

**AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT:
Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program**

**NEW FUNDING FOR HOMELESS YOUTH
SERVICES AND HOUSING**

GUIDE TO COMMUNITY PLANNERS AND YOUTH ADVOCATES

March 20, 2009

Table of Contents

- I. New Funding Benefiting Homeless Youth in ARRA (p. 2 – 4.)
- II. \$1.5 Billion for Homelessness Prevention and Re-housing - Action Steps for Local Organizations Serving Homeless Youth (p. 5 – 10)
- III. Ideas and Model Programs on Re-housing and Prevention for Homeless Youth (p. 11-14)
- IV. Establishing a Framework for Youth Homelessness Prevention and Re-housing (p. 15 – 17)
- V. Other Federal Appropriations Benefiting Homeless Youth (p. 18 – 20)

Question: how will your local jurisdiction coordinate these funds to help end youth homelessness?

This is the first edition! Changes may be made as clarification of eligible services from HUD. Please keep posted for updates and additional resources at:

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/>



NEW FUNDING BENEFITING HOMELESS YOUTH

March 20, 2009

On February 13, 2009, Congress passed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), a \$789 billion economic recovery plan. ARRA contains an extremely significant increase in federal support for homelessness prevention and re-housing services in response to the national recession. Included in the proposal are a number of funding provisions for programs related to housing and beneficial to people experiencing homelessness. This increase in federal resources will have the potential to provide new funding to homeless youth services and shelter, and offer new funding for prevention services and re-housing assistance for older homeless youth.

Question: how will your local jurisdiction coordinate these funds to help end youth homelessness?

FUNDING FOR HOMELESS YOUTH CRISIS SERVICES, OUTREACH, SHELTER, and HOUSING

Outline of Specific Appropriations - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:

- **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) Grants:** \$1.5 billion for the HPRP provides prevention assistance, short term rental assistance, housing relocation, and stabilization services for families and individuals during the economic crisis. Funds are distributed by Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) program formula.

Federal Agency: HUD

Local Contact Point: City or County or State representative who distributes Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds. Please, also see our website for a list of amounts appropriated by formula for each local jurisdiction. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/>

- **Neighborhood Stabilization:** \$2 billion to help communities purchase and rehabilitate foreclosed, vacant properties in order to create more affordable housing and reduce neighborhood blight.

Federal Agency: HUD provides formula grants to states and some cities -

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/neighborhoodspg/>

Local Contact Point: Local mayor's office or state housing finance agency

- **Community Services Block Grant:** \$1 billion for grants to local communities to support employment, food, housing, and healthcare efforts serving those hardest hit by the recession.

Federal Agency: HHS provides formula grants to cities and local jurisdictions -

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/>

Local Contact Point: Community Action Agency or Community Action Program (CAP)

- **Community Development Block Grants**: \$1 billion for community and economic development projects including housing and services for those hit hard by tough economic times.

Federal Agency: HUD offers formula grants to cities and urban counties - <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/>

Local Contact Point: Mayor's office, City Council, or County Government.

- **Emergency Food and Shelter**: \$100 million to help local community organizations provide food, shelter, and support services to the nation's hungry, homeless, and people in economic crisis including one-month utility payments to prevent service cut-off and one-month rent or mortgage assistance to prevent evictions or help people leave shelters. Funds are distributed by formula based on unemployment and poverty rates by FEMA.

Federal Agency: FEMA federal competitive grant (<http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/efs.shtm>)

- **Education for Homeless Children and Youth**: \$70 million to support the identification, enrollment, attendance, and school success of youth experiencing homelessness. The U.S. Department of Education must provide funding to States within 60 days of enactment, and States must provide funding to school districts within 120 days of receipt of funding.

Federal Agency: Department of Education – federal formula grant to all 50 states - <http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html>

- **Head Start and Early Head Start**: \$1 billion for Head Start and \$1.2 billion for Early Head Start to provide comprehensive early childhood services for young children and their families. Homeless families (including homeless teen parents) are categorically eligible and must be prioritized for enrollment.

Federal Agency: HHS - <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/>

Local Contact Point: Administration for Children and Families Regional Offices

- **Compassion Capital Fund**: \$50 million for grants to faith- and community-based organizations to provide critical safety net services to needy individuals and families. Grants include a “Communities Empowering Youth Program funds to collaborations providing approaches and alternatives to gang involvement, youth violence, and child abuse and neglect and generally fostering positive youth development.

Federal Agency: HHS – competitive discretionary federal grant to local community organizations and faith-based organizations - <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ccf/>

- **AmeriCorps Program**: \$200 million to put approximately 16,000 additional AmeriCorps members to work doing national service, meeting critical community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.

Federal Agency: Corporation for National and Community Service offers discretionary competitive grants to nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, higher education institutions, and public agencies.

- **Workforce Investment Act:** \$1.2 billion for grants to the states for youth employment programs that are designed to increase the employment, retention, earnings, and occupational skill attainment for young people up to age 24.

Federal Agency: Department of Labor

http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/whatsnew/eta_default.cfm?id=2061

- **YouthBuild:** \$50 million for YouthBuild activities, which work with low-income young people ages 16–24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people.

Federal Agency: Department of Labor

For further information, please see: www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/ or

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\$1.5 BILLION FOR HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RE-HOUSING

BASIC OUTLINE OF LEGISLATION: Homeless Assistance Grants from HUD

For information about the exact text of the federal law, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as it pertains to prevention and re-housing, please visit the web site for the National Alliance to End Homelessness <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/>. This issue brief is to offer responses and ideas to expand services to homeless youth in response to the new funding. It is based on a review of HUD's Guidance issued on March 19, 2009, which may be obtained at: <http://www.hud.gov/recovery/hrp-notice.pdf>

The \$1.5 billion in funding will support homelessness **prevention and re-housing**, and includes four general categories geared toward housing: **financial assistance, housing relocation and services, data collection and evaluation, and administrative costs**. According to HUD's Guidance the following eligible activities are allowed:

Financial Assistance:

- Short-term (up to 3 months) and medium-term rental assistance (up to 18 months) including up to 6 months for arrears (back rent owed);
- Security and utility deposits;
- Utility payments (up to 18 months or 6 months of payments by arrears)
- Moving costs (including short-term storage costs);
- Motel and hotel vouchers (up to 30 days if no shelter available and no housing).

Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services:

- Case management services (focus on access and stability in housing)
- Outreach and engagement;
- Housing search and placement (tenant counseling, securing utilities, representative payee services, and mediation with property owners);
- Legal services;
- Credit repair.

Data Collection and Evaluation:

- HMIS costs (not start-up or new software) and costs when HUD evaluates services;

Administrative Costs:

- Personnel costs related to accounting, preparing reports, audits, training for staff.

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Activities and costs which are NOT eligible under HPRP:

- Mortgage costs;
- Child Care;
- Employment;
- Construction or rehabilitation;
- Credit Card Bills;
- Car Repair or transportation costs;
- Food;
- Medical or dental care and medicines;
- Clothing and grooming;
- Home furnishings;
- Pet Care;
- Entertainment Activities;
- Cash Assistance directly to program participants (pay on behalf);
- Development of discharge plans from institutions (foster care, jails, hospitals); and
- License or certification courses.

HUD's Guidance and Notice of March 19, 2009, provides the following information:

- Funding will go to cities, counties, and states using the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) formula. To find out how much your local jurisdiction and state received, please following the link provided at: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/>
- Funding will not be used for traditional ESG activities (support for emergency shelters), instead it will be used for homelessness prevention and re-housing people who are or at-risk of becoming homeless;
- Grantees must spend 60% of the funds in 2 years and 100% in 3 years;
- There will be no match requirement and 100% of these funds can be used to support new projects;
- Communities should begin planning how additional dollars from the stimulus package may complement other services or be coordinated to expand a spectrum of services for homeless youth;
- Jurisdictions receiving funding are required to submit a substantial amendment to their Consolidated Plan which will require community participation. Youth, agency personnel, and youth advocates should volunteer to be a part of the community planning and participation process;
- Once the consolidated plan is amended to reflect how local jurisdictions plan to use the money, the local jurisdiction must accept public comment. Youth, agency personnel, and youth advocates should plan to offer comments if youth services and re-housing support are not outlined in the Consolidated Plan's amended language;

- Information will have to be tracked in HMIS or comparable data system. HUD will determine how much data will be required;
- The process will move quickly. With the legislation's passage in February, HUD will issue regulations and guidance in March, communities will submit their plans to HUD no later than May 18, 2009, and nonprofit subgrantees must have the funds by September, if not sooner. The first quarterly report on expenditures from jurisdictions are due October 10, 2009.

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY AGENCIES RECEIVING FUNDING

1. **This funding will be one-time funding.** Locations will have to struggle on how to implement programs and services that may not continue after a couple of years.
2. **Creating effective outreach:** Outreach is an absolutely critical component of a successful effort to identify youth at risk of homelessness. The most successful prevention programs actively seek youth who have many risk factors for homelessness. They do not expect people to come to an office or call a hotline. They also use data to identify neighborhoods where homeless people are likely to come from and target those neighborhoods. From the youth outreach perspective, it may also make sense to build relationships and partnerships with child welfare agencies, school systems, and juvenile justice.
3. **Targeting prevention financial assistance toward addressing short-term crisis:** Communities may find it difficult to target prevention financial resources to ensure it does not provide long-term rental subsidies. Many low-income persons may benefit from rental assistance. However, limited funding from this resource should be directed to preventing homelessness for those most at need. Some youth will need only one-time financial assistance while others may need short-term rental assistance. Longer-term rental assistance, child care, employment or health care needs are not eligible activities under these funds but should be addressed by linking youth to other services in their area when possible.
4. **Offering rental assistance obligates agencies to meet certain requirements:** "Medium-term rental assistance" can provide youth with rental subsidies for up to 18 months. However, the nonprofit agency must:
 - Certify the youth's eligibility at least once every 3 months;
 - Provide on-going case management to the youth;
 - Can determine to pay all or part of the rent (based on youth participant income and ability to contribute a portion of rent);
 - Ensure that rents are "reasonable" in the local area;
 - Youth's income must be below 50 percent of area medium income (AMI);
 - Comply with fair housing laws and regulations;
 - Conduct initial and any appropriate follow-up inspections of housing to ensure 'minimum habitability standards'
5. **Re-housing should not be targeted to homeless youth who will require on-going rental assistance:** These program funds are not allowed to be used as a source for permanent supportive housing. Although re-housing services are a primary focus, these funds will not become long-term rental subsidies for homeless youth.

6. **Re-housing funds should be focused on two different subcategories of homeless youth:**
 - a. **Younger teenagers who may benefit from family support and re-housing** – youth that with case management or youth advocacy services could be supported to access family housing options (parents, kin, extended relatives, or caring community members) that will offer future support without requiring on-going rental assistance.
 - b. **Young adults who are in need of financial assistance to access housing** – youth ages 17 to 24 that have access to some source of income but require financial assistance to secure housing (rental application fees, first month’s rent, security deposit).

Financial assistance should be targeted to youth who would not be able to move into housing without it. Also, case management services should be voluntary (given the short duration of this program) and not be required of youth who receive financial assistance. Youth should have a voice concerning the type, depth, and frequency of case management services.

7. **Evaluation is critically needed to document positive outcomes of prevention and re-housing services.** Local communities should plan how to incorporate evaluation of these services to show positive outcomes. The ability to sustain funding or find new sources of funding once these funds are depleted will rely on evidenced-based results which show benefit to the individuals served and the community. HUD ultimately will evaluate programs based on whether youth participants: (a) achieved housing stability, (b) were linked with community resources and mainstream benefits (connection to other resources), and (c) were helped in developing a plan to avoid future housing instability.
8. **Requirements regarding nonprofit status:** Nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations are eligible but they must be an IRA recognized 501(c) nonprofit organization with an accounting system, a voluntary of Board of Directors, and practices nondiscrimination in the provision of assistance.

TARGETING HOMELESS YOUTH AS SPECIAL POPULATION FOR PREVENTION AND RE-HOUSING

These funds represent a unique opportunity to communities to maximize the effectiveness of homelessness prevention and re-housing services. Targeting of these limited funds to high-risk populations will provide people with more appropriate interventions, will serve more people, will serve people better, and will have a bigger impact. By targeting these limited resources to high-risk populations, the funds will have a larger impact on the homeless service system.

Why Target Homeless Youth?

Homeless youth are a high-risk population that would directly benefit from greater investment in homelessness prevention and re-housing. Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied youth ages 12 to 24 years who do not have familial support, and who lack a regular night-time residence. Homeless youth live in shelters, on the streets, in a range of places not meant for human habitation (e.g. cars, abandoned buildings), or in others’ homes for short periods under circumstances that make the situation highly unstable (so-called “couch surfing” or “highly mobile youth”).

Homelessness among youth is commonly caused by family breakdown (severe conflict, abuse, neglect, and abandonment) and system failure (discharges to unstable housing options from foster care, treatment centers, or juvenile justice detention).

Youth should be targeted because they experience multiple factors which place them at higher risk of homelessness. Public officials and community planners involved in the distribution of these funds should be educated on the multiple risk factors that youth encounter to achieving residential stability:

- severe housing burden (cost of rent compared to income);
- mental health or substance abuse issues;
- homeless in the past 12 months;
- young parent under age 25;
- past involvement in child welfare or juvenile delinquency systems;
- extremely low income;
- high overcrowding in current housing;
- past institutional care (jail, hospital, or residential treatment);
- recent traumatic life event;
- no high school diploma or GED;
- history of physical or sexual abuse as a child;
- lack of rental history; and
- age discrimination in the housing market.

Special outreach to youth-serving organizations and schools may be necessary to ensure available funds are equitably distributed to homeless youth populations or older adolescents on the verge of experiencing a homelessness episode.

ACTION STEPS FOR LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS SERVING HOMELESS YOUTH

- **Identify Needs of Homeless Youth & Offer Your Services as a Local Resource:** Contact your Mayor, City Council Members, and County Commissioners to outline local gaps for homeless youth and suggest use of new federal funds – Homeless Assistance Grants, Community Development Block Grants, Emergency Food and Shelter, Community Service Block Grants, TANF, etc. – includes aside of vulnerable, homeless youth populations.
- **Get Involved in Local Planning Addressing Homelessness:** Contact your local HUD Continuum of Care and 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness representatives and ask for youth goals to be incorporated into implementation of HUD housing priorities and 10 year plans.
- **Organize Groups of Youth Agencies to Receive Funding Announcement:** Organize the community organizations that serve homeless youth to identify a contact person for receipt and dissemination of funding announcements for new federal grants and funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- **Offer Help and Expertise in Youth Issues to Inform the Amendments of Local Consolidated Plans:** Jurisdictions receiving funding will need to submit a substantial amendment to their Consolidated Plan by May 18, 2009 which will require community participation. Youth, agency personnel, and youth advocates should volunteer to be a part of the community planning and participation process;
- **Provide Written Comments on Your Local Amended Consolidated Plan If It Ignores Homeless Youth Needs:** Once the consolidated plan is amended to reflect how local jurisdictions plan to use the money, the local jurisdiction must accept public comment. Youth, agency personnel, and youth advocates should plan to offer comments if youth services and re-housing support are not outlined in the Consolidated Plan's amended language. From the time your city/county/state issues its draft substantial amendment to the Consolidate Plan, community members will have 12 days to offer written comments.
- **Apply for Funding and Offer Critical Services:** Remain aware of new funding announcements and apply for funding when new resources are announced!
- **Leverage Other Federal Funds to Make a Larger Spectrum of Services to Homeless Youth:** Begin to think creatively on how to leverage these funds together to establish an prevention and early intervention service system to benefit homeless youth and youth at-risk of homelessness.
- **Evaluate Your Community's Work to Show Progress and Results:** Contact your local universities or research entities to design evaluation methods. Think of evaluating any services offered as a way to show the community positive impacts of these funds and to make an argument for continued funding after these resources have been depleted.

For further information, please see: www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/ or

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IDEAS ON HOW RE-HOUSING AND PREVENTION FUNDS COULD BENEFIT HOMELESS YOUTH POPULATIONS

Community-based organizations should think creatively about how to use HPRP funds to prevent youth homelessness and provide re-housing services for homeless youth. A program designing a new project may incorporate a lot of different services, only some of which may be eligible for funding under the HPRP. Youth programs may wish to explore other federal funding opportunities under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Programs, and Family Unification Program or their state or local funding partners. In order to help facilitate community planning, we suggest the following ideas:

1. A youth emergency shelter could use these funds to support a full-time case worker, youth advocate, or counselor to offer crisis intervention, mediation, and assist in maintaining youth in family housing. When conflict or abandonment cannot be resolved to stabilize youth in their current housing, the youth advocates could help youth explore housing options with relatives, mentors, teachers, or community members they know to preserve community connection and avoid homelessness;
2. A community nonprofit organization or school district could look to hire a high school youth advocate or 'system navigator' to work cooperatively with McKinney Homeless Youth Liaisons to stabilize youth in family housing, locate housing opportunities with extended family, kin, full-time guardians, or existing youth housing programs to divert youth from long-term homelessness;
3. A community agency could use these funds to establish programs to work with youth at risk of running or who have recently run to rapidly re-house the youth with their parents, extended kin, or caring adults who can serve as guardians for long-term residential stability. Such services have a double benefit in that they divert youth from future homelessness and out-of-home foster care placements.
4. A homeless youth drop-in center could use HPRP funds to conduct housing search services, such as hiring and training a youth advocate to research the private and public housing market for housing opportunities for youth clients, building relationships with landlords and locating different types of housing opportunities. Perhaps, formal partnerships and referral procedures could be explored with the local public housing authority to expand opportunities for long-term housing for youth, including the Family Unification Program (FUP);
5. A youth transitional housing program or a collaborative of youth housing agencies could use these funds to conduct mediation or outreach to property owners or pay for housing relocation costs to homeless youth transitioning to independent housing.
6. A shelter program for older youth could establish a 'co-signor program' which would guarantee rental payments in the event youth tenants were unable to pay for rent. These programs could assist older youth to obtain independent living arrangements in the rental market by convincing reluctant landlords that young adults did not pose a financial risk of early flight or nonpayment of rent.
7. A street outreach program could couple outreach workers with a rent assistance grant program for youth reached through street or community-based outreach in need of re-housing. The outreach worker would remain in contact with the re-housed youth during the time they are in receipt of the short-term (3 months) rental assistance to ensure a connection to mainstream resources. Youth requiring longer assistance could be granted medium-term rental assistance for up to 18 months.

8. New and emerging youth programs should utilize youth allies in the planning and implementation of new youth programs – outreach, shelter, housing, or supportive service program models should be informed by consumer choice and opinions on best practices.
9. Child welfare or juvenile justice programs could partner with community nonprofits who use these funds to reach out to former alumni of foster care or former youth offenders that may be struggling with housing and offer rapid re-housing services in the form of short-term case management services coupled with financial assistance for first month's rent and security deposit.

MODEL PROGRAMS OF PREVENTION AND RE-HOUSING FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

Model Prevention/Re-housing Programs

Community Human Services, Oakland, CA

This agency provides a multi-faceted approach to prevent long-term homelessness by:

- Employing a peer-based outreach team that engages with individuals living on the streets to provide emotional support as well as food, clothing, toiletry items and referrals.
- A supportive re-housing program that provides housing location assistance, a one-time rental subsidy, and on-going case management services.
- A family-focused re-housing program that helps families move to self-sufficiency. This is accomplished by assisting families with identifying and address needs such as; housing, vocation, financial stability, employment, increasing life skills, locating resources, and maintaining sobriety/mental health stability. This program also provides rental assistance, intensive case management and household support.

Youth Service Inc.'s Family Preservation Program

Youth Service Inc.'s Family Preservation Program services families in the Philadelphia area. Family Preservation is an intensive 12-week program, which offers counseling, life skills education, advocacy links to community resources and concrete goals. The majority of families referred are dealing with at-risk adolescents and one of the focus is mediation and creating stabilization in housing for at-risk youth. Parents have easy access to parenting workshops, which provide parents with the knowledge and skills to strengthen their families. Unique to this service is the availability of short-term respite care for older adolescents whose parent's are dealing with the stresses of parenting. Families also have easy access to Youth Service Inc. crisis nurseries, which is a safe haven for young children during crisis such as illness, hospitalization and job search etc. The goal of this comprehensive intervention program is to have the cases exit the Department of Human Services (DHS) system at the program's completion. Youth Service Inc. is an accredited Child Welfare organization. To learn more about Youth Service's Family Preservation Program, please contact Cathleen Watkins at cwatkins@ysiphila.org.

Project SAFE, Cocoon House, Snohomish County, Washington

Project SAFE provides three services to parents and other caretakers who are concerned about a youth's behavior: phone consultation, groups or workshops, and a resource library. Parents or caretakers can call and

speak with a Master’s level therapist who works with parents to develop a plan of action and decide what community resources will be needed to implement the plan. Plans can include steps to help parents deal with personal problems that may be contributing to the conflict with their youth. Parents receive a follow-up call, usually one week later, to check on their situation and provide any additional referrals. Parents can also participate in support groups that focus on cognitive behavioral skills or educational workshops that seek to raise awareness of parental risk factors that contribute to problem behaviors. In both cases, the goal is to promote healthier family functioning and to prevent teen homelessness.

Maine’s Rapid Response Program

Created with an initial \$150,000 funding stream from the state legislature, Rapid Response brings together over 25 state and local agencies, both public and private, to work as a team to provide intensive intervention within the first 72 hours of a youth’s homelessness. The program focuses on providing stable housing, keeping the youth in the same community and school, and delivering family intervention, support, and mediation in a search for long-term solutions. An independent evaluation of the program by the University of Maine School of Social Work found impressive results: decreases in drug and alcohol use, victimization, suicide, gang involvement, police involvement, pregnancy and prostitution; overall health and well-being were significantly improved; and 100 percent of the youth served were enrolled in school or working and functioning well.

Model Re-housing Programs:

Hennepin County, Minnesota

The County contracts with local nonprofit organizations to deliver an array of prevention and re-housing services to youth including:

- Shelter and host home service programs offering family reunification services for homeless youth recently separated from their families;
- Youth-in-transition conferences that organize planning meetings between youth, their families, and important adults in their lives to create a plan to ensure continued services into young adult years and housing stability;
- Rapid Exit screener services in local drop-in centers and shelters to inform youth about housing opportunities and resources (a systems navigator); and
- Rapid Exit advocate services to shelter, drop-in centers, and outreach programs to offer housing first with short-term subsidies to assist youth in getting into an apartment.

StreetWorks Collaborative, Minneapolis, Minnesota

A Collaborative of several community-based organizations providing street-based outreach to homeless youth which couples relationship building and basic needs with a financial assistance program offering youth one-time grants to pay first month’s rent, last month’s rent, and security deposit to assist youth to access independent housing. This is a rapid re-housing program that requires outreach workers to screen youth participants for the ability to pay for market rate rent with wages or benefits after receipt of financial assistance – to ensure opportunity for long-term stability.

Common Ground Sanctuary, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Rapid re-housing program that provides apartment living for youth ages 17-22 with a goal of independent living.

- The program provides care, including skill development, peer mentoring, graduated monitoring/supervision and 24-hour staff availability.
- Transitional living shelter for youths ages 16-20 who are homeless and seeking self-sufficiency. The program includes counseling, job training, career development, educational assistance, financial subsidies and medical assistance.

- Short-term, safe shelter for youths in crisis, ages 10-17, provides care and inpatient counseling. The goal is to reunite the youths with their families.

Youth Continuum, New Haven, NJ

A community-based agency that provides re-housing to youth ages 17-23.

- They accomplish this by providing them 24-hour support while youth live in apartments throughout the Greater New Haven area.
- Youth in this program are required to be enrolled in an educational or vocational program, be employed part-time, and learn various skills in order to become productive, independent members of the community.

For further information, please see: www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/ or

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ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RE-HOUSING

The causes of youth homelessness are varied and complex and our approach to prevention and re-housing services should reflect that complexity. Community planners and officials responsible for distributing the ARRA's Homeless Assistance Grants may not have prior experience or a working knowledge of youth homelessness. It will be beneficial to communicate the causes of youth homelessness and provide a framework of promising practices in prevention and re-housing. This fact sheet is offered to outline research and a theoretical framework. This information and approach may assist communities in developing youth homelessness prevention and re-housing services:

Research-based Prevention Considerations:

- Youth homelessness is surprisingly common. Approximately five percent of the older adolescent population (over 2 million annually) will experience a homeless episode each year;
- Most youth who become homeless experience short periods (a few days) of homelessness and often return to family members;
- Youth typically have better life outcomes when supported to return to family members who are permanent and caring guardians (as opposed to assuming all homeless youth require independent housing); and
- Nationally, there is a deficit of child welfare services working with abused and neglected older adolescents in providing family counseling and intensive family preservation services.

Research-based Re-housing Considerations:

- A small percentage of the homeless youth population experiences long-term homelessness and survival in street environments (at least 100,000 youth nationally each year) and may benefit from housing first programs and re-housing services;
- Some homeless youth are young adults with resiliency, jobs, and income and will not require long-term assistance but may require shallow subsidies or financial assistance to lease an apartment;
- Contrary to common misperceptions, many states have common law rights allowing minors (17 and under) to contract for housing through lease agreements without a co-signor. However, there is no law requiring landlords to rent to a minor and most jurisdictions lack fair housing laws prohibiting age discrimination against minors accessing housing; and
- Youth are in a development stage and require access to opportunities to build life skills and positive youth development approaches should be implemented in any housing services.

The role of early intervention and prevention services for homeless youth:

Youth homelessness is largely a reflection of family breakdown, and youth often flee homes due to abuse, neglect, severe conflict, and crisis. The number of homeless youth is difficult to count for

definitional and methodological reasons, but estimates indicate that as many as 2 million youth are homeless during the course of a year.

Research reveals a couple of key observations about homeless youth. First, abuse, neglect, and family conflict are consistently identified as precursors to youth homelessness. Research finds that 40 to 60 percent of all homeless youth have experienced physical abuse and between 17 and 35 percent have experienced sexual abuse. Additionally, youth consistently report severe family conflict as the primary reason for their homelessness. Some youth may be rejected and abandoned by their parents due to their pregnancy, sexual orientation or gender identity. It is important to acknowledge that abuse, neglect, and rejection are not solely responsible for youth homelessness. Poverty, lack of affordable housing, inaccessible health care, and systemic racism are all factors that contribute to homelessness of unaccompanied youth.

The second key observation is that a majority of homeless youth will experience short periods of homelessness before reunifying with their families. In studies of runaway youth, a range of 47 to 80 percent of homeless youth return home within a few days or week. Of the 47,000 homeless youth accessing shelter services in 2007 through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, 73 percent were discharged out of shelter to their parents or a family member. (RHYMIS data) Even a longitudinal study of 249 homeless youth, ages 13 and 17 years, found that a relatively small percentage of homeless youth experience long-term homelessness in street environments. This study of the homeless youth population in Detroit found that only 7 percent remained homeless. However, not all were successfully reunified with parents. One third lived with their parent, about one fifth lived with relatives or friends, and over a third (34 percent) lived on their own. (Toro, Paul)

Unfortunately, for a significant minority of the homeless youth population family reunification is not a realistic option. Some youth have deceased parents or do not have immediate or known extended family able to take them in. For others, the risk of re-abuse is too great or parents may have completely abandoned them for various reasons such as the youth's sexual orientation, gender identity or pregnant status. Another group for whom reunification may not be realistically achievable is youth who have aged out of the foster care system or who have been discharged from the juvenile justice system. While some of these so called "systems youth" are discharged to secure family placements, many do not have stable family environments to which to return. Finally, older youth who have remained homeless for long periods of time and who have developed survival skills in street environments will likely not be successfully reintegrated into family housing. The systems youth and other youth who are unable to be reunified will require secure housing options with opportunities for positive youth development.

No homeless youth should be returned to parents or guardians that pose a risk of continued physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or abandonment. However, many homeless youth will benefit from services targeted to issues and challenges within the family which create barriers to reunification. Ideally, such prevention and early intervention services would build relationships between youth and their families to address the underlying causal factors to youth homelessness:

- severe family conflict
- physical and sexual abuse
- neglect
- alcohol and chemical abuse and dependency
- mental health disabilities



For further information, please see: www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/prevention/ or

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OTHER FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS BENEFITING HOMELESS YOUTH SHELTER, HOUSING, and SERVICES

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act not only includes homelessness prevention and re-housing funding, but additional investment in federal programs offering opportunities related to housing and beneficial to people experiencing homelessness. This investment is an extremely significant increase in federal support for low-income communities. Community planners may be able to coordinate funding to expand housing opportunities to homeless youth by using a combination of available resources. The following is a review of other areas that could be utilized to produce youth housing programs.

1. \$1 Billion – Community Development Block Grants

Quick Introduction: CDBG funds are annual grants to entitled cities and counties (offered on a formula basis) which can be used to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. CDBG funds may be used for activities which include, but are not limited to:

- acquisition of real property;
- relocation and demolition;
- rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures; and
- provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities.

To receive its annual CDBG entitlement grant, a grantee must develop and submit to HUD its Consolidated Plan, (which is a jurisdiction's comprehensive planning document and application for funding under the following Community Planning and Development formula grant programs: CDBG, HOME Investment Partnerships, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), and Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG). In its Consolidated Plan, the jurisdiction must identify its goals for these programs as well as for housing programs. In order to identify homeless youth shelter, housing, or service programs which could benefit from CDBG funds, nonprofit directors should contact local municipal or county officials for more information on the CDBG funding process.

2. \$2 Billion – Neighborhood Stabilization (HUD)

Quick Introduction: The Neighborhood Stabilization Program offers emergency assistance to state and local governments to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties to address community areas of high rates of residence abandonment and blight. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) provides grants to every state and certain local communities to purchase foreclosed or abandoned homes and then rehabilitate, resell, or redevelop these homes. It is believed that by creating significant federal investment in eradicating blight, neighborhoods may be stabilized and declining home values prevented. HUD already issued \$4 billion to states and local communities with the highest needs (determined by foreclosure rates and percentage of homes financed by subprime mortgages) in 2008. The stimulus package offers an additional \$2 billion.

State and local governments can use their neighborhood stabilization grants to acquire land and property; to demolish or rehabilitate abandoned properties; and/or to offer down-payment and closing cost assistance to low-to moderate-income homebuyers (household incomes not exceed 120 percent of area median income). In addition, these grantees can create "land banks" to assemble, temporarily manage, and dispose of vacant land for the purpose of stabilizing neighborhoods and encouraging re-use or redevelopment of urban property.

3. **\$1 Billion- Community Services Block Grant (HUD)**

Quick Introduction: The Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) is a formula grant that provides funds to States, Territories, and federally and State-recognized Indian tribes/tribal organizations so that they may provide supportive services and activities to assist low-income individuals and families to become self-sufficient. Typically, States fund these services by making sub-grants to locally based Community Action Agencies and other eligible entities that provide services to low-income individuals and families.

Grantees use the funds to support a variety of services that help low-income people. Services typically assist with childcare, employment, education, emergency services, health care, housing, nutrition, transportation, youth development, and coordination of resources and community participation.

4. **\$50 million – YouthBuild (Department of Labor)**

Quick Introduction: In YouthBuild is positive youth development program that couples educational advancement with hands-on vocational experience in the construction industry. YouthBuild supports low-income young people ages 16–24 to work toward their GED or high school diploma while receiving job training and career mentorship by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. Strong emphasis is placed on leadership development and community service. Youth participants spend 6 to 24 months in this full time program dividing time between school and the construction site. Community- and faith-based nonprofit organizations act as the sponsor for this nationally dispersed program. Funding through private and public sources are leveraged, but primary support comes from the appropriations to the U.S. Department of Labor. Approximately 75% of all enrolled youth either placed in a job or received advancement in their education. For further information about the program you can visit <http://www.youthbuild.org/site/c.htlRI3PIKoG/b.1223925/k.DF42/Programs.htm>. Federal Agency: Department of Labor - http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/youthbuild.cfm

4. **\$1.2 Billion- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – Department of Labor**

Quick Introduction: The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) reformed federal employment, training, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs by creating an integrated "one-stop" system of workforce investment and education services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. While the act did not "block grant" all training programs (as some state advocates had hoped), the law mandates coordination among a range of federal job training programs, including the Employment Service, adult education and literacy programs, welfare-to-work, vocational education and vocational rehabilitation. WIA's goal is to provide workforce development services to employers and workers through a universally accessible, information-driven, one-stop career center system. As prescribed by federal law, each Local Workforce Investment Board must establish a youth council to develop parts of the local plan pertaining to youth. Services are targeted to low-income youth, ages 14 through 21, who face one or more challenges as defined in the law to successful workforce entry. WIA requires that ten program elements, reflecting a focus on youth development, be made available to youth participants as well as one year of follow-up services.

RECIPE OF FEDERAL FUNDS: EXPANDING THE SERVICE SPECTRUM FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

1. **Use Neighborhood Stabilization funds to acquire housing.** Homeless youth housing programs (transitional housing and supportive housing programs) could approach their State and City partners to allocate a portion of the Neighborhood Stabilization funds to acquire foreclosed homes and resell the homes for bargain prices to nonprofit organizations offering housing opportunities to homeless youth. Planning could determine how to purchase a geographically dispersed array of housing options (shared homes, group homes, supervised apartment buildings) that are located near public transit and employment opportunities.
2. **Use Community Development Block Grant funds to rehabilitate housing.** Homeless youth housing programs (transitional and supportive housing programs) could use CDBG funds to rehabilitate their housing structures, perhaps using youth apprentice construction workers along with private contractors.
3. **Use Community Service Block Grant funds to offer life-skills training and employment support.** Homeless youth service and housing programs could approach Community Action Programs to develop specific services to assist homeless youth, including young homeless parents with children, with life skills support, case management services, and employment assistance.
4. **Homelessness Prevention and Re-housing funds could be used to offer outreach services, system navigation, and re-housing assistance coupled with short-term rental assistance or financial aid.** Homeless youth programs could support the expansion of their housing program spectrum by hiring a team of community-based outreach workers and youth advocates to provide system navigation (to obtain public assistance and ensure eligibility for public benefits) and referral to appropriate housing opportunities. Additionally, the outreach workers or youth advocates could offer case management services coupled with re-housing services – allowing youth to access financial assistance to obtain their own apartment or receive a short-term rental assistance (3 months) to ensure housing stability.

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