

# ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTIONS OF JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE



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## COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE

‘Collaborating for Change’ is a project of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and its partners the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) and National League of Cities’ (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. This initiative brings together stakeholders from across multiple sectors to ensure that a youth’s involvement with the juvenile justice system does not increase the likelihood that they will experience homelessness, and that communities support rather than criminalize youth who experience homelessness.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A young person's involvement with the justice system can increase their likelihood of later experiencing homelessness for many reasons, including the fact that educational disruptions and juvenile delinquency records can make it harder to obtain employment. Youth experiencing homelessness may also be swept into the juvenile justice system through laws that prohibit simply being in public spaces, such as juvenile curfews, or anti-sitting or sleeping ordinances. Both juvenile justice involvement and youth homelessness have long-term negative consequences. The Principles in Part I of this document provide a roadmap for communities to help young people avoid experiencing juvenile justice system involvement and/or youth homelessness. This includes doing the following:

- Principle 1:** Ensure that the laws and policies in your jurisdiction do not lead youth experiencing homelessness to be cited, arrested, or charged for survival acts or “quality of life” offenses.
- Principle 2:** Ensure that young people are diverted from juvenile justice system involvement whenever possible, and that any diversion programs or services are appropriately tailored to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.
- Principle 3:** When juvenile justice system involvement cannot be avoided, ensure that comprehensive transition planning begins immediately after—and continues throughout—a youth's confinement or probation supervision.
- Principle 4:** Ensure your community has both long- and short-term safe housing options available for youth who are, or have been, involved with the juvenile justice system.
- Principle 5:** Ensure your community provides youth and their families with related services and supports that can help them obtain and keep safe and stable housing.
- Principle 6:** Ensure that youth, and their families, are not kicked out of their homes or denied housing because the youth have been arrested or adjudicated for a delinquency offense.
- Principle 7:** Ensure youth help lead and shape the identification and implementation of policy and practice solutions to address the connections between juvenile justice and youth homelessness.
- Principle 8:** Ensure efforts prioritize lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth, gender non-conforming (GNC) youth, youth of color, and other over-represented populations to address and reduce the disproportionalities that exist in the populations of youth experiencing homelessness and/or involved with the juvenile justice system.
- Principle 9:** Ensure that law enforcement, courts, schools, and service providers employ gender-responsive and age- and culturally-appropriate trauma-informed responses when working with youth.
- Principle 10:** Undertake and fund research to help better understand the issue of youth homelessness and identify solutions.



Part II of this document includes specific resources and examples to guide communities as they work to put *Principles for Change* into practice. We also encourage you to engage with the Collaborating for Change project at [www.juvjustice.org/homelessness](http://www.juvjustice.org/homelessness) as we continue to develop new resources on these issues.

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, nearly 380,000 minors experience “unaccompanied” homelessness — meaning they are homeless and without a parent or guardian — for a period of longer than one week.<sup>1</sup> These young people, much like their adult counterparts, are often cited, arrested, charged, and/or incarcerated instead of being provided with the supports they need. One million youth are also involved with law enforcement or the juvenile justice system each year,<sup>2</sup> an experience that can increase their likelihood of becoming homeless.

Many young people experience both homelessness and justice involvement. The following key principles and policy recommendations can help jurisdictions ensure that a youth’s involvement with the juvenile justice system does not increase the likelihood that they will experience homelessness, and that youth experiencing homelessness receive the services and supports they need instead of being cited, arrested, charged, or incarcerated. Juvenile justice agencies, youth homelessness service providers, and related stakeholders can improve outcomes for youth through collaboration, innovation, and the use of research and promising practices to inform their work. These recommendations should be used as a guide.

### Framing the Issue

Young people may be arrested for reasons that are directly related to their lack of safe and stable housing, such as spending a night in a park in violation of a municipal ordinance that prohibits sleeping in public spaces. But homelessness can also be associated with justice involvement in more complex ways. For example:

- A young person may be sleeping on a friend’s or acquaintance’s couch some distance away and have trouble getting to school each day, leading to a truancy charge.
- A youth living on the street or in another unsafe environment may—due to traumatic stress—become hypervigilant and defensive, leading to a fight at school and an assault charge.
- A youth who does not have anywhere safe to sleep at night might steal money or goods in order to obtain shelter, leading to a theft charge.
- A young person may seek shelter in an abandoned building and be charged with trespassing.

#### Recommendations for Government Agencies

Governments and their component agencies serve a number of functions relevant to addressing the issues raised in this document. Because of this, recommendations for them are generally given according to those functions. For example, a state government’s responsibilities to make policy, fund services, and administer justice programs may be addressed in three separate sets of recommendations: one set for policymakers, one for public funders, and one for justice agencies. In carrying out the recommendations in this document, government agencies are encouraged to work collaboratively across agencies (e.g., housing, education, the courts), and also across levels of government (e.g., federal or state agencies working with city or county agencies).

<sup>1</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. *Youth – Overview*. Available at [www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youth\\_overview](http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youth_overview).

<sup>2</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Statistical Briefing Book*. Available at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/>.



Youth might trade sex for shelter (or money to obtain shelter) and be charged with solicitation. Even for youth whose “charge” is unrelated to homelessness, an arrest can exacerbate an already unstable living situation or introduce uncertainty into a currently stable living situation.

## Scope of the Issue

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families interviewed 656 homeless youth, ages 14-21, in 11 cities across the country. They found that:

- Almost 44% had been in a juvenile detention center, jail, or prison;
- Nearly 78% had at least one prior interaction with the police; and
- Nearly 62% had been arrested at some point in their lives.<sup>3</sup>

When asked why they first experienced homelessness:

- 51% said they had been asked to leave home or were kicked out;
- 25% said they could not find a job;
- 24% said it was because they had been physically abused or beaten;
- 23% said it was due to a caregiver's drug or alcohol use; and
- 13% said it was due to their own drug/alcohol issues.

Additionally, 7% directly attributed their first homelessness experience to exiting a jail or prison.<sup>4</sup>

This data is an important window into the pathways and experiences of youth who have spent some period of time homeless, but much more extensive research is needed into the characteristics, needs, strengths, and experiences of youth. (See Principle 10 for more information.)



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<sup>3</sup> Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau. *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Final Report*. Available at [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/data\\_collection\\_study\\_final\\_report\\_street\\_outreach\\_program.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/data_collection_study_final_report_street_outreach_program.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Defining the Issue: What is Youth Homelessness?

Definitions of **youth homelessness**—and eligibility for services—may vary from program to program and state to state. We suggest using the broadest possible definition in enacting the recommendations presented in this document to aid the greatest number of youth and to include populations or circumstances that may be particularly common among youth with juvenile justice involvement.

One example of a broadly inclusive definition is found in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC 11434A(2)) for education-related services. It says that **youth are considered homeless** if they “[lack] a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” including sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; and living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places. Another widely inclusive definition, from the National Network for Youth, states that “a ‘homeless youth’ is an individual who is 12-24 years of age, who is living on their own, without a parent or guardian, and is without a safe, stable living arrangement.”

Note that in some programs or publications, situations described throughout this document might be termed **“housing instability.”** This document uses an intentionally broad definition. For the purposes of this resource, any living situation that is not safe, stable, or otherwise expected to be long-term is considered to be homelessness. Additionally, although some programs or policies may focus on “runaway” youth, many young people labeled as “runaways” have actually been thrown out of their homes or are trying to escape unsafe situations. These particular youth are also referred to as “thrown away.”

Throughout this document **safe housing** denotes an environment where a young person does not have a reasonable fear of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and where basic living needs are met (e.g., home keeps out rain and wind, and has running water, electricity, and heat). **Stable housing** refers to a place where a young person reasonably expects to have continuous access to housing for a set period of time.

The term **“youth”** is used to encompass all young people up through the age of 24, while the term **“minors”** is used for recommendations/considerations specific to youth under the age of 18. Although many of the principles in this document can benefit young adults also involved in the adult criminal justice system, the primary focus is on young people who are—or could become—involved in the juvenile justice system. In most, but not all instances, a young person will be under the court’s jurisdiction until age 18. Some states, however, have extended jurisdiction up through the age of 24. Conversely, many youth under age 18 are charged as adults and enter the adult criminal justice system, either because of lower ages of jurisdiction or based upon exceptions in local laws that allow for prosecution of minors as adults under specific circumstances.

For explanations of other terms related to youth homelessness, see National Network for Youth’s website at [www.nn4youth.org/learn/definitions/](http://www.nn4youth.org/learn/definitions/).

## PART I: KEY PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE

### Principle 1: Ensure that the laws and policies in your jurisdiction do not lead youth experiencing homelessness to be cited, arrested, or charged for survival acts or “quality of life” offenses.

Juvenile justice involvement can increase a young person’s likelihood of homelessness and laws that disproportionately impact youth experiencing homelessness can make them more likely to enter the justice system.

Juvenile justice agencies, courts, schools, city and other local government leaders, community-based service providers (including runaway and homeless youth programs), law enforcement, and other various stakeholders all have a role to play in ensuring that youth are not cited, arrested, charged, or incarcerated for their lack of stable, secure, and permanent housing.

**Stakeholders** should prioritize providing services to meet the needs of homeless youth when they come to the attention of law enforcement rather than arresting and charging youth.

**Local, state, and federal policymakers** should ensure that children who lack stable housing receive services instead of being arrested and charged for being in public spaces. Laws and ordinances, such as those prohibiting sitting, camping, or sleeping in public spaces and activities such as panhandling, loitering, or violating youth curfews should be repealed or amended to avoid criminalizing acts caused by a young person’s homelessness.

**Law enforcement, courts, and juvenile justice systems** should divert youth who commit “survival crimes” from the justice system and provide services that meet their basic needs. (See Principle 2 for more information.)

**State policymakers** should ensure students are not subject to juvenile court involvement due to truancy. For example, both Texas and California recently passed state laws decriminalizing truancy (see TX HB 2398, 2015 and CA SB 1296, 2014).

**Policymakers, courts, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems** should prohibit confinement as a solution. No matter how limited alternate housing options may be, a young person should not be placed in a detention facility or other secure or locked facility because of their lack of housing. (Runaway and homeless youth programs may help provide alternatives, but must be allowed to access juvenile justice funding for use of their beds, so that they can continue to serve all youth who need their help.)

**Courts** should avoid use of fines and the application of other monetary costs for youth, such as fees to participate in a diversion program. Such fees may present a burden that not all youth can afford, regardless of how small the fees may be. Minors, for example, are often unable to work and their parents may be unable or unwilling to pay these costs. Unpaid debts from court cases make it even harder for youth to obtain jobs and stable housing.

**Policymakers** should similarly adjust laws and policies to avoid these fines. Additionally, court citations and summons that are delivered by mail should be avoided, as they may not reach

“Researchers emphasize that illegal acts committed by runaway youth and youth experiencing homelessness are frequently motivated by basic survival needs, such as food and shelter; the presence of adverse situations, such as hunger and unemployment; self-medication through use of alcohol and drugs; and a lack of opportunities for legitimate self-support.”

--Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau: Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Final Report (April 2016)

transient youth, leading to warrants for failure to appear or pay, in favor of text notifications. To the extent that fines and fees are used generally, they should be waived for any minor, and for any older young person who is considered indigent under the jurisdiction's standards. Youth who pose no safety risk — particularly minors — should always be released without requiring bail for similar reasons.<sup>5</sup>

**Schools** should:

- Comply with all federal and state law requirements for schools to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and take advantage of available training and technical assistance on how best to do so. Schools should be active participants in community discussions about proposed laws that could lead to juvenile justice involvement for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure youth are not subject to school discipline for experiencing homelessness. Students, for example, should not be punished for being unable to meet school dress code standards that require wearing clean clothes or a uniform if there is a lack of access to clean laundry. Similarly, they should not be punished for tardiness or absenteeism due to lack of access to adequate transportation. (Schools should also consider making laundry machines available, which has been shown to increase attendance.<sup>6</sup>)
- Ensure youth are not subject to overly harsh school discipline for behaviors triggered by past traumatic experiences, such as getting into a fight because they feel threatened. Schools should also ensure youth are not disciplined for actions that are directly related to homelessness (e.g., bringing household items to school that qualify as “weapons” under the school discipline code). (See discussion of trauma among youth experiencing homelessness in Principle 9.)
- Ensure that student privacy is respected. Avoid the use of School Resource Officers or investigators to verify or disclose to third parties a youth's housing status as contact from “authority figures” can disrupt safe, although temporary, housing situations.

**Attorneys and legal services agencies** should ensure that all youth have access to counsel and legal resources for any court involvement, as early in the process as possible. Even non-delinquent offenses can result in fines and fees leading to the consequences discussed above, thus making counsel imperative in all cases. Attorneys and legal advocates should also help youth experiencing homelessness enforce their right under the McKinney-Vento Act to stay in the same school throughout the duration of their homelessness or immediately enroll in a new school wherever they are.

**Public and private funders** should advocate for better policy on these issues and should provide or fund training and technical assistance. They should create an expectation that the communities they fund will not criminalize youth in the ways described above. They should also provide adequate funding and resources for programs to help ensure that young people can have the services they need without a juvenile justice or child welfare case having to be filed.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on bail in juvenile courts, see Szymanski, L. National Center for Juvenile Justice. (2005) *Juvenile's Right to Bail in Pre-Adjudicatory Proceedings*. Available at [www.ncjj.org/PDF/Snapshots/2005/vol10\\_no9\\_righttobail.pdf](http://www.ncjj.org/PDF/Snapshots/2005/vol10_no9_righttobail.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Mental Floss. *These Schools Raised Attendance by Supplying Laundry Services*. Available at [mentalfloss.com/article/84613/these-schools-raised-attendance-supplying-laundry-services](http://mentalfloss.com/article/84613/these-schools-raised-attendance-supplying-laundry-services).

## Principle 2: Ensure that young people are diverted from juvenile justice system involvement whenever possible, and that any diversion programs or services are appropriately tailored to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

A broad range of stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring that juvenile justice system involvement does not contribute to youth homelessness. This prevention begins with providing services and supports to youth with a specific goal of reducing likelihood of homelessness among youth with juvenile justice system involvement.

**All professionals** should ensure that youth are not arrested, charged, or otherwise brought in to contact the juvenile justice system for the sole purpose of providing services related to housing or homelessness. Justice system involvement generally, and detention in particular, has life-changing negative consequences, ranging from poorer education and employment outcomes to increased risk of suicide and other health issues.<sup>7</sup> Professionals must also be sure not to confuse needs with risks when it comes to decisions on residential placement. Youths' needs can be addressed through a wide range of services (discussed throughout this document), without the negative consequences associated with secure confinement and other residential placements.

**Stakeholders** must ensure that housing stability is considered at early points in justice involvement to identify youth with housing needs and connect them to the appropriate services. All stakeholders should consider whether homelessness may be an issue for each youth they come in contact with. (See CJJ's [Roadmap](#) for additional information.) Service-based responses to behaviors that have led to juvenile justice involvement should be offered whenever possible. Interventions or services, such as restorative justice practices, that help hold youth accountable and correct harms that may have been incurred by others, also serve as an important tool to put youth on a better path.

**Juvenile justice agencies, community-based alternatives to justice involvement, and the public and private funders** who support them must recognize that justice system interventions may require modifications to effectively serve transient youth, but these modifications are worth making. For example, electronic monitoring or other reporting mechanisms will be difficult or impossible for a young person who does not have access to a phone line or a fixed address. This could lead a young person to stay in an unsafe environment in order to be able to be in compliance. Stakeholders should ensure that youth are not excluded from community-based programs and diversion opportunities because of their housing status, inability to pay for fees, or lack of other resources necessary to participate in alternatives to detention (e.g., a phone). Working with youth who have experienced homelessness, and the providers who serve them every day, can help justice system stakeholders identify common barriers and potential solutions, and to ensure an equitable system which serves youth experiencing homelessness just as well as other youth.

**Intake and judicial officers** should consider whether youth are eligible for pre-court diversion and/or community-based services, and prioritize programs that offer case management and/or specific services related to homelessness without requiring court involvement. For more on the importance and characteristics of

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<sup>7</sup> Holman, B., et al. *The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities*. Justice Policy Institute. *No Place For Kids*. Available at [www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-NoPlaceForKidsFullReport-2011.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-NoPlaceForKidsFullReport-2011.pdf).

voluntary diversion programs, see the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's *National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses*, Standard 2.1.

**Schools** should use truancy review boards and other methods to identify and respond to the underlying reasons for missed classes (e.g., unmet special education needs) rather than filing truancy charges. Schools should also use supportive school discipline policies to reduce school push-out and address youth engaging in disruptive behaviors or minor school-based offenses, rather than over-relying on suspensions and expulsions, or calling law enforcement. Schools should partner with community-based providers to provide support services that address the underlying causes of truancy or other behaviors that may lead to court involvement. Schools should also ensure that youth are never kept out of school or denied services due to the school's lack of knowledge of McKinney-Vento rights and responsibilities (see below), since being out of school may make youth more likely to get involved in the juvenile justice system.

**Attorneys and other advocates** (e.g., McKinney-Vento liaisons) should ensure young people are accessing all legal rights that could meet their needs and address the root causes of their behaviors. This could include immediate enrollment in school, transportation, and other services through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as well as family preservation or independent living services through Title IV-E. It could also include behavioral or physical health services through Medicaid, if youth are eligible. For young women, particularly young mothers, advocates should ensure they are receiving any relevant protections afforded by Title IX, which guarantees equal education rights regardless of gender. (The National Women's Law Center provides information and resources on the rights of pregnant and parenting students.)<sup>8</sup>

**Juvenile defenders** should also zealously advocate for youth to be diverted from court involvement whenever possible, and for services to address housing and other needs.

**Child welfare systems** should work closely with justice systems, the courts, and community-based providers to resolve any alleged offenses by youth in their care without justice involvement (e.g., through community-based services and diversion programs that would help connect the youth with services before court involvement). They should also provide support for youth to resolve the underlying reasons for the behavior that led to court involvement. This includes reducing the risk of running away and/or behaviors that could lead to justice involvement by ensuring that youth under their care are in safe, supportive, stable placements and are receiving developmentally appropriate services, including any needed special education services at the youth's school. Child welfare systems should evaluate their practices regarding adolescents to ensure that this population is receiving the same quality and intensity of prevention efforts and services as younger children who experience abuse or neglect. Services should be tailored to meet the particular needs of adolescents. When a young person with an active child welfare case comes into juvenile justice custody, the child welfare agency's case involving the child should be kept open to ensure that the young person can still receive placements, services, and supports. The young person should continue to receive case management, including child welfare transition planning.

**Community-based service providers, child welfare, and public/behavioral health agencies**, (e.g., runaway and homeless youth programs, behavioral health providers) should educate law enforcement, justice agencies, and

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<sup>8</sup> [nwlc.org/issue/pregnant-parenting-students/](https://nwlc.org/issue/pregnant-parenting-students/).



courts about services available in the community that can serve as alternatives to justice involvement. They should be trained on key issues like adolescent development and crisis intervention/de-escalation, in addition to the collateral consequences of a juvenile adjudication in their jurisdiction.

**Law enforcement** should take advantage of local drop-off options and other alternatives to arrest for eligible offenses. If these options do not exist, they should work with city and county leaders to establish such resources. These programs often have intake and service referral procedures that can identify and respond to homelessness and issues that lead to homelessness, such as high family conflict. Although program design varies by location, the recommendations throughout this document about avoiding arrest, charging, etc., for youth should still be followed. Law enforcement should also partner with schools, behavioral and public health agencies, runaway and homeless youth service providers, child welfare agencies, and community-based services. Collaboration can range from requesting training (e.g., adolescent brain development and legal rights) to initiating joint response protocols and programs.

**Policymakers and funders** should advocate for, and make funding available to, provide services without requiring that a youth be involved in the justice system, diagnosed with a mental illness, identified as homeless, or otherwise given a label or record that may follow them and impact their future. This includes making it easier for agencies and service providers to blend or braid funding to better serve youth. Public and private funders should also provide resources to expand community-based services and pre-court diversion programs.

**Interagency working groups**, such as those focused on disproportionate minority contact within the justice system or youth involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems (e.g., crossover or dual status youth), should integrate considerations related to housing stability and youth homelessness into their work. (See Principle 8 for more information and recommendations on disproportionality and homelessness.)

**Elected officials** (mayors, city council members, county commissioners and supervisors, state legislators, etc.) and their staff can work to improve service offerings and support piloting and spreading diversion options, particularly service-driven alternatives to arrest. They can also prioritize youth experiencing homelessness or justice-involvement for relevant programs, such as setting aside a certain number of spots in a summer jobs program for youth with these backgrounds. They should also look creatively at state and federal funding opportunities to determine if they could be used to serve youth experiencing homelessness and/or justice involvement.

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### **Principle 3: When juvenile justice system involvement cannot be avoided, ensure that comprehensive transition planning begins immediately after—and continues throughout—a youth’s confinement or probation supervision.**

Without proper planning and service provisions, youth may become homeless after exiting secure confinement. This can be prevented if system professionals begin planning on the day a young person enters juvenile justice supervision for what will happen when he or she leaves. This includes careful case planning and management so that youth who are in custody, or under probation or parole, receive needed services throughout their



involvement with the juvenile justice system. It must also include a concrete transition or exit plan. This additional focus on housing is particularly important because public housing authorities or private landlords may bar individuals with criminal records (note that these restrictions may not apply to a youth adjudicated delinquent).

**Juvenile justice agencies** should ensure that this planning includes/addresses the following issues:

- Transition plans should specifically address long-term housing stability. Agencies should not simply ask if each youth has a place to sleep the night or week they are released, but instead ensure that the youth is positioned to safely return to their homes until adulthood and/or find and keep a new place to live. This could include providing family counseling to address high-conflict relationships and/or offering educational and vocational services. It could also include ensuring that the youth's behavioral health needs are met and planning for behavioral health care after system involvement.
- Intake assessments should be used to identify risks or concerns related to housing and other needs (e.g. mental health, substance abuse, disability). Youth should receive ongoing, research-informed, assessment, planning, and service provisions that are prioritized throughout their system involvement. As youth spend more time involved with the justice system, and as they age and have new experiences, their needs may change. They may also be more willing to share information with system professionals as relationships develop and trust grows.
- In addition to a "first-choice" long-term housing plan, transition planning should include one or more backup plan(s) in case the planned living arrangements do not work out. (Juvenile justice agencies may wish to look at concurrent planning, a somewhat similar concept in the child welfare field). Youth should also have a crisis plan, meaning that they know what they would do, and who to call, if they find themselves facing homelessness despite the efforts detailed above.
- Transition plans must be individualized and address the particular needs and circumstances of young people. For example, youth who were gang-involved may not be able to safely return to their previous neighborhood. Young people convicted of sex offenses may have severe restrictions on where they can live. Youth with disabilities, meanwhile, may be eligible for additional services or supports as they transition to adulthood. Youth who have experienced family rejection, because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or for other reasons, may only be able to return home safely if their families are offered and take advantage of LGBTQ-affirming family counseling,<sup>9</sup> but this is something that should be identified and addressed early in transition planning. Young people and their families should never be referred to programs that attempt to alter their sexual orientation or gender identity (i.e., "conversion" therapy).
- Planning should occur in partnership with families (as defined by the youth) when safely possible for the young person, and in coordination with juvenile defenders if the jurisdiction allows for post-disposition representation. This planning process should reflect the realities of young people's lives,

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<sup>9</sup> For more information, see the Family Acceptance Project at [familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu).

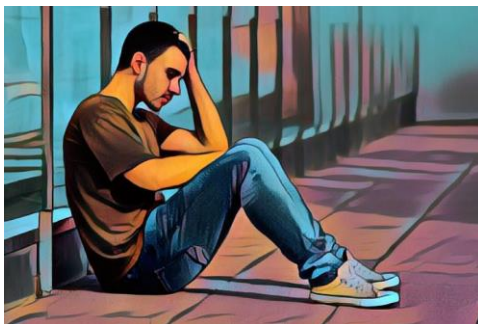
such as where and with whom they feel safest. Services should also be offered to families as appropriate (e.g., helping a parent or potential guardian find stable housing or employment may lead to a young person having a safe home after system involvement).

**Juvenile justice agencies** should also ensure that they are responsive to the needs of youth experiencing specific circumstances such as:

- Justice-involved youth who have also been involved with the child welfare system, particularly those close to aging out of foster care. The youth may need additional services and supports, as they may not have sufficient supportive connections and social capital. They should also be fully educated about their rights to education funding, extended foster care, and Medicaid eligibility, which can vary by state.
- Pregnant and parenting youth may also need extra support to ensure they have networks and resources in place for when they exit the juvenile justice system. Plans should be developed that address the needs of both the young person and their child or children.
- For youth in non-secure residential placements or programs as part of their juvenile justice involvement, agencies must recognize that youth may run away from these settings for a number of reasons, but may be able to successfully return and complete programming if they are given the chance. This behavior is normal and should be expected, and community-based programs should expect and plan for it. Justice agencies should give youth multiple chances rather than automatically classifying these incidents as “violations” and moving youth to higher levels of supervision.

**Schools and juvenile justice agencies** must partner on developing and implementing policies and practices to ensure that youth who are exiting a justice placement are able to re-enroll in school promptly. This may require cross-training so juvenile justice agencies understand youth’s education rights (including those under the McKinney-Vento Act) and schools understand juvenile justice procedures. For example, probation staff should understand when to connect youth to McKinney Vento Homelessness Liaisons and how to help young people understand and exercise their rights to immediate school enrollment and other services.

Juvenile justice agencies should provide education in justice facilities that closely tracks education provided in public schools. Agencies and schools should also improve access to records, and ensure that youth receive credit for study undertaken in justice facilities and alternative placements.



### Education and Employment: Homelessness Prevention Strategies for Justice-Involved Youth

Educational attainment and employability can position young people for long-term economic stability and decrease their risk of homelessness. In *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*<sup>1</sup> (*Core Principles*), the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG) discusses how juvenile justice systems can support youth under their jurisdiction on these issues.

To improve educational outcomes CSG says jurisdictions should:

- Keep young people in school by reforming school discipline and improving responses to school-based behaviors. CSG also suggests minimizing educational disruption by keeping youth in juvenile justice and child welfare systems in their schools when possible, and when changes are unavoidable, ensuring records and other information transfer smoothly, and appropriate academic supports are offered.
- Ensure high quality education for youth in confinement, including qualified teachers, the same high standards as successful schools in the community, and independent accreditation. CSG advises juvenile justice systems to "support sufficient services for youth with educational and other disabilities." They also suggest providing "credit recovery and alternative credentialing programs, and vocational certification programs aligned with industry standards and local workforce needs."
- Help students re-enroll in school when they leave juvenile justice system custody. CSG explains that up to 2/3 of youth do not re-enroll in school after returning to their communities, increasing the likelihood that they will reoffend. Improved policies and practices around record and credit transfers, and training on education rights, can help address this. Transition coordinators, advocates, or teams can help individual students navigate the process. (See *Core Principles* for specific examples from jurisdictions throughout the country).

Although there is limited research on the effectiveness of vocational training for youth, CSG suggests that juvenile justice systems try programs that have been proven effective for young adults. Job Corps and Youth Build are two programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor that CSG cites as having "significant promise." Both offer vocational training and other services and have been shown to improve employment and other outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> Council of State Governments Justice Center. *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*. Available at <http://bit.ly/2c9eYO6>.

**State Advisory Groups** and local commissions/workgroups on juvenile justice should ensure that their juvenile justice agencies and the community-based providers they work with prioritize transition planning in line with the recommendations outlined above.

**Other public and private funders** should allocate resources to support transition planning for youth exiting the justice system, as well as funding research to better inform this planning and educating policymakers and others about the importance of these efforts.

**Policymakers** should put strict accountability mechanisms in place to ensure that youth receive transition planning.

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### Principle 4: Ensure your community has both long- and short-term safe housing options available for youth who are, or have been, involved with the juvenile justice system.

If housing does become an issue for youth, despite early and consistent planning on behalf of the juvenile justice agency, it is important that communities have youth-appropriate housing options available and that youth and advocates know how to access them.

At least one jurisdiction has documented the phenomenon of youth staying longer than necessary in justice system custody because they “have nowhere else to go.”<sup>10</sup> Advocates report anecdotally that this is true in many other jurisdictions as well. Youth should *never* spend a single extra day in juvenile justice system custody because there are no housing options in the community.

Juvenile justice stakeholders must work with other community stakeholders to ensure that long- and short-term housing options exist and that youth with past juvenile justice involvement can access them. This must include options for youth who are pregnant and parenting. Many stakeholders have a role to play in making this happen:

**Policymakers** should put strict accountability mechanisms in place and ensure youth are released from juvenile justice custody at the earliest possible date.

**Policymakers and public funders/agencies** should ensure that their jurisdiction has a public system of care for youth that cannot return home for any length of time. This includes:

- Ensuring that their community has a spectrum of housing and service options that are youth-centric and appropriate, from prevention to aftercare services. (See Principle 5 for more on services.)
- Removing barriers so that youth can access available housing options. Common barriers include exclusion based on juvenile justice history and requiring parental consent to stay in a shelter or longer-term housing option. A lack of parental consent should not keep minors from accessing housing. Minors should be able to self-refer when parental consent is being withheld, the minor fears for his or her safety, or agencies have documented unsuccessful attempts to reach the parent or legal guardian.
- Ensuring they possess and are appropriately using data regarding how many youth are homeless in their jurisdiction. This means establishing an effective identification, information, and referral system to identify youth who need housing and/or services and then get them connected quickly to services and stable housing.

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<sup>10</sup> Columbia Legal Services. *Falling Through the Gaps: How a Stay in Detention Can Lead to Youth Homelessness*. Available at [www.columbialegal.org/sites/default/files/Detention\\_to\\_Homelessness\\_Web\\_0.pdf](http://www.columbialegal.org/sites/default/files/Detention_to_Homelessness_Web_0.pdf).

- They should also make it easier for different agencies to combine funding streams to providing housing for different populations of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

### **Sustaining and expanding short- and long-term housing options for youth**

Communities may already have short-term and long-term housing options (through shelters, public housing authorities, etc.) available for youth identified as homeless, but these may not be open to unaccompanied minors, or may have long waiting lists or other restrictions. Efforts to educate youth, and families, about current resources should be coupled with efforts to expand the availability of options with low barriers to entry, both in terms of the number of beds and eligibility requirements.

Some issues that stakeholders need to consider and address in sustaining and expanding short- and long-term housing options for youth are:

- In some states, child welfare agency policy—or common practice—is that a parent’s refusal to accept a youth back home (e.g., after a stay in juvenile detention) does not necessarily constitute neglect/maltreatment.<sup>1</sup> In those jurisdictions, it is even more essential that there is a public system available to provide housing. At a minimum, child welfare agencies should be mandated to provide housing and other needed services for any young person who was in their care before entering the juvenile justice system and who wants to re-enter a child welfare placement.
- Young people’s willingness to be involved with the child welfare system will vary according to their individual circumstances and the quality of child welfare services offered in their jurisdiction (e.g., funding for independent living vs. group homes). Child-serving agencies and advocates must work together to ensure that youth can access homelessness services without fear of unwanted child welfare involvement, but also that youth who wish to receive services through the child welfare system are able to do so if their parents are unwilling or unable to provide a safe home.
- Jurisdictions should consider whether there are ways to link family housing support more specifically to youth members of the family. For example, offering rental assistance but specifying that it must be used in the best interests of minor children. These policies and practices should also address—consistent with the Principles in this document—what this means in families where there may be multiple children, whose best interests may be in conflict.
- Agencies should look to Title IV-E funding, which has been used successfully to fund services like transitional living and host homes in some states.
- Communities should consider prioritizing or giving extra attention to best practices for serving harder-to-house populations, such as parenting adolescents.
- Housing options and choices should reflect each young person’s ability and desire to live independently (including youth who are parents). Even for older adolescents, safe reunification with family should always be considered as part of a continuum of housing options.

<sup>1</sup>Columbia Legal Services. *Falling Through the Gaps: How a Stay in Detention Can Lead to Youth Homelessness*. Available at [bit.ly/2lQ1IUR](https://bit.ly/2lQ1IUR).

**Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) providers and juvenile justice agencies** should partner to identify placements outside the justice system that could serve justice-involved youth — particularly if the alternative is secure detention and/or a probation violation — and to allow RHY programs to access juvenile justice funding for use of their beds and prevention services.

**Juvenile justice systems, child welfare systems, behavioral health** and other agencies should generally help fund community-based providers who frequently house youth who would otherwise be placed in those agencies' care.

**Child welfare systems** should ensure they are able to meet the needs of youth who cannot safely be with their families due to abuse or neglect by increasing their capacity to offer services, programming, and placement options targeted to meet the needs of adolescents and their families. This must include placements that ensure young parents and their children remain together.

**Homelessness advocates and service providers** should collaborate and coordinate with juvenile justice system stakeholders tasked with transition planning, including educating them about housing options in the community. They should also partner with juvenile justice agencies to ensure that youth can access runaway and homeless youth services and coordinated entry systems.

**State Advisory Groups** on juvenile justice should prioritize efforts that address these issues.

**Other public and private funders** should ensure that adequate resources are allocated to meet the long and short-term housing needs of youth exiting juvenile justice system custody. They should also direct resources toward demonstrations or pilot tests of new models (or expansion of current, promising models) for serving youth experiencing, or at risk for, homelessness, particularly those involved with the juvenile justice system.

**Juvenile justice advocates** should engage with the housing/homelessness community and push for best practices for serving youth with juvenile justice histories, or at risk for future justice involvement. This could include ensuring beds are available for young people who would otherwise be placed in secure confinement (with the juvenile justice system helping to pay the costs of that placement). They should also partner with local U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-funded Continuums of Care<sup>11</sup> to ensure justice-involved youth can access appropriate housing.

### System to End Young Adult Homelessness

The National Network for Youth's "Proposed System to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness" depicts the wide range of housing and service options communities could put in place.

For example, there are many different types of housing a community could provide to youth. However, what a community provides is often determined by what housing models currently exist, as well as state licensing requirements, whether a minor can sign a lease (in most states they cannot), and a myriad of other factors. You can see the full range of housing and service options, from prevention to aftercare at: [bit.ly/2IDdB2g](https://bit.ly/2IDdB2g).

<sup>11</sup> HUD describes the program as "designed to assist sheltered and unsheltered homeless people by providing the housing and/or services needed to help individuals move into transitional and permanent housing, with the goal of long-term stability." Learn more at [www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/](http://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/).

## Principle 5: Ensure your community provides youth and their families with related services and supports that can help them obtain and keep safe and stable housing.

Housing alone is not enough to serve the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. As discussed in the National Network for Youth’s “Proposed System to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness,” youth may also need developmentally-appropriate services to help them heal from trauma or have their needs met. Education and workforce development programs, meanwhile, can help young people prepare for life as an adult. An array of services should be available, and youth should receive education about, and connections to, these services so that they can take advantage of those they would find helpful. Services should be available for a young person’s family as well.<sup>12</sup>

While the majority of this document discusses youth under 18, further research should be conducted to examine ways to best serve youth between the ages of 18 and 24.

Systems that already have extended ages of juvenile jurisdiction may want to consider strategies focused on young adults when working with young people who are exiting the juvenile justice system as legal adults. For example, some rapid re-housing<sup>1</sup> programs develop relationships with landlords and provide supports to encourage landlords to “take a risk” on a tenant they might not otherwise be willing to rent to, such as first-time renters. These supports can include a hotline to call with issues or the provision of mitigation funds to cover property damage and similar costs. As part of the 100-Day Challenge in Austin, Texas homelessness organizations worked with property developers to rent single family homes to young adults. This allowed the young adults to have low-cost housing and develop a good rental history. It also allowed the developers to generate income from properties that would have otherwise sat empty. For more examples of landlord-specific strategies, visit [bit.ly/2kTtfGn](http://bit.ly/2kTtfGn). To learn more about rapid re-housing, generally, visit the National Alliance to End Homelessness’s website at: [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

<sup>1</sup>National Alliance to End Homelessness. Learn more at <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/rapid-re-housing2>.

Youth who experience homelessness — and those at greatest risk to do so — should receive services that prepare them to successfully transition to adulthood. Ideally, these services would be included as part of short- or long-term housing, and would include an analysis of each young person’s skills and needs regarding living independently as an adult. As well as the employment, educational, and behavioral health services discussed above, this could include mentoring, legal support, and life skills education on issues such as cooking, using public or private transportation or driving, and personal finance (e.g., budgeting, paying bills, and using banking services such as ATMs or checks).

**Juvenile justice systems, child welfare systems, behavioral health** and other agencies should ensure that youth exiting juvenile justice systems receive aftercare services, including help with planning and connecting with resources. Resources themselves, such as any needed behavioral health treatment, vocational services, etc., should be provided and at a minimum match what is provided to youth involved with the child welfare system. These services should not be attached to court supervision. Agencies should also help fund community-based providers who

<sup>12</sup> Families include all individuals identified by youth as being family, including a young person’s own child(ren).



are serving youth who are in their care, or who have recently exited their care.

**Juvenile defenders and civil legal service providers** should partner with homelessness advocates and service providers to help identify appropriate services for juvenile justice involved youth with the goal of preventing youth homelessness. Legal services should be provided to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness due to past juvenile justice involvement. These needs can include juvenile record sealing or expungement, assistance accessing public benefits, obtaining identification documents, or filing emancipation petitions.

**Schools** must coordinate and collaborate with homeless providers to improve the provision of comprehensive education and related services to youth experiencing homelessness, in accordance with the McKinney Vento Act (42 USC §11432). Whenever possible, schools and other stakeholders should advocate for a consistent and expansive definition of homelessness so that homeless youth who are identified in schools can be rapidly housed.

**Public and private funders** should advocate for and invest in services that can address the underlying causes of homelessness, such as effective family interventions that prevent youth from becoming homeless, services to address mental health issues, employment services, and assistance with basic needs. Common basic needs of youth experiencing homelessness include obtaining identification documents and accessing public benefits to pay for food (and child care for adolescent parents).

**Policymakers and public funders/agencies** should make it easier for different agencies (e.g., juvenile justice, behavioral health) to combine or coordinate funding for services (sometimes referred to as blending or braiding funding) by easing restrictions on how and when funding streams can be used to serve different populations. This includes removing legislative and funding definitions that may create barriers. Combined funding streams can allow providers to better serve youth. For example, it may enable them to hire staff members that are critical to serving young people, such as a behavioral health specialist or case manager.

**State and local juvenile justice and child welfare agencies** should enact policies to make it easier for homelessness and other community-based service providers who are serving youth under juvenile justice or child welfare supervision to be paid or reimbursed for their services.

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## Principle 6: Ensure that youth, and their families, are not kicked out of their homes or denied housing because the youth have been arrested or adjudicated for a delinquency offense.

Many factors can make it harder for youth with past juvenile justice involvement to access and keep short- and long-term housing, including, local, state or federal policies restricting access to publicly funded housing and eliminating housing discrimination on the part of private landlords. A juvenile delinquency adjudication can, in some cases, lead to a youth (and potentially his or her entire family) being evicted from public or private housing. In reality, though, many of these policies apply only to criminal (adult) convictions, or to certain

offenses. Private landlords and public housing authorities may believe they have to, or are allowed to, deny housing more often than required or allowed by law. Private landlords have more discretion in accepting or rejecting tenants, but still have to comply with anti-discrimination laws. Public and private landlords could benefit from more education about the law in this area, as well as about supports that may be available to both tenants and landlords.

As will be further discussed in Principle 8, youth of color and LGBTQ/GNC<sup>13</sup> youth are disproportionately likely to become involved in the justice system. This can contribute to increased levels of homelessness among LGBTQ/GNC youth when public housing authorities and market-rate (private) landlords perform background checks. Stakeholders should ensure that all of the recommendations below are inclusive of youth of color and LGBTQ/GNC youth, and address any additional discrimination they may face.

**Attorneys and other advocates, as well as juvenile justice system professionals** should assist youth exiting the justice system by addressing collateral consequences of justice system involvement. This can include expunging/clearing juvenile records, which can become barriers to housing and employment. Attorneys and advocates should also help youth obtain needed identification documents and public benefits, in addition to providing other legal services aimed at helping youth successfully transition to adulthood. Advocates should help educate youth about their rights, including what questions about justice-involvement are permissible under state and federal law, and the distinctions between arrests, juvenile adjudication, and criminal convictions.

**Policymakers, public housing authorities, and private landlords** should restrict or eliminate the use of criminal background checks. When this is not possible, they should, at a minimum, limit restrictions to those required by law. They should also clarify to potential tenants—and to staff—that a juvenile delinquency adjudication is not the same as a criminal conviction, and that juvenile records may not need to be shared. Policymakers should also consider whether existing laws on sex offender registries should be amended with respect to acts committed by minors.<sup>14</sup>

**Government officials, housing providers, and advocates for young people** should ensure that housing providers adhere to the accommodations/modifications requirements of the Fair Housing Act Amendments, which can prevent eviction of youth with disabilities and their families. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kTsiOj](http://bit.ly/2kTsiOj).

**Local government leaders** should consider whether their jurisdictions have “crime free” or “nuisance” ordinances that have the unintended consequence of increasing homelessness and housing discrimination. These ordinances can, among other things, lead to victims of domestic violence being evicted due to the actions of their abusers since they often penalize tenants for calls to police. The ordinances may also cause municipalities to violate Constitutional protections.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (and/or Questioning)/Gender Non-Conforming.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Raised on the Registry: The Irreparable Harm of Placing Children on Sex Offender Registries in the US*. Available at [www.hrw.org/report/2013/05/01/raised-registry/irreparable-harm-placing-children-sex-offender-registries-us](http://www.hrw.org/report/2013/05/01/raised-registry/irreparable-harm-placing-children-sex-offender-registries-us).

<sup>15</sup> Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. *The Cost of Being Crime Free: Legal and Practical Consequences of Crime Free Rental Housing and Nuisance Property Ordinances*. Available at [povertylaw.org/sites/default/files/files/housing-justice/cost-of-being-crime-free.pdf](http://povertylaw.org/sites/default/files/files/housing-justice/cost-of-being-crime-free.pdf).

**Public and private employers** should also eliminate or restrict the use of criminal background as a barrier if the offense is not tied specifically to the job to be performed, as lack of employment can lead to homelessness. Employers should also clarify on application forms that delinquency adjudications are not the same as criminal convictions and may not need to be shared. This issue should also be addressed in trainings for managers, human resources staff, and others who hire and supervise staff.

**Child welfare agencies** should provide housing - or financial assistance to obtain housing - to all youth who are eligible for their services. This housing should also accommodate the children of parenting youth. This should happen in partnership with existing housing providers and the juvenile justice system to expand capacity to specifically house youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. They should also provide assistance with record expungement, enrollment in public benefits, employment, and other matters that can decrease barriers to housing. Homelessness alone may not qualify a minor for child welfare services, depending on the state.

**Law enforcement** should ensure that all youth feel safe and protected. Law enforcement recruitment should, when possible, focus on identifying officers from the community itself to serve as patrol officers and law enforcement leaders. Training should be provided to officers at all levels to ensure that they can de-escalate situations, understand adolescent development and mental health needs, and do not make unnecessary arrests. Law enforcement leaders should encourage officers to connect with the community in a positive fashion to help increase a sense of safety among both communities and law enforcement officials. (See Part II for resources to help achieve this.)

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## Principle 7: Ensure youth help lead and shape the identification and implementation of policy and practice solutions to address the connections between juvenile justice and youth homelessness.

Youth who have experienced homelessness and/or juvenile justice system involvement are the best sources of ideas, information, and energy to put the principles discussed throughout this document into action.

**Community-based providers, government officials, youth-serving agencies, advocates, and reform or oversight committees/workgroups** should partner with **young people** to shape policy and practice. These stakeholders can increase the success of partnerships with youth by:

- Creating youth panels or boards to provide input on policy, programming, practice, and research, and to support efforts through peer-to-peer outreach. Ensure meetings are at times and places that are practical for young people, and that stipends are available for transportation and other expenses. Avoid placing restrictions on participation that would limit involvement from youth who have relevant lived experiences (e.g., requiring a criminal/background check).

- Ensuring that *all* juvenile justice and homelessness advisory committees, interagency working groups, and similar bodies designate a specific minimum percentage (or number) of seats for young people with relevant lived experiences. Having one or two young people can lead to tokenism, while having several peers can allow youth to work together, engage in peer mentoring, and affirm each other's voices. Ensuring that these seats remain filled at all times will require planning and sometimes intense recruitment efforts.
- Training staff on positive youth development as well as the need for gender and cultural responsiveness, adolescent brain development, and trauma and toxic stress. Equipping staff with facilitation skills can also position them to work well with, and better support, youth.
- Ensuring youth are co-creating solutions, not simply listening in to conversations or sharing their personal stories. Young people should always be at the table and part of the conversations where solutions are being crafted. Often, this requires making sure the young people are prepared for these conversations in advance, listened to by those present, and that their recommendations are incorporated as part of the final product.
- Seeking out specific funding for youth engagement work so that it can be sustained and prioritized, and ensuring youth are paid for the time they contribute. While adults often serve on boards in a professional capacity and get paid by their employer for that time, youth representatives may actually lose out on hourly wages at their jobs during their participation.
- Hiring young people with relevant lived experiences for paid staff positions within their organizations. While volunteer positions on advisory committees are a good way to get young people involved in this work initially, juvenile justice, homelessness, and other relevant organizations should ultimately be led by individuals whose experiences match the youth they serve. Creating and nurturing a leadership pipeline from junior staff to management is part of that process.

### Characteristics of youth who are experiencing homelessness and/or are involved with the juvenile justice system

In a study of 656 youth ages 14-21 in 11 cities across the country, conducted for the federal Administration on Children and Youth:

- 41.1% identified as Black or African American;
- 33.3% identified as White only;
- 25.7% identified as being Hispanic or Latino/Latina; and
- 21.7% identified as being two or more races.

When asked about sexual orientation and gender identity:

- 20% identified as bisexual;
- 9.9% identified as gay or lesbian;
- 6.8% identified as transgender; and
- 4.1% percent identified as "something else" (e.g., not straight or one of the categories above)<sup>1</sup>.

Other national research has indicated that up to 40% of homeless youth nationally may be LGBT.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, a previous study also found a high prevalence of disabilities among youth who had run away from home, particularly among youth who had also been maltreated.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau. *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Final Report*. Available at [bit.ly/1S4L4sY](http://bit.ly/1S4L4sY).

<sup>2</sup>Laura Durso & Gary Gates. *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. Available at [bit.ly/2liSnnU](http://bit.ly/2liSnnU).

<sup>3</sup>P.M. Sullivan & J.F. Knutson. *Child Abuse & Neglect: The prevalence of disabilities and maltreatment among runaway children*. Available at [bit.ly/2lDoJMC](http://bit.ly/2lDoJMC).

- Using affirmative recruitment methods to ensure that youth partners are diverse in both experience (e.g., homelessness, juvenile justice, child welfare) and the communities they are from (e.g., rural, suburban, and urban), as well as reflecting the populations that are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system and among youth experiencing homelessness (e.g., youth of color or LGBTQ youth). (See Principle 8 for more information.)

**Policymakers** can support these efforts by explicitly requiring some of the above practices, such as requiring a percentage of seats on a committee for youth with relevant life experiences.

**Funders** should partner with youth to learn what their most pressing needs are, and fund programs and projects that are designed to meet those needs. Funders should also create an expectation that all grantee efforts on behalf of youth are informed and co-led by youth, as well providing funding to allow grantees to carry out the suggestions above.

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### **Principle 8: Ensure efforts prioritize LGBTQ/GNC youth, youth of color, and other over-represented populations to address and reduce the disproportionalities that exist in the populations of youth experiencing homelessness and/or involved with the juvenile justice system.**

Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and/or gender non-conforming (LGBTQ/GNC) and youth of color are at greater risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system and of homelessness. Because of this, special attention must be paid to addressing their needs and pathways into, and out of, the justice system and homelessness.

Other populations that may be particularly vulnerable to homelessness and/or justice involvement, and their negative effects include:

- youth with physical, behavioral, or cognitive disabilities; and
- recent immigrants who may be undocumented and/or may not speak fluent English.

For youth who belong to more than one of these groups, the risk may be even greater.

Youth of color are overrepresented among this population for a variety of reasons, including a lack of cultural and linguistic responsiveness among community-based services and runaway and homeless youth providers. Youth of color and LGBTQ/GNC youth may be subject to disproportionate rates of removal or ejection from community-based programs aimed at preventing homelessness. Community-based services and supports aimed at preventing or reducing youth homelessness may not be located in, or accessible to, certain communities of color. Finally, jurisdictions may not have the resources that are needed to support parents and family members who are struggling with a child's behavior, as opposed to taking custody of the youth.

Moreover, youth of color and LGBTQ youth are overrepresented among youth who are removed from their homes and placed in juvenile justice facilities. A large body of research has documented the connection between placement in secure juvenile detention facilities and worsened life outcomes for young people, including an increased likelihood of dropping out of school, reduced employment prospects, and a greater likelihood of engaging in future criminal behavior.<sup>16</sup>

**Juvenile justice agencies, runaway and homeless youth providers, schools, and community-based programs** can take the following steps to prevent homelessness among justice-involved youth:

- Provide and require meaningful gender and cultural responsiveness staff training that increases knowledge and skills, with a particular focus on LGBTQ youth, youth of color, youth with disabilities, and the reasons they are more at risk for homelessness and justice involvement.
- Enact, expand, or update comprehensive anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies. Ensure that both youth and staff are aware of and follow these policies. Staff must be expected to lead by example and model affirming behavior to the youth in their programs.
- Ensure that any external partners or services that youth are referred to, including mental and physical health professionals, provide gender and culturally responsive services and can meet the specific needs of the youth being referred (e.g., a health provider with expertise on the medical needs of a transgender young person).
- Expand recruitment and retention of diverse employees who have lived experiences that reflect those of the young people they will serve.
- Collaborate with LGBTQ/GNC youth and youth of color in designing/developing programming, and encourage them to provide peer support and educational opportunities for other youth. Ensure that LGBTQ/GNC youth, youth of color, their families, and their communities are offered opportunities to partner in the identification and development of community-based resources that can prevent juvenile justice involvement and reduce homelessness.
- Ensure that State Advisory Groups, their Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) committees, and other juvenile justice committees working to address DMC, consider and address issues related to homelessness, based on the disparities outlined above. Due to the disparities in homelessness, achieving housing stability for youth of color should be considered a strategy for decreasing DMC in the juvenile justice system.
- Ensure that no young person will be subjected to or referred to programs that attempt to alter their sexual orientation or gender identity (i.e., “conversion” therapy).

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<sup>16</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. *No Place For Kids*. Available at [www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-NoPlaceForKidsFullReport-2011.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-NoPlaceForKidsFullReport-2011.pdf).

### **Making re-entry programming work for LGBTQ/GNC youth**

Adequate transition planning and re-entry services are essential for preventing homelessness among juvenile justice-involved young people. Unfortunately, this programming does not always meet the needs of LGBTQ/GNC youth:

- Substance abuse treatment programming is often based on a faith narrative that may not be effective for youth who have traumatic experiences with faith communities. This may be particularly true for young people who were subject to conversion therapy, or thrown out of their homes based on their families' religious beliefs. Professionals should identify and refer to substance abuse providers who are not affiliated with religious institutions, or who have programs that are culturally competent and appropriate for LGBTQ/GNC youth.
- Mentoring programs, substance abuse treatment, and other services may prohibit matching young people and adults of a different biological sex (fearing romantic relationships forming). This can be exclusionary for youth who are not gender binary (e.g., do not identify solely as male or female), and also means that someone who is attracted to people of the same sex may have a same sex sponsor. Programming should allow youth to choose if they want a sponsor, mentor, or other resource adult of a particular gender.
- Young people should be re-enrolled in their original school whenever safely possible. For young people who experienced anti-LGBTQ/GNC discrimination, bullying, or harassment special efforts may be needed to make that school safe. If that is not possible, youth should have the option to attend a different school or alternative program.
- Re-entry and transition planning/services should connect all young people to health care that is specific to their needs. Professionals should identify and refer youth who are LGBTQ to health providers who are culturally competent and can meet their specific health needs (e.g., HIV-related care for a young person living with HIV).
- LGBTQ/GNC young people may face additional barriers to finding and keeping employment. Vocational programming should help all youth navigate the practical aspects of getting and keeping a job, in addition to training them on necessary skills. This should include educating LGBTQ young people on any state rights protecting them from discrimination. For transgender youth, help should also be provided in obtaining identification that matches their gender, and guidance on navigating an interview process if a legal ID has a different name than what is listed on their resume.

*Source: Meghan Maury, Senior Policy Counsel and Criminal and Economic Justice Director, National LGBTQ Task Force*

**Policymakers and funders** should advocate for and encourage systems and providers to take the above steps through specific incentives linked to demonstrated proficiency and service provision. They can also support current and broader efforts to better serve disproportionately-affected populations through targeted funding and require, where appropriate, that policies and programming meet the above recommendations.



**Public system officials, service providers, and other juvenile justice stakeholders** should receive training about implicit and explicit racial bias in the juvenile justice system, racial and ethnic disparities among the juvenile justice and homeless youth population, and effective strategies to reduce and eliminate bias and disparities.

**Researchers, policymakers, and private funders supporting research** efforts should ensure that disaggregated data is gathered on specific sub-populations of youth at each point they are by served and engage with the system. Individual privacy should be protected to the greatest extent possible.

In addition to looking at how many youth are involved in these systems, information is needed on how their experiences differ (e.g., which youth are more likely to be detained for the same type of offense), what their pathways into and out of systems are, as well as what services are currently available and where the gaps are. Specific areas for further research on racial and ethnic disparities include:

- Improving data collection on the gender, race, and ethnicity of the homeless youth population and the juvenile justice population, including disaggregating race from ethnicity in data collection.
- Assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of community-based services and programs for youth of color relative to white youth.

**Advocates** can push for better policies and practice in line with the principles above. They can also help local agencies and programs learn about, and connect to, promising practices throughout country.

In addition to the specific suggestions above, many of the recommendations throughout this document have the potential to keep youth of color LGBTQ/GNC, and other overrepresented youth out of the justice system and prevent homelessness. Special attention may be needed, however, to ensure that these efforts reach the youth who need them most. Some examples include:

- Increasing resources to support family members who may be struggling with their child's behavior instead of resorting to removal of the child from the home. These could include parent-to-parent mentoring programs, mobile crisis response teams, and other support services.
- Limiting the use of out-of-home placement for youth in the juvenile justice system and developing more effective community-based programs.
- Ensuring that youth of color and LGBTQ/GNC youth who are returning from an out-of-home placement have help connecting with community-based supports, including assistance re-engaging with educational, health and mental health, and other treatment and support services.

## Principle 9: Ensure that law enforcement, courts, schools, and service providers employ gender-responsive and age- and culturally-appropriate trauma-informed responses when working with youth.

As defined by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, “trauma occurs when a child experiences an intense event that threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical well-being.” In the Administration for Children, Youth and Families study discussed previously, 56.7% of homeless youth had experienced physical abuse as a child, and at least 30% had been sexually abused.<sup>17</sup> Other studies estimate that past traumatic experiences and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are twice as common among juvenile justice-involved youth.<sup>18</sup> How past experiences translate into trauma varies from individual to individual, but traumatic stress can cause youth to be anxious, depressed, emotionally numb, impulsive and can lead to conduct problems and other issues.<sup>19</sup> All of this can lead to school pushout, juvenile justice involvement, and other circumstances that can then bring additional trauma.

Although a large proportion of youth who have experienced homelessness and/or juvenile justice system involvement have also experienced neglect or physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, not all have. These experiences impact each person differently. Some youth may experience lifelong traumatic stress symptoms (with or without a clinical diagnosis), while others may, on the surface, show little to no apparent impact. Because young people are incredibly resilient, a range of healing and therapeutic supports should be provided. As such, there are many elements of trauma-informed care that support youth in these systems, particularly those experiencing or healing from high levels of traumatic stress. (Homelessness and justice-system involvement, particularly secure confinement, can be extremely traumatic in and of themselves, and the recommendations in this document can address past trauma as well as minimizing new system-induced trauma.)

Trauma and victimization are a particular concern for girls in the juvenile justice system. According to the National Crittenton Foundation’s *Gender Injustice* report:

- 45% of justice-involved girls in one study reported experiencing five or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES);
- 31% reported experiencing sexual abuse in the home;
- 84% reported experiencing family violence; and
- Girls report abuse at 4.4 times the rate of boys.<sup>20</sup>

The Human Rights Project for Girls’ report, *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline* similarly outlined extremely high rates of abuse histories among juvenile justice involved girls in studies in Oregon, South Carolina, and California.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The study asked about three different types of sexual abuse: being touched in a sexual way by an adult (30.1%), being forced to have sex (21%), and being forced by an adult to touch someone else in a sexual way (13.4%).

<sup>18</sup> Ford, Steinberg, Hawke, Levine, & Zhang. *Randomized Trial Comparison of Emotion Regulation and Relational Psychotherapies for PTSD with Girls Involved in Delinquency*. Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 41, 27-37; Ford, Hartman, Hawke, and Chapman. *Traumatic Victimization, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicidal Ideation, and Substance Abuse Risk Among Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth*. Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, 1(1).

<sup>19</sup> National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Welfare Committee. *Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit*. Available at [www.nctsn.org/products/child-welfare-trauma-training-toolkit-2008](http://www.nctsn.org/products/child-welfare-trauma-training-toolkit-2008).

<sup>20</sup> Available at [nationalcrittenton.org/gender-injustice/](http://nationalcrittenton.org/gender-injustice/).

**Service providers and other system professionals** should recognize that girls and boys accessing their services may have experienced sexual and/or labor trafficking, and ensure that their services can meet the needs of youth with those experiences. As the same time, however, youth-serving systems and programs should avoid requiring that youth be classified as “trafficking victims,” “abuse survivors,” or even “homeless,” as this may prevent young people from using needed services if they do not share their personal history. Focusing on resilience, rather than victimization, is also more in line with the principles of positive youth development.<sup>22</sup>

**State Advisory Groups, policymakers, schools, and federal, state and local government agencies** should provide and/or fund training on Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma, and should change their systems, policies, and practices to be more trauma-informed.

**Juvenile Justice and Homeless Youth-Serving Agencies** should:<sup>23</sup>

- Screen youth for traumatic stress symptoms using evidence-based screening tools, while ensuring that assessment information is never used to incriminate youth.
- Offer mandatory staff training on trauma and on how gender and race impacts services. Ensure that training is provided to allow staff to properly recognize and respond to "disruptive" behaviors that result from trauma.
- Ensure that attorneys and other legal or court professionals who work directly with youth receive training on trauma, including its impacts on young people, and how to interview clients using trauma-informed strategies in order to reduce further trauma.
- Provide evidence-based or empirically-supported interventions, such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET), as needed and appropriate.<sup>24</sup>
- Front-load or speed up service delivery so youth can receive any needed trauma-related treatment as soon as possible, noting that not all youth involved in these systems will require treatment for trauma.
- Avoid court involvement and secure confinement, and minimize out-of-home placement and placement changes. Therapeutic, rather than punitive, settings should be chosen if out-of-home placement is necessary. (All stakeholders should be familiar with the community-based residential therapeutic placement options in their community, and should require that if these placements are necessary, youth

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<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Project for Girls, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, and Ms. Foundation for Women Studies. *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls Story*. Available at [rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2015/02/2015\\_COP\\_sexual-abuse\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2015/02/2015_COP_sexual-abuse_report_final.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice. *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*. Available at: [bit.ly/2IQnrfu](https://bit.ly/2IQnrfu).

<sup>23</sup> Lisa Pilnik & Jessie Kendall. *Victimization and Trauma Experienced by Children and Youth: Implications for Legal Advocates. Moving From Evidence to Action: The Safe Start Series on Children Exposed to Violence*. Issue Brief #7. Available at [safestartcenter.wordpress.com/tag/toolkit/](https://safestartcenter.wordpress.com/tag/toolkit/).

<sup>24</sup> Learn more about evidence-based practices at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices at [nrepp.samhsa.gov](https://nrepp.samhsa.gov).

are only placed with high-quality providers who use evidence-informed practices.) These steps will help minimize system-induced trauma.

- Involve and educate caregivers and other family members about the impact of trauma. This is needed to help them be a resource for their children, and because they may have also been impacted by trauma.<sup>25</sup>

### Gender-Responsive Practice

While there have historically been fewer girls than boys involved in the juvenile justice system, arrest and incarceration rates for girls are rising relative to boys. Girls are more likely to be arrested and charged for status offenses than for other offenses. Just under half of homeless youth are girls, as well. The services and supports that work best for girls are often different, so education, policy, and practice change may be needed to meet the needs of girls.

While evaluation research on programs for girls is lagging behind the research on effective programming for boys, programs that are gender-responsive for girls rely on a theoretical framework that dictates research-based principles for effective female programming. Boys may also benefit from many of these program qualities. These include:

- Being strength-based, trauma-informed, and relational;
- Ensuring clients' physical, psychological, and emotional safety;
- Employing staff who are sensitive to trauma and understand girls' socialization; and
- Providing ongoing staff training and support.

Stakeholders should ensure that elements of gender-responsive practice are present throughout, from first contact with the system, through service and treatment provision. To the extent that gender-specific programming is offered, youth should participate according to their gender-identity rather than their biological gender, if they are not the same.

*Adapted from the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's "National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses" and from Kimberly Selvaggi's "Ideas for Building a Female Responsive System for Girls."*

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## Principle 10: Undertake and fund research to help better understand the issue of youth homelessness and identity solutions.

The preceding principles in this document outline the policies and services that need to be in place to prevent homelessness among justice involved youth, and to prevent citation, arrest, charging, and/or secure confinement of youth experiencing homelessness. In order to fully enact these recommendations, however, communities need to know:

- How do we define homelessness and related terms?

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<sup>25</sup> National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Child Welfare Committee. *Birth Parents with Trauma Histories and the Child Welfare System: A Guide for Judges and Attorneys*. Available at [nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/birth\\_parents\\_trauma\\_guide\\_judges\\_final.pdf](https://nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/birth_parents_trauma_guide_judges_final.pdf).

- What data do we currently collect on youth homelessness? How is the data disaggregated for analysis of specific populations of youth experiencing homelessness?
- How many youth experience unaccompanied homelessness each year?
- How many justice-involved youth did not have stable housing before contact with the justice system, or are at greater risk for homelessness after exiting?
- Where are the current gaps in services (e.g., are there enough beds, enough providers of mental health services, etc.)?
- What “charges” are causing homeless youth to enter the justice system? What underlying experiences or circumstances are leading to these charges? Which local and state laws are, intentionally or unintentionally, penalizing youth experiencing homelessness?
- At what point in or after justice-system involvement (e.g., immediately post-release, several months later) are youth most likely to experience homelessness? What additional services could prevent this?
- How does housing status affect what programs are offered to youth? How do the experiences of young people in the juvenile justice system who are homeless differ from those of other youth?
- What experiences or circumstances are causing youth to become and remain homeless? How are past experiences with the juvenile justice system contributing to these pathways to homelessness?
- When youth are placed in juvenile detention, diverted from system involvement at the point of arrest, or participate in diversion efforts as part of court involvement, how does this impact their housing status in the short and long-term?

For individual programs and interventions that are offered to youth, communities must also ask what the short- and long-term impacts on housing status were for youth.

Youth may not identify as or want to label themselves as homeless, so asking the right questions is essential to gathering this information. Enabling researchers to gather and analyze relevant data at the city, county, and state level will allow policymakers and practitioners to best expand or alter services for young people who are, or are at risk of, experiencing homelessness. All data collection should be conducted with training and policies in place to share data as needed to provide and measure services, but that data should never be used in ways that could incriminate or stigmatize a young person.

**Researchers** should work with service providers and system stakeholders to educate them about the existing knowledge on this issue and to identify gaps. Researchers with expertise in juvenile justice should collaborate with researchers who specialize in youth homelessness, and vice versa, to strengthen their efforts and benefit from each other’s knowledge. They should also look at ways to incorporate these issues into current research, and launch new efforts to learn about these issues. This includes collecting “practice-based evidence” when evidence-based practices are not available.<sup>26</sup> They should ensure that housing status is considered as an outcome measure when evaluating diversion programs and other juvenile justice interventions (in the same way that impacts on recidivism and racial and ethnic disparities are considered).

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<sup>26</sup> Practice-based evidence, according to the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare, “is evidence of effectiveness from the practitioners and workers in the field, as well as a match with the needs and values of the local community.” Learn more at <http://www.cebc4cw.org/home/understanding-evidence-based-practice/>.

**Public and private funders** should fund and disseminate this research, and advocate for practice and policy change based on research findings. They may also use this research to help guide funding priorities, bearing in mind that funding is needed both to spur and support innovation, and to continue expanding proven practices. They should also encourage expanded attention to these issues in any research they are currently funding (e.g., asking about youth living arrangements in current national data collection efforts in juvenile justice, and asking about justice involvement in current data collection on youth homelessness). Finally, public and private funders should encourage, and provide financial support for, outcome data, including measures related to homelessness to be part of all programming they fund.

**Juvenile justice agencies, homelessness service providers, and juvenile justice/runaway and youth homelessness advocates** should partner with researchers to identify gaps in knowledge and to design and carry out new research to address those gaps, and improve current data collection methods. They should also use existing research to advocate for better policy and practice and to guide their own work. Universities may be particularly useful partners in this work, as they are research focused and often adept at working across schools and issue areas.



## PART II: PUTTING THE PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION: RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES

The following list of resources and examples aims to help stakeholders identify important tools and programs that can help them as they seek to implement change. Each tool is listed in relation to the principle to which it most directly relates.

### Principle 1: Ensure that the laws and policies in your jurisdiction do not lead youth experiencing homelessness to be cited, arrested, or charged for survival acts or “quality of life” offenses.

- **Truancy** may be directly related to homelessness for many reasons that are outside a young person’s control, such as if the youth is staying far from their “home school,” or if they are placed by an agency or provider outside the school district of attendance. To learn more about why and how schools should respond to truancy by uncovering the underlying causes and connecting youth to necessary services, see CJJ’s *Safety Opportunity and Success Project* at [bit.ly/2kTroBo](https://bit.ly/2kTroBo).
- **Housing Not Handcuffs** is a national campaign to “stop the criminalization of homelessness, and push for effective housing policies that end homelessness,” led by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. Individuals, organizations, and government agencies can all endorse the campaign, view model policies, and find advocacy talking points and other resources at [housingnothandcuffs.org](https://housingnothandcuffs.org).
- **“Alone Without A Home,”** a report by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and the National Network for Youth, discusses how youth experiencing homelessness can become involved with the juvenile justice system. The report also details laws that govern emancipation of minors, minors’ abilities to sign contracts and consent to their own health care, access federal benefits and education, and homeless/outreach services. Learn more at [bit.ly/2lirh3j](https://bit.ly/2lirh3j).
- The **U.S. Department of Justice** has discussed the constitutionality of, and relevant case law on, criminalizing sleeping in public for individuals who are experiencing homelessness and cannot access shelter beds. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kKBAK2](https://bit.ly/2kKBAK2).
- The **U.S. Department of Education** has said that school districts have an ongoing obligation to review and revise barriers to the education of youth experiencing homelessness, including status offense laws or ordinances that criminalize homelessness. Learn more at [bit.ly/2l8YWdu](https://bit.ly/2l8YWdu).
- The **Juvenile Law Center** provides additional information about the impact of fines and fees on youth at [debtorsprison.jlc.org/#!/map](https://debtorsprison.jlc.org/#!/map).
- **The California Homeless Youth Project** shares research on the effects of criminalization of homelessness on youth and suggested public policy responses in **“Adding Insult to Injury: The Criminalization of Homelessness and Its Effects on Youth.”** Learn more at [bit.ly/1L3lt5o](https://bit.ly/1L3lt5o).



- **The U.S. Department of Education’s “Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance”** (July 2016) includes several specific tips for promoting supportive discipline practices for students who experience homelessness (see pages 33-34) and suggestions for how schools and law enforcement can work together to identify and support youth experiencing homelessness (see pages 46-47). Available at: <http://bit.ly/2l8YWdu>.

## Principle 2: Ensure that young people are diverted from juvenile justice system involvement whenever possible, and that any diversion programs or services are appropriately tailored to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

- **Connecticut’s Public Act No. 16-147**<sup>27</sup> incorporates the recommendations of the state’s Juvenile Justice Policy & Oversight Committee, which is staffed by the Tow Youth Justice Institute. It also includes a number of strategies to increase diversion opportunities, decrease recidivism, and enhance access to evidence-based services and practices such as:
  - effective truancy intervention models that are being used by schools;
  - law enforcement trainings on trauma, adolescent development, graduated sanctions, emergency psychiatric services, and other topics; and
  - mechanisms to address school expulsions and suspensions.
- **Drop off centers** in many jurisdictions, including Minneapolis and Portland, connect youth to needed services while saving law enforcement time and saving communities money. Community-based organizations run centralized drop off centers, sometimes called juvenile assessment and service centers, or juvenile supervision centers, where law enforcement can bring young people as an alternative to arresting them. A service provider or case manager for the organization then completes an intake and referral to an array of services that varies from one location to another (e.g., case management, beds, behavioral health services). Policies in some cities create the option for police officers to transport youth to these centers without any arrest report or official charge entering the record. (Officers may make a report on the interaction, just as they would any stop of an individual, but the young person does not carry a charge on his or her record.) See <http://thelinkmn.org/isc/> and <http://bit.ly/2l8MXMS> for examples.
- The **National League of Cities** provides a wealth of resources outlining how law enforcement, city governments, and other stakeholders can offer alternatives to arrest at <http://bit.ly/2mn7lgO>.
- **Strategies for Youth (SFY)** police officer training provides scientific and evidence-based information and practical strategies that meet the varying needs of officers working with youth. Learn more at [bit.ly/1fWSvju](http://bit.ly/1fWSvju).

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<sup>27</sup> Available at [www.cga.ct.gov/2016/act/pa/pdf/2016PA-00147-R00HB-05642-PA.pdf](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/act/pa/pdf/2016PA-00147-R00HB-05642-PA.pdf).

- **"Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act"** from the National Center for Homeless Education includes sample questions that professionals can ask to determine whether a young person has "fixed, regular, and adequate" housing. These questions can help determine whether the housing situation is stable (e.g., "Do you have a key?" "How long do you plan to stay?") as well as whether it is physically adequate (e.g., "Does it keep out wind and rain?"). Learn more at [bit.ly/2l8MSss](http://bit.ly/2l8MSss).
  - The **National Juvenile Defender Center** discusses the ways unmet special education needs can lead to truancy and other charges—and the role attorneys can play in addressing this—at [njdc.info/educational-issues/](http://njdc.info/educational-issues/).
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### Principle 3: When juvenile justice system involvement cannot be avoided, ensure that comprehensive transition planning begins immediately after—and continues throughout—a youth's confinement or probation supervision.

- **Connecticut's Public Act No. 16-147**,<sup>28</sup> also discussed in Principle 2, includes a provision requiring each school board in the state to have a re-entry liaison. It also requires the relevant state agencies to take steps to address and plan for the educational needs of youth re-entering the community from the justice system. The state also held a convening focused on what permanency means for youth involved with the juvenile justice system. Connecticut's efforts were discussed in a July 2016 Coalition for Juvenile Justice/Collaborating for Change webinar, "Collaborating for Change: Coming Together to Address the Intersection of Juvenile Justice and Youth Homelessness," available at <http://bit.ly/2kqJsEs>.
- **North Dakota**, through legislation and agency policy, undertakes many of the practices described in this section. This includes providing case managers who regularly meet with young people. They also provide targeted assessments, formal transition plans, and an array of services for youth and families, including life skills education for youth 16 and older. Learn more at [bit.ly/2lSmxSc](http://bit.ly/2lSmxSc).
- **Title I, Part D, of the Every Student Succeeds Act** awards funding to state educational agencies (who then subgrant to other state or local agencies) with the goal of improving education for neglected and delinquent youth, improving education and vocational transitions from institutionalization, preventing school dropout, and providing re-entry support for educational success. An overview of the impact of this law on juvenile justice-involved youth is available from the Juvenile Law Center at [bit.ly/2lysOCp](http://bit.ly/2lysOCp). Many other resources on Title I, Part D are available through National Neglected-Delinquent Technical Assistance Center at [www.neglected-delinquent.org](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org).
- **"Connecting People Returning From Incarceration with Housing and Homelessness Assistance"** is a guide from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness that provides tips for helping individuals

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<sup>28</sup> Available at [www.cga.ct.gov/2016/act/pa/pdf/2016PA-00147-R00HB-05642-PA.pdf](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/act/pa/pdf/2016PA-00147-R00HB-05642-PA.pdf).

exiting the criminal justice system connect to available housing resources. While it is not focused on the juvenile justice system, many of the suggestions may still be useful, particularly for young adults over the age of 18. Learn more at [bit.ly/2l8NBtV](http://bit.ly/2l8NBtV).

- A number of **education-focused resources** on recidivism reduction and re-entry, including a transition toolkit, are also available from the U.S. Department of Education at: [www.ed.gov/JJreentry](http://www.ed.gov/JJreentry).
  - The Council of State Governments Justice Center publication **“Locked Out: Improving Educational and Vocational Outcomes for Incarcerated Youth”** provides a wealth of useful data and recommendations on these issues and is available at [bit.ly/1HbYoMj](http://bit.ly/1HbYoMj).
  - Advocates in Washington State, California, and Minnesota<sup>29</sup> have released **policy briefs discussing common paths from justice involvement to homelessness** in their states, and strategies for prevention. Many of the issues and ideas they identify can be applied to other jurisdictions. The Washington report is available at <http://bit.ly/2lQ1lUR>; the California report at <http://bit.ly/1L3lt5o>; and the Minnesota report at <http://bit.ly/2lQ3Rjb>.
  - **“Back on Track: Supporting Youth Reentry from Out-of-Home Placement to the Community,”** was released in 2009 by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition. Written by Ashley Nellis and Richard Hooks Wayman, the document provides additional tips on preventing homelessness among youth transitioning from the juvenile justice system. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/2krcWC7>.
  - The Iowa Department of Human Rights has collected many **national and state-specific resources on juvenile justice re-entry**, and posted those materials online at <http://bit.ly/2kVSOV0>.
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#### Principle 4: Ensure your community has both long- and short-term safe housing options available for youth who are, or have been, involved with the juvenile justice system.

- In Harris County, Texas the **TRIAD Prevention program** is a partnership between the juvenile probation, child protection and mental health agencies. It offers 24-hour intake for youth age 10-17, and provides emergency shelter, evidence-based services, service referrals, and follow up. The program serves youth who are alleged to have committed status offenses and certain misdemeanors, as well as youth in crisis. Learn more at [bit.ly/2lScQU8](http://bit.ly/2lScQU8). Local advocates report that this includes providing respite care and family counseling when families are unwilling or unable to take youth back after a stay in juvenile detention.
- **Host homes** have been successful in providing housing to youth experiencing homelessness in rural and suburban areas where there is not a runaway and homeless youth program or center. A social services agency can recruit and train the families, and partner with schools, law enforcement, courts and/or the

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<sup>29</sup> Columbia Legal Services. *Falling Through the Gaps: How a Stay in Detention Can Lead to Youth Homelessness*. Available at [bit.ly/2lQ1lUR](http://bit.ly/2lQ1lUR).

juvenile justice system in order to receive referrals of youth who need a safe place to stay. Learn more at [bit.ly/2ILOMIW](http://bit.ly/2ILOMIW).

- Oklahoma is using support from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the federal Pay for Success<sup>30</sup> program to provide **supportive housing to youth exiting the juvenile justice system**.<sup>31</sup> (Corporation for Supportive Housing defines supportive housing as “an innovative and proven solution to some of communities' toughest problems [which] combines affordable housing with services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity.”) Learn more at [bit.ly/290A4N9](http://bit.ly/290A4N9).
  - The **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness** works to support federal agencies in coordinating and collaborating in their efforts to end youth homelessness. Learn more about these efforts, including the Council's Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness, and Coordinated Community Response, at <https://www.usich.gov/goals/youth>.
  - **A Way Home America** is a national initiative to prevent and end youth homelessness. At the national level, it works to create attention and momentum around this issue, as well as identifying and disseminating action steps and policy changes needed to ensure all youth have safe and stable housing. At the local level, the initiative supports 100-day challenges in communities across the United States that set ambitious goals for housing youth experiencing homelessness. As of February 2017, 428 young adults (ages 18-25) in three communities had been moved in to housing. Learn more about A Way Home America at [www.awayhomeamerica.org](http://www.awayhomeamerica.org).
  - Communities participating in **Safe Place**, a national program, designate specific locations (e.g., school buses, convenience stores, libraries, fire stations) as places where youth can say they need a safe place to stay and they will be connected to appropriate services. Staff in each location receives training and the response looks different in each community, based on the implementing agency and community partners. Learn more at <http://nationalsafeplace.org/>.
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## Principle 5: Ensure your community provides youth and their families related services and supports that can help them obtain and keep safe and stable housing.

- **The Homeless Youth Legal Network**, an initiative of the American Bar Association, was developed to increase legal services for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. This Network provides information and fosters collaboration in order to help attorneys and other advocates address existing gaps in legal services, and improve outcomes for homeless youth and young adults—including those transitioning from the child welfare system and exiting the juvenile justice system. (This includes civil

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<sup>30</sup> Available at [www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund/our-programs/pay-success](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund/our-programs/pay-success).

<sup>31</sup> Available at [www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/CSH-SIF-PFS-Press-Release-4-18-16.pdf](http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/CSH-SIF-PFS-Press-Release-4-18-16.pdf).

legal matters, juvenile and criminal defense, and policy work/impact litigation for minors as well as young adults through at least age 25.) Learn more at [www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org).

- **“Youth at Risk of Homelessness,”** a 2015 report from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children’s Administration, provides information about the risk factors that may increase the likelihood of homelessness among youth aging out of foster care. It may help advocates, agencies and policymakers make the case for addressing these risk factors early on, and for allocating additional resources where they are needed most. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kl6vw](http://bit.ly/2kl6vw).
- Attorneys and other advocates can learn more about ways to ensure youth experiencing homelessness have their educational rights protected in the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty’s manual **“No Barriers: A Legal Advocate’s Guide to Ensuring Compliance with the Education Program of the McKinney-Vento Act.”** Learn more at [bit.ly/2fFkdvd](http://bit.ly/2fFkdvd).<sup>32</sup>
- The **National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth** ([www.naehcy.org/](http://www.naehcy.org/)) and **SchoolHouse Connection** ([www.schoolhouseconnection.org](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org)) provide technical assistance to schools and other stakeholders on meeting the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.
- Several state legislatures have recognized that unaccompanied homeless youth under age 18 need legal rights to access housing, shelter, and other basic services. **“Current and Pending State Laws Allowing Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to Consent for Housing and Related Services,”** from SchoolHouse Connection summarizes these laws. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kTAEW7](http://bit.ly/2kTAEW7).
- The **National League of Cities** works with cities to promote school re-engagement. Learn more at [www.nlc.org/reengagement](http://www.nlc.org/reengagement).
- Handbooks for youth and youth advocates on legal rights specific to several states are available at <http://www.homelessyouth.org/>. These guides have been developed by the law firm Baker & McKenzie, in partnership with pro bono attorneys and organizational partners in each state. As of early 2017, guides were available for Minnesota, Washington, Illinois, and Texas.

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## Principle 6: Ensure that youth, and their families, are not kicked out of their homes or denied housing because the youth have been arrested or adjudicated for a delinquency offense.

- The June 2016 Coalition for Juvenile Justice/Collaborating for Change webinar, **“Addressing the Housing Needs of Youth and Young Adults in Contact with the Justice System,”** provides additional information about helping justice-involved youth access housing. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kqJsEs](http://bit.ly/2kqJsEs).

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<sup>32</sup> Join the Lawyers’ Education Access Resource Network (Project LEARN) to learn more and discuss strategic advocacy opportunities. Contact NLCHP at [email@nlchp.org](mailto:email@nlchp.org) for more information, or visit [bit.ly/2ILRvMvto](http://bit.ly/2ILRvMvto) to sign up.

- The Juvenile Law Center publication **“Future Interrupted: The Collateral Damage Caused by Proliferation of Juvenile Records”** discusses how juvenile records can serve as barriers to housing and interfere with education, employment, and other contributors to self-sufficiency. Learn more at [bit.ly/2licJAN](http://bit.ly/2licJAN).
- **The National Juvenile Defender Center** has resources on collateral consequences available at [njdc.info/collateral-consequences](http://njdc.info/collateral-consequences).
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development** has authored several resources clarifying the limits to barring individuals from housing based on court involvement. These include:
  - Legal guidance explaining the limits on use of criminal records to deny housing under the Fair Housing Act.<sup>33</sup> The guidance discussed the racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system, and explained that policies or actions related to housing could be impermissibly discriminatory if they had a disproportionate impact on protected classes, even if their intent was not discriminatory. The guidance also states that, “Policies that exclude persons based on criminal history must be tailored to serve the housing provider’s substantial, legitimate, nondiscriminatory interest and take into consideration such factors as the type of the crime and the length of the time since conviction. Where a policy or practice excludes individuals with only certain types of convictions, a housing provider will still bear the burden of proving that any discriminatory effect caused by such policy or practice is justified.”<sup>34</sup>
  - Guidance for Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and owners of Federally-Assisted Housing clarifying that arrest records cannot be used to deny admission to housing, evict tenants, or cut off federal assistance.<sup>35</sup>
  - Guidance clarifying that PHAs and other property owners are not required to “adopt or enforce so-called ‘one-strike’ rules that deny admission to anyone with a criminal record or that require automatic eviction any time a household member engages in criminal activity in violation of their lease,” and instead may use their own discretion.<sup>36</sup>
- Additional resources on housing discrimination based on arrest, conviction, or criminal records are available in the Shriver Center publication **“When Discretion Means Denial: A National Perspective on Criminal Records Barriers to Federally Subsidized Housing,”** and can be found at [povertylaw.org](http://povertylaw.org).
- Learn more about the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s **“Advocates Guide”** at [bit.ly/23ihgne](http://bit.ly/23ihgne).
- The Human Rights Watch report, **“Raised on the Registry: The Irreparable Harm of Placing Children on Sex Offender Registries in the US,”** also discusses the barriers to housing created by sex offender

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<sup>33</sup> Available at [portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD\\_OGCGuidAppFHASandCR.pdf](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_OGCGuidAppFHASandCR.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Available at [portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=fagexcldearrestrec33116.pdf](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=fagexcldearrestrec33116.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Available at [portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=PIH2015-19.pdf](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=PIH2015-19.pdf).

registration for youth. Learn more at [bit.ly/2mlMOGg](https://bit.ly/2mlMOGg).

- **Resources on effective police-youth interactions** are available from Strategies for Youth ([strategiesforyouth.org](https://strategiesforyouth.org)); the International Association of Chiefs of Police ([iacpyouth.org](https://iacpyouth.org)); the Department of Justice ([cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\\_finalreport.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)); and the State of Connecticut ([bit.ly/2mi9dUM](https://bit.ly/2mi9dUM)).
  - The **Vera Institute** for Justice has several resources related to barriers and solutions to accessing public housing. These include:
    - "Public Housing for People with Criminal Histories," a fact sheet on pilot projects in New York City, Chicago, and Oakland aimed at allowing formerly incarcerated people to return home or join family members in public housing, available at [bit.ly/2kKCG8O](https://bit.ly/2kKCG8O).
    - A more detailed report on New York City's program, available at [bit.ly/2fCvN7k](https://bit.ly/2fCvN7k).
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## Principle 7: Ensure youth help lead and shape the identification and implementation of policy and practice solutions to address the connections between juvenile justice and youth homelessness.

- CJJ's "**Youth Manual: A Resource for New and Continuing Youth State Advisory Group Members**," is a useful resource for youth who wish to engage in juvenile justice system improvement. It provides an overview of the relevant federal laws and state issues. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kTphOg](https://bit.ly/2kTphOg).
- **Youth Action Hub**, a group of Connecticut-based youth researchers, is working with the statewide Youth/Young Adult Homelessness Workgroup to determine best practices for young people to access supports/services (e.g., their Coordinated Entry System). Their findings have been instrumental in helping reshape Connecticut's system. Learn more about their work at [bit.ly/2lQ40Dl](https://bit.ly/2lQ40Dl).
- **The Link** in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has a Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee made up of youth who have experience with the juvenile justice system. The committee designs and oversees programs and helps hire relevant staff. They also have a gender-specific juvenile justice advisory committee called VOICE which is made up of girls who have had involvement in the juvenile justice system. This group helps oversee their POWER Program (Positive Opportunities for Women of Every Race) and provides gender specific support for girls on probation within Hennepin County. Learn more at [thelinkmn.org](https://thelinkmn.org).
- **National Network for Youth's National Youth Advisory Council members** are "an important bridge between formerly homeless youth and policymakers, service providers and community officials throughout the country...identify practices and perspectives that help young Americans overcome homelessness... [and] actively alert policymakers to barriers, misconceptions and human rights issues that demand attention." Learn more at [www.nn4youth.org/engage/nyac](https://www.nn4youth.org/engage/nyac).



- Through the **National Youth Forum on Homelessness**, 20 young adults ensure "that our national conversation is informed by and filtered through the perspectives of young people who have experienced homelessness, and that strategies to end homelessness are generated by youth and young adults themselves." The Forum is facilitated by the True Colors Fund and National Alliance to End Homelessness. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kqYqu7](http://bit.ly/2kqYqu7).
- **California Homeless Youth Project** is "a research and policy initiative that highlights the issues and challenges faced by unaccompanied young people who are homeless or lack stable housing." Learn more at [cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov](http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov).
- **Seattle's Mockingbird Society** collaborates with former and current foster youth in advocating for, and advising on, policy and system reform. Learn more at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).
- Examples of the **"ladder of youth engagement,"** a tool that outlines ways to meaningfully collaborate with youth, can be found at [bit.ly/2kTxGB1](http://bit.ly/2kTxGB1) and [bit.ly/2kKQQq9](http://bit.ly/2kKQQq9).

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**Principle 8: Ensure efforts prioritize LGBTQ/GNC youth, youth of color, and other over-represented populations to address and reduce the disproportionalities that exist in the populations of youth experiencing homelessness and/or involved with the juvenile justice system.**

- **The Equity Project** has produced many resources

### Resources on Racial and Ethnic Disparities

As discussed throughout this document, running away, truancy, curfew violations and other status offenses may be associated with youth homelessness, so these disparities can magnify the already inequitable impact on youth of color experiencing homelessness.

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice's issue brief **"Disproportionate Minority Contact and Status Offenses,"** addresses racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice system treatment of status offenses behaviors: [bit.ly/2kL4I3N](http://bit.ly/2kL4I3N).

Eliminating racial and ethnic disparities is also discussed as a key strategy in the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's **"National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses,"** available at: [bit.ly/2lildIj](http://bit.ly/2lildIj).

The Standards' companion training curriculum includes guidance on training professionals on this issue, as well as an updated resource list, which highlights many relevant publications on these issues including:

- **Status Offenders and Race** available at: [bit.ly/1hMpegg](http://bit.ly/1hMpegg)
- **Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System** available at: [bit.ly/2krf0df](http://bit.ly/2krf0df)
- **Racial Disparities in Youth Commitments and Arrests** available at [bit.ly/1OpWZ2W](http://bit.ly/1OpWZ2W)
- **Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System** available at: [bit.ly/2liJpdG](http://bit.ly/2liJpdG)
- **Understanding Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice** available at: [bit.ly/2lQzsBj](http://bit.ly/2lQzsBj)

that assist local jurisdictions in ensuring fair treatment of LGBTQ youth in the juvenile justice system. These are available on their website, [www.equityprojects.org](http://www.equityprojects.org). The Coalition for Juvenile Justice also has resources on this issue available at <http://bit.ly/2kyJSnq> as well as a bibliography, developed in partnership with several collaborating organizations, at [juvjustice.org/lgbtqjjresources](http://juvjustice.org/lgbtqjjresources).

- **Just Us**, a program of the Oasis Center in Nashville, TN, serves LGBTQ youth through outreach, individual and group support, and education directly for youth. Just Us provides advocacy and training to and for schools, families, courts and other programs/agencies. Just Us is also currently working on reducing the number of homeless LGBTQ youth state-wide and increasing family preservation by addressing public school truancy policies and procedures, and juvenile justice unruly filings, which can be triggered by family rejection based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Learn more about their work at <http://justusoasis.org/>.
- **The Family Acceptance Project** provides free “confidential family support services to help ethnically diverse families decrease rejection and increase support for their LGBT children, including those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.” These services are offered to families in the San Francisco Bay Area, but the project’s website also provides nationally applicable research and other information about helping culturally and religiously diverse families support their LGBT youth’s well-being. For more information, see [familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu).
- **The eQuality Project**, an initiative of the Center for Children & Youth Justice in Washington State, “is the first statewide effort to help LGBTQ youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system find safety and support for the unique issues they face.” More information about their work is available at [ccyj.org/initiatives/equality/](http://ccyj.org/initiatives/equality/).
- **“At the Intersections: A collaborative report on LGBTQ youth homelessness,”** published by True Colors Fund and the National LGBTQ Task Force, includes useful content relevant to these Principles, including chapters on intersectionality, race, and juvenile justice. Learn more at [attheintersections.org](http://attheintersections.org).
- National Disability Rights Network's **"Orphanages, Training Schools, Reform Schools and Now This? Recommendations to Prevent the Disproportionate Placement and Inadequate Treatment of Children with Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System"** addresses the overrepresentation of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system and provides concrete strategies for reform. Learn more at: [bit.ly/1QNG1NB](http://bit.ly/1QNG1NB).
- **"Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning/queer youth"**, was produced by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. It includes useful information and advice that could be applied in other states as well. Learn more at: [bit.ly/2kyPYUL](http://bit.ly/2kyPYUL).
- The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth publication **"Unaccompanied Immigrant Children: Education and Homelessness"** offers helpful guidance and

additional resources on how some of the issues discussed in this document are compounded for unaccompanied immigrant youth. Learn more at: [bit.ly/2kTANcc](https://bit.ly/2kTANcc).

- The **Center for Children’s Law and Policy** and the **Burns Institute** offer resources, training, and technical assistance to help jurisdictions reduce racial and ethnic disparities in their juvenile justice systems. Learn more at [cclp.org](https://cclp.org) and [burnsinstitute.org](https://burnsinstitute.org).
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## Principle 9: Ensure that law enforcement, courts, schools, and service providers employ gender-responsive and age- and culturally-appropriate trauma-informed responses when working with youth.

- CJJ’s **“National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses”** discusses how past traumatic experiences can impact youth, and how courts and other stakeholders can reduce new system-induced trauma. Learn more at [bit.ly/2lyPFot](https://bit.ly/2lyPFot).
- The **U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** lays out key principles of a trauma-informed approach, trauma-specific interventions, and provides information about training and technical assistance. They also list specific widely delivered interventions, such as TARGET (Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy) and the Sanctuary Model®, which have both been used in juvenile justice settings. Learn more at [bit.ly/2hlOlfa](https://bit.ly/2hlOlfa).
- **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network** has developed a wealth of resources related to trauma, including materials and trainings specifically focused on the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Learn more at [www.nctsn.org](https://www.nctsn.org).
- **The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges** provides guidance and education to courts on trauma, including performing "trauma audits" to several juvenile courts. Their work on trauma is available at [bit.ly/2kKY9y8](https://bit.ly/2kKY9y8).
- **The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice** collects and disseminates data and works to inform and improve policy on youth with behavioral health needs and the juvenile justice system. Resources include trauma and juvenile justice, including guidance on how to fund behavioral health services. Learn more at [ncmhjj.com](https://ncmhjj.com).
- **The National Crittenton Foundation** offers several resources on trauma and gender-responsiveness including a toolkit for providers and several other relevant webinars and publications. Learn more at [bit.ly/2lkywHR](https://bit.ly/2lkywHR).
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s **"Girls and the Juvenile Justice System,"** outlines what communities can do to improve responses to girls involved with the justice system. Learn more at [bit.ly/2kKYnFs](https://bit.ly/2kKYnFs).

- **The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative** offers research, resources, and training tools to make schools trauma-sensitive learning environments. Learn more at [traumasensitiveschools.org](https://traumasensitiveschools.org) and [traumaawareschools.org](https://traumaawareschools.org).
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## Principle 10: Undertake and fund research to help better understand the issue of youth homelessness and identify solutions.

- **Voices of Youth Count** is a "national policy and research initiative designed to link evidence and action by capturing the diverse experiences of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability, or who have runaway, more clearly defining the size of the population, and driving compelling knowledge into the hands of the broad national community dedicated to ending youth homelessness." In 2016 they released a toolkit to help communities undertake a count of youth experiencing homelessness, available at [bit.ly/2kr0G4z](https://bit.ly/2kr0G4z). Learn more at [voicesofyouthcount.org](https://voicesofyouthcount.org).
- As discussed in Principle 7, the **Youth Action Hub**, a group of Connecticut-based youth researchers, collaborates with the statewide Youth Homelessness Workgroup to determine best practices for youth to access supports and services (e.g., their Coordinated Entry System). Their findings have been instrumental in helping to shape Connecticut's system. Learn more at [bit.ly/2lQ40DI](https://bit.ly/2lQ40DI).



## APPENDIX I: DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE: HOW ONE JUVENILE COURT IS WORKING TO DECRIMINALIZE AND ADDRESS YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2017

Davidson County Juvenile Court, which serves metropolitan Nashville, TN, is currently putting into practice many of the recommendations shared throughout this document. Juvenile Court Administrator Kathryn Sinback explains that under the leadership of Judge Sheila Calloway, “our Court has taken the position that it is wrong to permanently stigmatize children as ‘delinquent’ if they simply need services and assistance to deal with problems such as family crisis and homelessness.” Some examples of their policies and practices include:

- Decriminalizing all juvenile status offenses and most non-violent misdemeanor delinquent offenses<sup>37</sup> by handling them as “informal adjustment” cases. (Informal adjustments in their court do not result in a juvenile petition, court costs, or a permanent Juvenile Court record).
- Developing a process for other misdemeanor offenses often related to homelessness<sup>38</sup> to be informally adjusted as well. Sinback says “[b]y handling these cases as informal adjustment cases, we can address the underlying issues without causing more trauma or unnecessary negative consequences for the child.”
- Identifying the individualized needs of each child and linking them with appropriate services, including services to address housing needs. This happens through referral to an Assessment Team, which determines an individualized plan of services and interventions for the child. Although this process is voluntary for informal adjustment cases, Sinback explains that “staff are highly trained to engage with families and to explain the importance of working together to help the child avoid future delinquency.”
- Following up on assessments with identification of resources, case management, and service linkage. Services can include assistance with housing, job services for parents, and other issues that can lead to risk of homelessness.
- Protecting youth from self-incrimination and encouraging openness and cooperation by having Assessment Reports be statutorily confidential, protected from subpoena, and unavailable to the District Attorney, Judge, Department of Children’s Services, or police.
- Training staff on ACEs, trauma-informed care, crisis prevention and intervention, issues relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and intersex youth, non-violent communication, motivational interviewing, and poverty, which Sinback says, “enables our staff to effectively work with homeless youth and to assist families with preventing homelessness.”

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<sup>37</sup> Charges included: Criminal Trespassing, Curfew, Disorderly Conduct, Evading Arrest (Misdemeanor—not in a vehicle), False Information, Gambling (Misdemeanor), Loitering During School Hours, No Driver’s License/Revoked/Suspended, Obstructing a Passageway, Runaway, Smoking Paraphernalia and Possession, Tobacco, and Traffic Tickets.

<sup>38</sup> The following misdemeanor offenses are staffed by D.A., Public Defender, and Court staff to determine if they can be informally adjusted instead of being placed on a court docket: Criminal Impersonation, Domestic Assault, Drugs (Possession or Paraphernalia), Harassment, Indecent Exposure, Joyriding, Leaving the scene of an accident, Possession/Consumption of Alcohol, Resisting Arrest, Simple Assault, Theft (Property, Merchandise) \$500 or less, and Vandalism (under \$500).

The court also devotes staff time to partner on larger efforts to address and prevent youth homelessness, including serving on the Steering Committee of the Nashville Youth Homelessness Task Force, which developed the city's Key Action Plan to End Youth Homelessness, and assisting the Metro Development and Housing Agency with an application to be part of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Youth Homeless Demonstration Program.

Sinback adds that they are also currently in the planning process for construction of a new youth complex that will house the Juvenile Court, community partners, and a youth employment hub. It will also feature a respite center to accept youth beyond the capacity of the current respite provider (Oasis Center), and a 24 hour assessment center where non-detainable youth can be processed without having to go to the secure detention facility.

*Source: Davidson County Juvenile Court Administrator Kathryn Sinback*

## APPENDIX II: STATES AT THE INTERSECTIONS

The following is a non-exhaustive list of work that states are doing to ensure that youth do not become homeless as a result of juvenile justice involvement, and likewise, that they do not become system-involved because they are homeless:

- **Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services** is working ensure youth have sustainable housing after discharge, as discussed in Objective 2.2 of its Re-entry Strategic Plan, available at <http://bit.ly/2kVum57>. Their strategic planned activities include screening to "identify youth requiring alternative living arrangements" and "updat[ing] policies to support sound permanency planning, increase adult youth participation, identify appropriate living arrangements, and require case management follow-up." The state is also working to ensure that jurisdictions are aware of housing resources in their local communities.
- In **Vermont**, the youth justice system is part of the child welfare system, so all youth in system custody receive the same transition planning services as youth in foster care. The state contracts with county-based service providers to provide services for youth age 14 and over, ranging from assistance maintaining housing/placements, to support with everyday necessities like getting a driver's license. Their youth justice system contracts with the statewide homeless and runaway youth services network to prevent homelessness and prevent youth from entering foster care. Youth are also supported by several statewide policies including requirements that youth stay in their home school whenever possible (unless that is not in their best interests), specific requirements regarding permanency planning, and requiring credit checks for youth 14 and older (which can help identify identity theft and other issues that can lead to homelessness when youth are no longer in system custody). These and other relevant state policies are available at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/policies>. Vermont also has a statewide youth leadership and advisory group for those transitioning out of care.
- In **South Carolina**, United Way of the Midlands convenes a Youth in Transition initiative made up of over 40 community agencies, organizations and leaders. The group focuses on youth age 17 to 24 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including those transitioning out of the juvenile justice system. Their work has contributed to the opening of new programs, including a re-entry pilot program, and new transitional housing beds and outreach services. Their efforts are informed by a Youth Advisory Board, whose input has led to additional resources being developed, including a Young Adult Passport, which includes service listings as well as "tips for interacting with service systems, note pages, a pull out map and encouraging messages from the youth meant to give hope." Learn more at <https://www.uway.org/reports/youth-transition-assessment>.





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