

## Montana Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Coordinated Community Plan Summary

### YHDP REQUIREMENTS

HUD, its federal partners, and youth with lived experience of homelessness designed the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) to drastically reduce the number of youths experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied, pregnant and parenting youth.

1. Communities must bring together a wide variety of stakeholders, including housing providers, local and state child welfare agencies, school districts, workforce development organizations, and the juvenile justice system.
2. Communities must convene Youth Action Boards, comprised of youth that have current or past lived experience of homelessness, to lead the planning and implementation of the YHDP.
3. Communities must assess the needs of special populations at higher risk of experiencing homelessness, including racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, parenting youth, youth involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, and youth victims of human trafficking.
4. Communities will create a coordinated community plan that assesses the needs of youth at-risk of and experiencing homelessness in the community and addresses how it will use the money from the YHDP grant, along with other funding sources, to address these needs.
5. Communities may propose innovative projects and test new approaches to address youth homelessness.

### VISION

*With shared responsibility throughout Montana, we envision a community in which all youth and young adults (YYA) know their rights and resources and that services and housing are readily available to them, creating a pathway for youth to achieve self-sufficiency and self-actualization.*

To this end, we envision a future in Montana where all youth and young adults (YYA) are:

- Served with dignity and respect through youth-driven systems of care regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion or other identities;
- Provided with immediate, safe and supported housing through diverse and flexible options that pave the way for long-term, sustainable housing;
- Supported into adulthood through the process of self-actualization by chosen family and other natural supports;
- Accessing affordable and youth-oriented health and wellness supports, including reproductive health and life planning decision; and
- Provided access to educational resources to achieve their career goals.

### GOALS

**Housing.** YYA are connected to immediate, safe, and supported housing options through diverse and flexible options that reflect their individualized needs and pave the way for long-term, sustainable housing.

**Social-Emotional Well-Being & Permanent Connections.** The health and well-being of YYA are prioritized by meeting youth where they are and providing them with the resources, supports, and permanent connections they need to achieve happiness, health, self-sufficiency, and self-actualization.

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**Education and Employment.** All YYA have access to educational resources to achieve their career goals, helping to prevent homelessness for at-risk YYA and create sustainable pathways to income and housing for YYA experiencing homelessness.

**Systems Change.** YYA will be supported in navigating systems of care and transitioning into adulthood and out of homelessness through increased cross-systems coordination and collaboration.

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A needs assessment was conducted in November of 2019 with YAB members and community leaders to assess better what each of these four tenants meant to Montanans. The following provides a summary of identified needs:

#### *Stable Housing Needs*

- Significant need for more housing options with an emphasis on Native American youth on reservations and other urban and rural settings.
- Emergency shelter services or host homes that will serve minors with the minimal threshold (e.g., not a requirement to take a drug test, attend religious services, mandatory community volunteerism hours)
- Montana will benefit from strengthening and expanding existing resources such as transitional housing, as well as more suitable housing stock such as host homes drawing on existing natural supports.
- Host homes, or a similar model, that allows for youth-choice and a safe alternative to shelter care.
- Supportive peer support and case management services to support youth in chosen family finding and reunification when appropriate.
- Access to affordable market-rate housing options with supportive landlords or landlord liaison support.
- Implementing a statewide system mapping effort across the continuum of all housing options that match the needs of all identified homeless youth, including diversion, family and school engagement, socio-emotional supports, and employment.
- Strong support for state-wide education and understanding of the existence and impact of youth homelessness in all areas of Montana.

#### *Education and Employment*

##### *Education Needs*

- Targeted approaches to increase the graduation rate for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Single points of contact in higher education, such as specialized navigators for students to connect to housing, education, and employment opportunities.
- Shift in mindset in schools to be strengths-based, goal-oriented, and create more stability and predictability between school districts to better support students who are highly mobile. Overall, Montana education systems can improve its focus on future planning and educational outcomes.

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- Coordination and partnerships between the Office of Public Instruction, the states 500+ locally controlled school districts, and the Montana University System with a focus on the needs of youth and young adults experiencing and at risk for homelessness.
- Creating clear educational pathways beyond traditional two and 4-year post-secondary programs.
- Aiding youth in acquiring needed documents (e.g., birth certificate, social security card).
- Trained supports in navigating and applying for social services to increase academic and employment autonomy.

### *Employment Needs*

- Identify, articulate, and educate youth on employment pathways.
- Statewide coordination at an interagency level with strong public-private partnerships.
- Employment options need to be expanded and developed that address the needs for:
  - Providing a living wage;
  - Creating support/incentives for employers to hire youth with lived experience;
  - Workforce development resources, including targeted job search assistance, social-emotional supports and life skills training;
  - Educational options beyond the traditional 2-4-year pathways; and
  - Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes.

### *Social-Emotional Well-Being Needs*

- Improved teaching of emotional skills across a variety of professions and providers.
- Access to health resources in all regions of the state will require creative approaches, including the use of telehealth and the formation of new partnerships dedicated to special populations.
- Services and supports need to include a variety of knowledge and skill-based opportunities, including:
  - Pre-crisis self-regulation;
  - Safety planning
  - Enhancing knowledge of reproductive life planning, healthy relationships, and violence prevention
  - Suicide Prevention
- Specialized, flexible, individualized social-emotional and behavioral supports with improved transitions from youth to adult systems of care.
- Peer to peer/mentorship opportunities.
- Life skills, including opportunities for community connection and fun activities.
- Healthy transitions of youth from the youth homeless response system to the adult homeless response system and into adulthood.
- Community connection, including community (natural supports) and family-focused interventions to support the youth and the family by tapping into existing protective factors.