

Northeast Coordinated Access Network Needs Assessment

July 12, 2017

The Northeast Region of Connecticut’s Coordinated Access Network (CAN) is a well-established component of the CAN system in place statewide, designed to address the various needs of individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and to end homelessness in the state. The 20 town region is rural, with 4 towns having a population of over 15,000: Mansfield (25,969), Windham (24,727), Killingly (17,069), and Plainfield (15,067). Individuals who are homeless, or who are at imminent risk for homelessness are able to access services by calling 211, followed by an intake assessment and appropriate referrals.

In November of 2016, Connecticut began its next phase of ending homeless with the goal to end youth and family homelessness by the end of 2020. Unaccompanied youth ages 14-18 and young adults, ages 18-24 have different service requirements than adults and, as a result, the NE CAN will need to ensure that the needs of this population are integrated into the system. In January 2017 the first PIT Youth Count was conducted of homeless youth in the northeast region. The results indicated an estimated 140 homeless and unstably housed youth in the NE CAN region (See attachment). From January 1 to June 30, 2017, 925 calls were made to 211 from the northeast region. Of those calls, 13% were from young adults, ages 18-24.

In May of 2017, the first regional open discussion meeting was held to jump start the process of understanding the needs of youth in our region. The meeting was led by Mimi Haley of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and Katie Durand of HUD. Attendees included representatives of agencies that serve the homeless population, as well as McKinney-Vento liaisons and members of the Youth Engagement Team Innovators, a group of people who are dedicated to addressing the issues of youth in homelessness in the region. The purpose of the discussion was to determine the greatest gaps in services for youth and young adults in the area. At the conclusion of the discussion, attendees voted on what they determined to be the greatest needs for services. The results are shown below:

Congregate Housing/Dorms with Supports toward Independent living when appropriate	18-24: 11 Votes Under 18: 5 Votes
Transportation	3 votes
Diversion & Mediation with Flexible Funds	2 votes
Youth Specific Emergency Housing	3 votes
Respite for Non-DCF (under 18 for 30 days):	10 votes
Expand Outreach: (Off hours, phone/app, maximize existing (pediatricians, cops, schools. Potential outreach pilot with college students):	19 votes
Rapid Re-Housing	1 vote

The greatest need, according to the people in the region who attended the meeting, is for outreach and engagement to youth in the region. The discussion brought to light many points regarding the disposition of youth. Most young people who are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing are unaware of who to turn to for help. They do not generally self-identify as homeless. Furthermore, as many of them come from families that are experiencing crises, they tend to have a distrust of authorities in schools and social workers from DCF, making it difficult for them to seek help. An informal street survey conducted with 13 young people, 14-24 years old, at a festival in Willimantic in June, 2017 indicated that, in the event they found themselves suddenly homeless, they would turn to a relative or friend for help. None of the respondents indicated that they would seek the help of an adult professional, such as a school counselor or police officer. The respondents also indicated that they believed the services that should be available for homeless youth are shelters or transitional housing.

Housing Resources for 18-12 youth in the NE CAN

The Northeast Region has five emergency shelters:

- The Windham Region No Freeze Project: seasonal emergency shelter with 30 beds for 18 and older.
- The Holy Family Shelter, which is a 28-bed family shelter serving families with children and unaccompanied female youth over 18.
- Access Shelter: 50 bed family facility serving families with children, youth 18 and older. A no-freeze component is available in the winter months.
- United Services operates 2 domestic violence shelters in the region serving families and youth over 18.
- The Northeast region has several sober houses and subsidized housing units available to youth over 18.
- United Services operates a DHMAS funded Young Adult Services program, which provides housing and life skills for youth with identified mental health disabilities, ages 18-24.

Housing resources for unaccompanied (under 18) youth in NE CAN

Unaccompanied minors must rely on friends, family, or DCF in the event they are suddenly homeless. According to the statistics from the January Youth Count, 47% of the homeless and unstably housed youth in the northeast are 15-17 years old. In the event of a mental health crisis, families are sometimes able to access S-FIT beds at Waterford Country Day School in the southeast CAN region. The only other resource for emergency shelter in this CAN for under age youth is the statewide resource The Connection provides.

Additional Resources for youth in NE CAN

NE CAN – Housing Assessment & referral for youth	18 and older
Over 30 schools with McKinney-Vento Liaisons	School age youth
Youth Service Bureaus in Ashford, Coventry, Columbia, Mansfield, Willington, and Windham	School age youth to age 21
Youth Services through United Services in Canterbury, Eastford, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Thompson, and Woodstock	School age youth to age 21
Generations Family Health Centers in Willimantic, Danielson & Putnam: homeless medical outreach, Nurturing Families and Healthy Start programs working with families and children	All ages
YETI – Outreach activities	Ages 14-24

Gaps in services:

Education and Outreach

In the NE CAN Region the outreach services are limited. PATH outreach is provided through Perception Programs, which serves the 18-year-old and over homeless population in and out of shelter. Two positions serve over 570 square miles of the NE CAN. The YETI group engages the schools during the Youth Count through the McKinney-Vento liaisons. Outreach for the Youth Count and for various other surveys are done by the YETI group on a volunteer basis.

Emergency shelters:

No emergency shelters exist in the region for unaccompanied minors. Furthermore, the adult shelters are not appropriate for young adults through age 24. No host homes, transitional housing, congregate housing, or respite beds exist in the NE Region.

Housing:

Young adults who are homeless are housed through the adult system. The NE Region does not have youth-specific housing.

Transportation:

The Northeast Region has very limited public transportation, making access to services extremely difficult for youth. Bus service between the Windham and Putnam areas only run Monday through Friday, with only 2 buses each day. Most of the remainder of the region has no public transportation.

Submitted by:

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CAN Level Homeless Youth Estimates

Northeastern CT

Estimated Homeless & Unstably Housed Youth in CAN: 140

Age	Estimate	Percent
12-14	15	11%
15-17	66	47%
18-20	37	26%
21-24	22	16%

Gender	Estimate	Percent
Male	74	53%
Female	44	32%
Transgender	22	16%

Sexual Orientation	Estimate	Percent
Straight	81	58%
Bisexual	44	32%
Pansexual	7	5%
Gay	7	5%

Feel Safe Where Staying		
Response	Estimate	Percent
Yes	133	95%
Refused/Don't Know	7	5%

Can Stay As Long As Wanted		
Response	Estimate	Percent
No	96	68%
Yes	44	32%

Criminal Justice Involvement		
Response	Estimate	Percent
No	133	95%
Yes	7	5%

DCF or Foster Care		
Response	Estimate	Percent
No	88	63%
Yes	52	37%