

TOP THREE THINGS

youth said they need right now to improve their well-being:

- 1 Place to live long term
- 2 Help getting a job
- 3 Help getting an education

* HUD awarded the funds to the Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care, which includes all the cities and towns in the counties of Hartford, Litchfield, New Haven, New London, Windham, Tolland, Middlesex, and the City of Danbury. Fairfield County is not part of this Continuum of Care and therefore did not receive YHDP funding, but stakeholders from Fairfield are actively involved in statewide planning and implementation of the grant.

Could Connecticut Be the First State to End Youth Homelessness?

We believe the answer is a resounding **“Yes!”**

5,054
youth under
the age of 25

This is how many young people were estimated to be homeless or unstably housed in Connecticut last year according to an annual count conducted during one week in January.

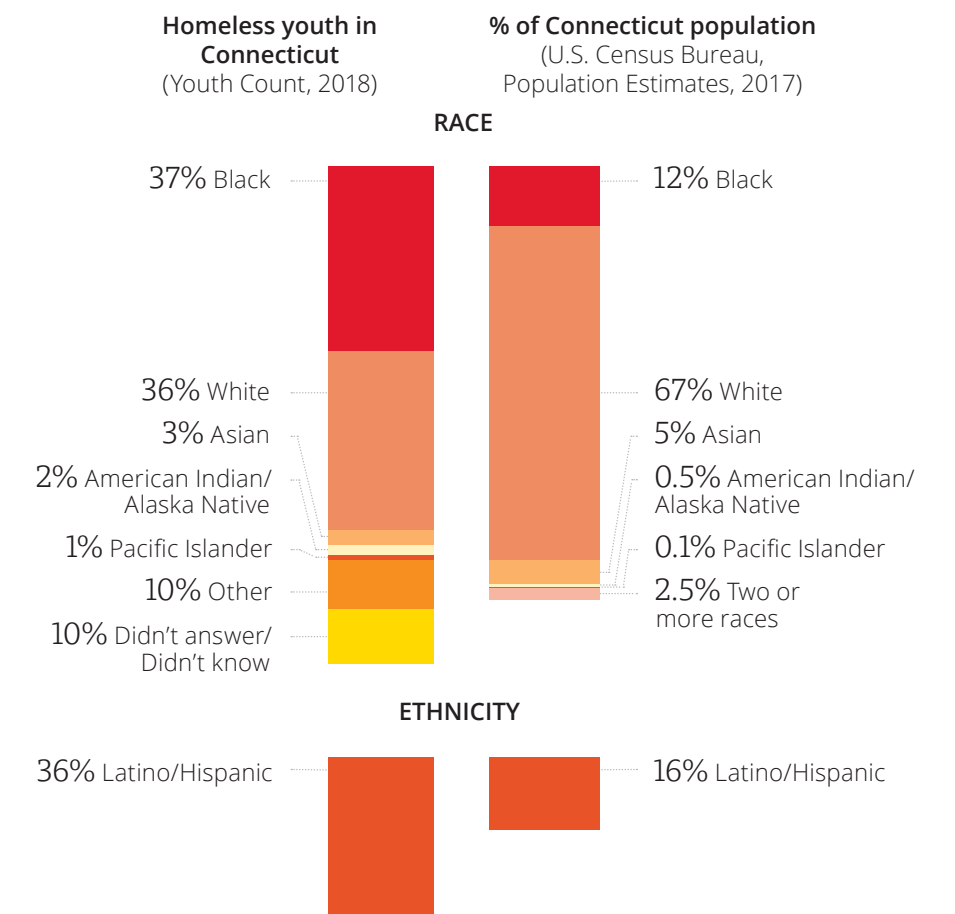
What we know about our youth

While more youth experiencing homelessness are in metro areas like New Haven, Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, and Norwich, Connecticut’s small towns and cities are also impacted. You can dig deeper into the data at: cceh.org/youth-count.

Youth experiencing homelessness are often referred to as an “Invisible Population” because they typically try to blend in with their peers and keep their housing status hidden. These young people are less likely to get the services they need due to shame, fear, hopelessness, and general lack of knowledge about what supports are available.

Demographics

Youth of color experience homelessness at disproportionate rates in Connecticut, mirroring national data.





2018 Connecticut Youth Count Statistics

19%

were pregnant or parenting

23%

identified as LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual)

Safety and Stability

Not having a safe place to call home poses real risks to young people's safety and ability to reach their potential. Of the youth surveyed:

20%

moved more than three times in the last 60 days

Alarming, many reported being pressured or forced to exchange sex for money, drugs, food, clothing, or protection:

14%

of the 18-24-year-olds

11%

youth under 18

Systems Involvement

Youth coming out of the criminal justice or child welfare system are much more likely to become homeless.

21%

have been in juvenile detention, jail, or prison

33%

have been in DCF/foster care

42%

are still in DCF/foster care

Opportunities for Funders

The issue of youth homelessness cuts across so many areas—housing, education, employment, child welfare, health care, juvenile justice, LGBTQ issues, racial equity, and more. As funders working in many different sectors, there is a role for all of us to play. Below are some examples of the kind of work that will enable our state to finish the job of ending youth homelessness.

1 Support Youth Collaboration and Partnership

As we work together to end youth homelessness, it is critical to create authentic opportunities to partner with young people with lived experience and give them a platform to share their expertise. The Youth Action Hub at the Institute for Community Research is currently developing a strategy for youth collaboration and partnership across the state. Their goal is to build and support a statewide coordinated network of youth leaders who have experienced homelessness to work as partners alongside other stakeholders in the design of youth services and the development of policy and practices to end youth homelessness. In order to do this, we must provide career opportunities for youth and provide the tools, trainings, and ongoing professional development for them to take on professional roles in the fight to end homelessness.

2 Build Regional Capacity to End Youth Homelessness

Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETIs) are the regional backbone workgroups that bring together partners working in youth and housing services to end youth homelessness in Connecticut. YETIs are also responsible for organizing and implementing their region's Youth Count, engaging with local schools and institutions, and creating local youth resource guides. YETIs need capacity building support, stipends for youth participation, and the active participation of funders in the community.

3 Launch 100-Day Challenges Statewide

In early 2019, Connecticut plans to launch a series of "100-Day Challenges" across the state to end youth homelessness. This fall, all regions in the state will be invited to join the effort. During a 100-Day Challenge, a community that is wrestling with a tough problem commits to an audacious goal that they aren't sure how to achieve. Through focused coaching and intense collaboration, experimentation, innovation, and execution, community partners figure out new ways to achieve their goal. Insights about the issues being tackled stimulate and inform conversations among leaders in bringing about long-term change. Recent 100-Day Challenges on youth homelessness have achieved results at levels that far exceed normal performance levels. For example, in 2017, a team in Hennepin County, Minnesota set a goal to ensure that 150 youth age 16-24 exited homelessness into safe and stable

housing, of which 75% will be employed or advance their education. 100 days later, 236 youth were in safe and stable housing and 57% were employed or advanced their education.

4 Build the Infrastructure in Your Community

Connecticut was one of ten communities selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for their new Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). This funding enables our state to broadly expand housing and support service capacity for this population, *but it does not fill all the gaps within each region*. For example, there are still funding needs for rental assistance, case management, and crisis housing. Some of the most pressing infrastructure gaps are in Fairfield County since the geographic scope of this YHDP grant does not extend to that region. The Fairfield County team is strongly organized, but they have unique infrastructure and capacity funding needs to meet to ensure that they can end homelessness for young people in their region.

5 Support Development of Outreach and Engagement

Targeted outreach and engagement efforts are critical to reach this often "invisible" population. Early efforts are underway across the state to train staff and provide resources to schools, colleges, libraries, community health centers, and other organizations that interact with these youth every day but are often not equipped to help them. Funding is needed to expand our capacity to reach all youth in need and to train these frontline institutions to assist in the efforts to end youth homelessness.

6 Fund Backbone Support and Advocacy

The Reaching Home Campaign's YYA Homelessness Workgroup provides a powerful structure to plan, organize, educate, and advocate for ending youth homelessness. Supporting the capacity of the organizations that are deeply engaged in this collaborative is crucial. The workgroup partners are listed here: pschousing.org/youth-and-young-adults-homelessness-workgroup-members. The Partnership for Strong Communities serves as a backbone organization for the Reaching Home Youth and Young Adult Workgroup, using their strategic position and extensive network to guide vision and strategy and support aligned activities.

7 Join the Reaching Home Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Funder Collaborative

There are a wide variety of ways for funders to get involved in efforts to end homelessness for youth and young adults in Connecticut. Start by joining with your state, community, and private funder colleagues in the new Reaching Home YYA Funder Collaborative to learn more about all of these opportunities.

Questions? Please contact Aimee Hendrigan, Melville Charitable Trust, ahendrigan@melvilletrust.org, 203-901-1065



How Connecticut is leading the way

We have a solid plan. Opening Doors for Youth 2.0 is a collaborative action plan to provide all Connecticut youth and young adults with safe, stable homes and opportunities: pschousing.org/files/Opening_Doors_For_Youth_Plan_2.0.pdf

We are organized. The Reaching Home Campaign, Connecticut's statewide effort to end homelessness, has an active Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Homelessness Workgroup. The workgroup and its subgroups meet monthly and use the Opening Doors for Youth 2.0 plan to set annual priorities that guide statewide work.

Over the past two years, the YYA workgroup, and its subgroups have made numerous enhancements to the coordinated entry system for youth, conducted another count of youth who are homeless/unstably housed, collaborated with youth-serving systems, and helped establish regional groups called Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETIs) to push youth efforts forward on a local level.

We have strong federal support. In 2017, Connecticut was awarded \$6.5 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to implement the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP).^{*} Our state was one of the first locales in the country to win this funding and through this grant, a diverse group of partners are working to build a comprehensive system of care for young people. Additionally, we provide thought leadership on federal efforts to end youth homelessness to other New England states.

We continually improve data collection and use. Using data from the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and the statewide annual Youth Count, Connecticut is creating system performance measures and goals, which will be tracked via quarterly dashboards. We are also exploring ways of incorporating other data sources into the performance measures, including qualitative data sources such as client feedback surveys.

We model authentic youth and young adult collaboration and partnership. Youth with lived experience play a critical role in Connecticut's planning and strategy to end youth homelessness. Members of the Youth Action Hub, a center for youth-led research and advocacy, are active participants in the YYA Workgroup and helped plan and manage the federal YHDP grant. They are also strategizing on how to work with the regional YETIs to ensure effective youth collaboration at the local level.