youth collaboratory

Discussion Guide for "Toward a System Response to Ending Youth Homelessness"

The intention of this Discussion Guide is to support communities to engage with and immediately use the November 2018 "Toward a System Response to Ending Youth Homelessness" findings to improve decision-making related to coordinated community responses. The discussion questions may guide a deeper discussion of system improvement opportunities based on the findings, considering the current state of your coordinated response for youth. It is recommended that communities identify the appropriate local youth-focused action group to discuss the following questions. Consider approaching this Discussion Guide by initially discussing each of the five findings independently, and then coming together to consider all discussion responses and determine how to move system improvement opportunities into action.

	Discussion Questions	Additional Context for Facilitator
Finding 1. <u>Risk assessment scores successfully predict likelihood of continued housing instability</u>	● Are we using a research-based assessment tool to prioritize youth for limited housing resources? ● Are we using an additional tool/process to collect information regarding the strengths and needs of youth to support resource matching and service planning?	● The NST is merely a triage tool for prioritization. Tailored service and support matching requires more detailed assessment tools and structured case management conversations regarding young people's individual strengths, needs, aspirations, and preferences.
	● Understanding we need youth-friendly coordinated entry points with staff trained to administer the tool in a safe and effective manner, what do we know about *who* is administering the tool, *when* it is administered, and in *what setting/context*?	● *Who*: Do the people administering the tool mirror youth who are experiencing homelessness locally (examples of key demographics include age, gender, LGBTQ, race, lived experience)? ● *When*: Is the tool administered with all youth immediately upon entering the homeless system, within a specific timeframe of entering, or otherwise?

	• Are we maintaining demographic data on who is administering the tool? If not, do we need to? If yes, are we using that data to make system improvements? • Is additional CoC-level guidance needed to ensure consistency and quality throughout the assessment tool administration process?	• *What context/setting*: An example may be CoC-level expectations regarding demographics of people administering the assessment tool (specifically, if 30% of youth accessing the homeless system are African American, at least 30% of people administering the tool must also be African American).

Finding 2.
Most youth participating in housing programs remain out of homelessness systems for at least a year after starting those programs
	• Do local exit and return data align with the national findings?
	
	• Beyond overall score information, what information are we using to sharpen our assessment, prioritization, and service delivery models to ensure we are appropriately matching the right youth to the right resources at the right time?
		• A common question after reviewing findings is about results of youth housing models, especially rapid rehousing (RRH) and permanent supportive housing (PSH). The following studies were completed independently of these findings, and there is still much to learn about youth housing models, but are a good starting point when considering effectiveness for youth and focusing on outcomes.
		  ○ DayBreak Youth Housing
		  ○ *Watch for additional resources in early December 2018*
		
		• How youth RRH and PSH models are working in other communities:
		  ○ Valley Youth House, Eastern Pennsylvania (NAEH recording)
		  ○ Rapid ReHousing for Youth Learning Community lessons learned
		  ○ *Watch for PSH resources in early December 2018*
		
		• *Watch for example prioritization policies and case conference resources in early December 2018.*

	● Are we testing progressive engagement with youth who are higher-scoring as an approach to more quickly support a homelessness exit while awaiting a higher level intervention?	● Progressive Engagement is an approach that is tailored to an individual and starts with providing just what youth need to exit homelessness and sustain housing (no preset/arbitrary time limits on length of housing subsidy/services). It enables communities to serve more youth than they have in the past, with strong results. ● The 2018 Point Source Youth Symposium highlighted why Houston, King County, New York, and Grand Rapids made the shift to progressive engagement within their youth systems.
Finding 3. Strategies are needed for many youth who await placements	● Thinking about our approach within coordinated entry points, what are we doing to support low-scoring youth who will not receive an immediate housing referral? ● What aren't we doing now that we need to develop, test and evaluate to better support youth who are low-scoring? ● Are we adequately evaluating these efforts to better understand who is returning to the homeless system for assistance, and who is not? ● What does local data tell us about who is waiting for housing placements, and for how long they are waiting? ● What should we prioritize for improvement within our coordinated	● Approaches within youth-specific coordinated entry points include connection to prevention resources, offering diversion and family reunification services to all youth willing to engage in the conversation, making real time connections to services and mainstream resources including employment support, public benefits, child care assistance, food assistance, etc. ● Offering diversion and family reunification services should be an ongoing strategy vs. a one time opportunity. Coordinated entry strategies should allow for planned follow up and identified inventory of services available to youth to engage in other supportive services. ● Review of housing inventory (challenges and opportunities). What pathways to housing opportunities are accessed through CES? What housing opportunities are not, and how can those additional resources be brought into the system through CES? ● Review of prioritization policies. How are current prioritization policies influencing wait times for youth once assessed? Policies could include scoring matrix, process for getting onto prioritization list, who is included in making decisions about housing placement and referrals, etc. ● Review current strategies to stay connected and engaged with youth once assessed. How are youth contacted while waiting? How do youth

	entry point approach to ensure we are supporting youth awaiting housing placements immediately and on an ongoing basis?	know to stay in contact and with whom and for what? What is communicated about what it means to "wait for placement"?
Finding 4. Youth face long wait times for critical services	• Do we have a strategy for increasing investments in housing and services resources for youth? If yes, who owns this and how can we elevate it to be a CoC priority? If not, who is responsible for developing the strategy and putting it into action? • Are public systems at the table strategizing how to reduce inflow from public systems into the homeless system? Who is missing (ex: schools, child welfare, justice system) and how will we get them to the table? • Are local prevention resources integrated into our coordinated response and contributing to a reduction in inflow of youth?	• [100 day challenges](#) and [YHDP communities](#) have demonstrated the importance of engaging leaders and champions from within and outside of the homeless response system in elevating the needs of youth in the community and identifying opportunities for increased investments or innovative uses of existing capacity. Increased prevention and diversion strategies prevent youth from having to enter the homeless systems and waiting for critical services to end their homelessness. Strategies include family reconnection services, eviction prevention, rapid rehousing models and partnerships with child welfare, education and juvenile justice systems. The recently released [Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness](#) captures the continuum of proven strategies. Additionally YHDP communities like Austin, TX, Grand Traverse Michigan and Santa Cruz, California have funded partnerships with local school districts and child welfare to respond to prevent homelessness. Prevention and diversion resources can be integrated into your coordinated response. [Minnesota's Family Homeless and Prevention Assistance Program](#) provides a framework for prevention assistance can be structured and integrated into a community's response.

| Finding 5. Racial and ethnic disproportionalities point to the need to address inequities in homelessness responses | • Are we collecting data on race and ethnicity by homelessness entry, exits/placements, and program outcomes?

• Are we using this data to devise better system strategies to address inequities in access and outcomes?

• Are young adults with lived experience involved in the design and decision making process when developing both coordinated entry strategies and systems change efforts? | Learn more from SPARC: Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities, an initiative launched in 2016 to understand and respond to racial inequities in homelessness. SPARC offers a data driven and actionable opportunity for communities to improve strategies to address inequity and outcomes in their homeless responses system.

Stay informed on future racial equity resources and opportunities through A Way Home America by signing up here.

A few communities have been intentional within their youth systems to begin to address equity issues, have seen results and are willing to share. *Check back in early December 2018 for contact information.*

Engaging youth and young adults as experts in the design and implementation of coordinated responses results in better outcomes for youth. Learning how to partner and support young people in leadership roles requires skill building for both the adults and the youth. Learn how to collaborate with youth using the Youth Collaboration Toolkit developed by the True Colors Fund. |