-21.

3. DCF?

CHAP and CHEER are both potential options for youth meeting the DCF re-entry criteria and programmatic criteria. DMHAS also operates the YAS program throughout the GH CAN and has the potential to provide short-term subsidies to youth experiencing homelessness.

ii. Do you utilize TH for emergency housing?

No identified TH program serve as emergency housing currently in the region.

iii. How do you prioritize for TH?

For the GH CAN the TLPs prioritize households who are literally homeless who don't appear to be chronically homeless, but we only really have one "regular" TLP that still exists (South Park Inn). Regarding the TLP/RRH program that The Connection has, referrals for that are taken based on VI-SPDAT/NST score.

iv. How do you prioritize for single young adults?

Currently, the VI-SPDAT is used to prioritize individuals for CAN-involved TH programs. The youth-specific TH program utilizes a different system of entry that falls outside of the CAN, where the NST/VI-SPDAT is not currently being used.

v. How do you prioritize for young families?

The GH CAN no longer have the TLP at My Sister's Place (that program reallocated to Permanent Supportive Housing for families) so we don't have any TLP's that serve families in the GH CAN at this time.

3. **Permanent housing options: What does your region have?**

a. Youth under 18 (DCF, family reconnection, other?)

All permanent housing options for homeless youth under the age of 18 are linked to DCF entry currently.

b. Young adults (RRH, PSH, other (such as security deposit assistance, PHA preference?)

i. RRH anything dedicated specifically to youth/young adults/young families?

The Connection operates the only young adult-specific RRH program in the region currently. There are also PSH beds for young adults age 18-23 who aged out of foster care (managed by Chrysalis in Hartford and CHR in Manchester). There are also a couple of PSH units at My Sister's Place that prioritize young adults and take referrals from the CAN.

c. What are the barriers to accessing these resources? Possible issues include: prioritization, length of time homeless v. youth status, involvement with CAN, systems v. provider driven. For youth-specific RRH, barriers include the varying definitions of homelessness (HUD vs McKinney Vento) and excessive waitlists. For former foster youth PSH, these referrals come from DCF as youth need to be verified for their history of involvement in foster care. It is not currently known how these referrals are prioritized.

d. Affordable housing – what is your supply? What are your barriers to access? (such as need security deposit assistance)
The GH CAN has had trouble identifying affordable housing that was accessible to folks with multiple barriers, especially past evictions and criminal history. The City of Hartford has more affordable housing than other parts of the GH CAN, but for households who want to stay out of the only finding affordable units that don't have the barriers of credit/background checks locating units in the suburbs can be a challenge.

4. Community needs questions:

a. How do you think the community could serve homeless youth better, without additional funding? Do you have a specific suggestion, strategy, or idea for improving services?

Proposed CAN shelter prioritization policy change

Young Adults are not currently prioritized on the shelter waitlists (unless they meet one of the other categories of prioritization such as pregnancy). As this is a regionalized policy made by the Greater Hartford CAN, we would propose that youth get some level of prioritization when they are literally homeless or in very unsafe doubled-up environments. A proposal for prioritization would be for youth to be prioritized as a tie-breaker, shortly after pregnant females for available shelter beds.

Reserved youth beds at existing adult shelters in order to increase accessibility to safe shelter

The CAN would reach out to existing shelter providers to see if any would be willing to set a preference for a fixed number of existing beds specifically for homeless 18-24 year olds or emancipated youth.

Amend shelter rules so that they are more youth-friendly

Presence of curfews at many shelters is often identified by homeless youth as a deterrent from accessing shelter. By encouraging existing shelter providers to examine removing curfews from their practices, acceptance of available shelter beds by youth may increase.

Engagement of existing behavioral health clinics to serve as family mediation sites.

As mediation is a billable service, the YETI would reach out to existing behavioral health centers to determine if any of them would be willing to serve as a “family mediation” site, which would provide mediation services to homeless youth and their families in order to increase rates of youth being able to return home. (Ex: RECLAIM in Minneapolis).

Development of volunteer Host Home/Couch Surfing network?

Regional recruitment of community members that would be willing to serve as a form of safe shelter for homeless young adults in their community. Home studies with criminal background checks would be conducted for each host home. Host Homes would not be paid but would ideally be supported through services and flex funding that could cover incidental costs such as transportation, food, basic needs, etc. As a homeless young person was identified, volunteer host homes could be contacted to see if they were willing to take someone in for the night.

- b. What exists already and do you need more in any of the above categories?
See GH CAN Housing Inventory Chart and Greater Hartford Residential Programs for Youth Chart for current existing inventory available to homeless youth.
Participating members in the YETI identified an increased need in 18-24 emergency/crisis beds, the presence of youth-specific navigators/diversion case managers (discussed in more detail in section e), and an increase in longer-term rapid re-housing specific to youth.
- c. How would you alter existing models to better suit needs of youth/young adults?
YETI members feel that youth can better serve youth by extending the length of stay of most shelter/crisis housing options, extending the length of financial assistance provided by existing rapid re-housing programs, and making several of the prioritization/reservation/curfew adjustments for shelters noted in section a) above.
- d. Thinking creatively, if you had flexible funding, what assistance would help youth/young adults stay safe during housing crisis and/or help them get permanently housed in your region?
As discussed in a. above, flexible funding would be helpful for rolling out a host home program to pay for incidental expenses like transportation, food, basic needs, job training, criminal background checks, and home studies. It could also be used to pair with navigation/case management for diversion purposes while youth are waiting on a shelter, host home, or rapid rehousing placement.

- e. If you had \$200,000 to spend on ending youth homelessness, what would be your housing priorities (outreach/engagement – permanent housing) broken down by percentages? The YETI community members noted that the prioritization of this funding would be for the presence of Youth Navigators (further definition of this navigator’s responsibilities below) and for Permanent Housing options in the form of Rapid Re-Housing (also discussed below).

Youth Navigation Role

Of note is that this would be a different role functionally than existing CAN navigators in that their responsibilities would only partially be in getting youth “document ready”. Rather, Youth Navigators (YN) would primarily be responsible for provided case management services to youth from the time they are placed on the by-name-list until they are stably housed, with targeted services in the following specific areas:

- Employment readiness and employment maintenance. By helping youth entering the CAN, the navigator can work from an “employment first” framework in an attempt to see if youth can increase their permanent/temporary/shelter options provided they have income.
- Connection to education services/resources, McKinney-Vento liaisons, etc
- Reaching out to potential natural supports (including family) to assess under what conditions they could serve as permanent/temporary housing. Attempting to engaged in family members to engage in mediation services with the homeless youth.
- Obtaining needed documents (birth certificate, social security card, etc) which are mutually needed for housing programs and employment/educational resources.
- Working to connect homeless youth to one another, in an attempt to have them “pair up” to increase the potential for shared living arrangements with 2+ youth that have income.
- Connecting youth and navigating youth through the process to enter rapid rehousing if other solutions are not possible. These services could continue and include housing search and housing stabilization while the youth is in rapid rehousing as described below:

Rapid Re-housing Financial Assistance

YETI members identified that existing rapid re-housing programs available through the CAN tend to not provide the necessary financial assistance for long enough for some members of this younger population. Given that, the community would seeking flexible rapid re-housing funding assistance for young adults ages 18-24 with the approximate breakdown as:

- 50% rental assistance for up to 1 year
- 25% rental assistance for up to 2 years
- 25% rental assistance for 2+ years

(These percentages are partially informed by data obtained from The Connection’s rapid re-housing program, which can provide rental assistance for up to 2 years.)

f. What training do you think would be most helpful? For whom?

The community identified a need for increased training around how 211 communicates with youth that call seeking shelter, based on feedback gained from youth that have tried to access the 211 system. (i.e. youth not understanding what the 211 operator is instructing them to do)