

# Transforming Systems: Accelerating Collaboration Between Youth Homelessness Providers and Youth Policing and Incarceration Systems



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Acronyms	ii
Introduction	1
Methodology	1
What We Learned	2
The Top 6 Steps A Community Should Take to Build an Effective Relationship Between Youth Homelessness Providers and the Youth Policing and Incarceration System:	3
1. Open the lines of communication to begin to build a positive and strong relationship.	3
2. Include court and probation system partners in your collaborative community and state work to prevent and end youth homelessness.	4
3. Center youth and young adults with lived experiences of homelessness, placing an emphasis on BIYOC and LGBTQIA young people.	6
4. Identify the top challenges and opportunities for collaboration. Be honest.	7
5. Set clear goals and be persistent in achieving them.	9
6. Evaluate progress towards goals and reaffirm or create new goals at least every six months.	10
Conclusion	10
Appendix A: NN4Y’s Local Cross-System Collaboration (LCSC) Approach	12
Appendix B: Examples	13

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This survey is part of the ongoing project that [Coalition for Juvenile Justice](#) launched in 2016, Collaborating for Change: Addressing Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice. In collaboration with project partners the [National Network for Youth](#) and the [National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families](#), the project generates policy and practice recommendations, training and technical assistance resources, and avenues for greater collaboration across systems to (1) decrease the likelihood that youth experiencing homelessness become involved with the youth justice system, and (2) prevent youth experiences of homelessness among system-involved youth.

## Acronyms

CJJ – Coalition for Juvenile Justice

CoC – Continuum of Care

BIYOC – Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color

DCF – Department of Children and Families

HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

JJDP – Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act

LGBTQIA – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual

NN4Y – National Network for Youth

SOGI – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

YAB – Youth Advisory Board

YHDP – Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

YYA – Youth and Young Adults

## Introduction

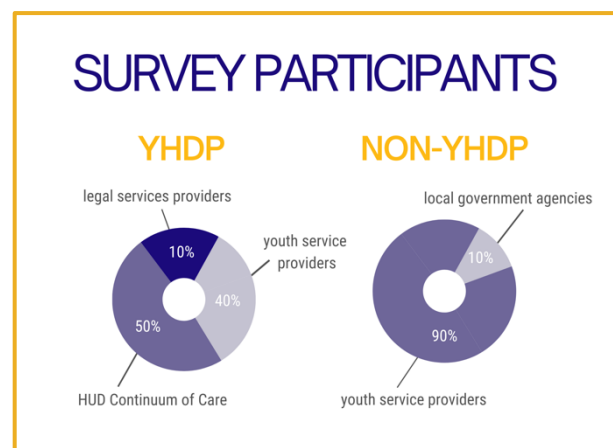
Each year, 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness<sup>1</sup> and nearly 1 million young people become involved with the youth court, probation, and incarceration systems<sup>2</sup> (referred to as “court and probation systems” throughout this paper). In some cases, this involvement may be due to lack of housing/shelter or other basic life necessities. This can sometimes occur when a minor-aged youth is arrested for a curfew violation due to lack of stable housing, or when they are arrested for theft for stealing food, or money to buy food or pay for a place to stay. In other cases, youth who are arrested and released (either through a diversion program or after spending time in a youth detention facility) may experience homelessness because they are either unable to return to their families due to restrictions imposed by landlords or public housing authorities, or because families are unwilling or unable to have young people return due to family conflict.

Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color (BIYOC) and LGBTQIA youth disproportionately experience homelessness and their race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and homelessness situation significantly increases their risk of encountering police officers and for those encounters to be biased, harmful, and result in a loss of rights and decreased access to housing and employment due to acquiring a criminal record. Those with intersecting identities, BIYOC and LGBTQIA, are most at risk of negative outcomes when they do encounter police and most likely to be incarcerated and face lifetime negative impacts as a result.

This resource guide is intended to accelerate communities’ and systems’ progress in preventing and reducing the incidence of homelessness and negative system involvement among young people.

## Methodology

The Coalition for the Juvenile Justice (CJJ) and National Network for Youth (NN4Y) disseminated two different surveys. One survey was broadly shared to the members and partners of each organization and another survey was specifically sent to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP) communities. This allowed the gathering of learnings from both YHDP and non-YHDP communities. A total of twenty communities responded. Most



<sup>1</sup> Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M. (2017). Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (July 2015) Juvenile Court Statistics 2013. Retrieved April 19, 2016 from <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda/pdf/jcs2013.pdf> p. 6.

respondents to the non-YHDP survey were community-based runaway and homeless youth service providers and most respondents to the YHDP survey were YHDP Continuum of Care (CoC) leads and a legal services provider.

This survey is part of the ongoing project Collaborating for Change: Addressing Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice. This project has been generating policy and practice recommendations, training and technical assistance resources, and avenues for greater collaboration across systems to (1) decrease the likelihood that youth experiencing homelessness become involved with the youth policing and incarceration system, and (2) prevent youth experiences of homelessness among system-involved youth.

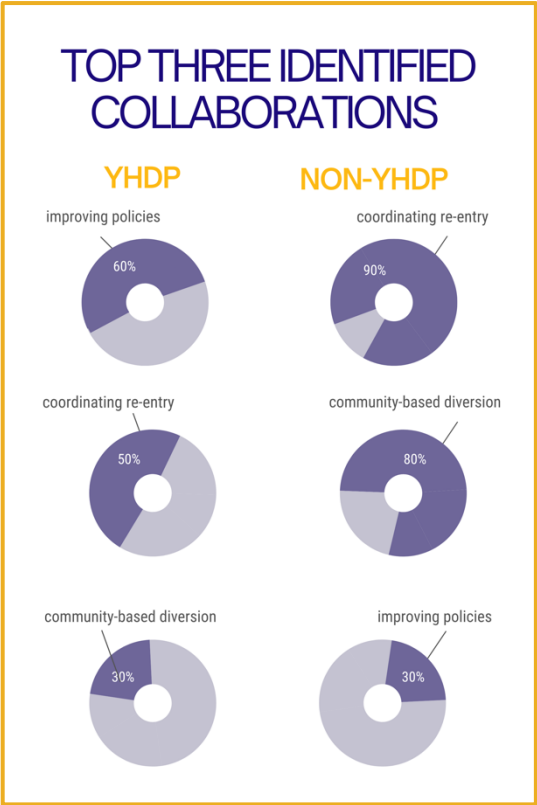
### What We Learned

When asked how closely the youth homelessness service provider community collaborates with the youth court system on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being not closely at all and 10 being very closely), the YHDP respondents indicated an average of 5.2 and the non-YHDP respondents indicated a similar average of 6.5. Respondents shared many examples of strong collaboration, but their overall answers also illustrated how much room there is for even greater partnership between systems.

The office or agency that YHDP communities most commonly partnered with were youth detention and youth probation (80%) followed by the courts and police officers (33%) and on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being negative and 10 being positive) the average rating of this interaction was 6, neither positive nor negative.

For non-YHDP communities, youth homelessness service providers most commonly identified collaborating with youth detention and probation (90%), courts (70%), and police officers (60%), and the court and probation system agencies identified partnering the most closely with youth housing service providers (78%), McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons (55%), and youth drop-in centers and youth legal service providers (44%). For non-YHDP communities on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being negative and 10 being positive) the average rating of the collaboration between the juvenile system and youth homelessness service providers was 8, more positive than negative.

YHDP communities identified the top three ways they collaborated with the court and probation system as: improving policies (60%), coordinating



re-entry (50%), and ensuring most youth encountering police and courts are diverted to community-based services (30%).

Non-YHDP communities identified the top three ways they collaborated with the court and probation system as: coordinating re-entry (90%), ensuring most youth are diverted to community-based services (80%), and improving policies (30%). Another option identified that wasn't included in the list, "ensuring trafficked youth have access to services."

The survey indicated that while some good collaboration is happening across the country, there is certainly a great potential for communities to do more to increase their collaboration. Based on the strategies shared by survey respondents and the work of NN4Y and CJJ members, our organization developed six specific steps communities can take to improve cross-sector relationships and achieve better outcomes for youth.

**TOP SIX STEPS A COMMUNITY SHOULD TAKE TO BUILD EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PROVIDERS AND THE YOUTH POLICING AND INCARCERATION SYSTEM**

**1 Open the lines of communication to begin to build a positive and strong relationship.**

**GOAL:** Establish strong two-way relationships built on the strengths of each partner **OR** Open the lines of communication if this has not already been done.

Research and practitioner experience both make clear the link between youth homelessness, police, and system involvement (inclusive of courts, probation, and incarceration). Youth homelessness service providers, law enforcement, probation, and court professionals, should all reach out to each other to begin to build or strengthen relationships in order to reduce the incarceration of youth who are experiencing homelessness and are in need of assistance.

**Examples:** One youth homelessness service provider survey respondent identified that they started building a relationship with youth probation when they started facilitating [Strengthening Family Programs](#) and the [Loving My Future](#) program for the youth and families who were court and probation system-involved.



Another provider facilitates the Safe Harbor Task Force that focuses on trafficked youth. That task force has helped to build relationships and had some successes and many challenges.

**Some tips for RHY providers to build relationships:**

- Reach out and meet with court and probation system stakeholders to explain the services your runaway and homeless youth program has to offer.
- Invite policy and court and probation systems professionals to community meetings (e.g. CoC meetings; tours of youth-specific shelters and programs).
- If your organization has expertise on cultural competency, reach out to court and probation system professionals to offer free training to all staff on race, equity, diversity and inclusion around BIYOC and free training around sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) competency around LGBTQIA system-involved youth, including mitigating risk factors, culturally competent care during legal involvement, culturally appropriate reintegration planning, and supportive housing for eligible youth and families. If your organization is still building your own competencies in these areas, consider partnering with the court and probation system to bring in outside experts to conduct joint trainings.



**2 Include court and probation system partners in your collaborative community and state work to prevent and end youth homelessness.**

**GOAL:** Police, probation, courts, and incarceration systems that are interacting with young people are at the collaborative community table.

If the court and probation system is not at the table in your community's work to address homelessness, you are missing a key system partner. Establishing a relationship (step one) is critical to getting them at the table. Everyone is pulled in many different directions with many tables to be at. Never underestimate the value of incentives. Incentivizing collaboration can help work to get people at the table. Survey respondents identified having a law that requires juvenile system reform, especially specific to increasing community-based alternatives and effective reentry planning really incentivized the court and probation system to collaborate more enthusiastically at the state and local level. Having funding to do new things was also identified as an effective incentive to getting court and probation system partners at the table!

**Examples:**

- A 2014 task force that included youth homelessness and juvenile system stakeholders with major foundation funding made targeted recommendations for improving the juvenile system. As a result of the task force's advocacy, the state legislature responded with new policies and funding that greatly reduced the number of youths in prison.



- The Connecticut Statewide Campaign to End Youth Homelessness, the Reaching Home Campaign, intentionally included multiple system partners, including the youth justice system, across all of the work. This was critical to ensuring that system partners, like juvenile justice system stakeholders, were at the table from the very beginning.
- One community already had the Reimagine Re-entry/engagement program funded by the city when the city's CoC received the YHDP grant. The youth service providers brought them to the YHDP table to match housing for system-involved youth. This same community is also working with the city to expand the YHDP programming to youth at-risk of system involvement and homelessness.

### **Top Nine Tips to Building Relationships Between Community Partners**

1. Communication. Communication. Communication. Be intentional about reaching out and building relationships with other system stakeholders -- offer something of value to help the other system meet its goals/objectives. A better understanding what each has to offer the other and appreciation for how they are inherently intertwined is vital to beginning a fruitful partnership.
2. Having laws and policies that require systems to change. For example, requiring reentry planning or requiring youth system partners to collaborate in Youth Homeless Demonstration Project grants, decriminalizing running away from home --- all of this requires policing and youth systems to partner with community-based youth service providers in order to effectively implement these policy reforms.
3. Receiving blended funding from state agencies that work with system-involved youth; youth probation and incarceration, child welfare/foster care, behavioral health and education.
4. Expanding a focus to all youth at-risk of homelessness and/or system involvement is very important in reducing both homelessness and system experiences. Community efforts should especially target youth who have been incarcerated or placed in foster care. For example, a focus on substantive and effective transition planning to ensure no youth exits the foster care or incarceration system to homelessness (with safeguards to ensure that youth do not remain incarcerated for longer due to lack of housing).
5. Having city or state officials convene different stakeholders to drive system change and collaboration.
6. The willingness, time, and capacity for both systems to dedicate thinking, explore approaches, and then evaluate their effectiveness. Routine dedicated time where all system partners meet and have real conversations about the intersection and overlap.
7. Convening all youth homelessness providers within a state to the same table to agree to shared top priorities for policy change.
8. Having a neutral external partner providing expert facilitation and coaching of all of the system partners.
9. Professional development opportunities to educate all system partners on each system as well as on promising and innovative solutions to reducing YYA homelessness and youth system involvement.

3

**Center youth and young adults with lived experiences of homelessness, placing an emphasis on BIYOC and LGBTQIA young people and young people who've also had personal experience with police, courts, and incarceration systems.**

**GOAL:** Youth with lived experiences of homelessness, especially BIYOC and LGBTQIA youth and youth who've experienced police contact and/or incarceration, are driving the collaborative community work.

Your collaborative community work should be driven by a Youth Action/Advisory Board (YAB) comprised of youth with the lived experience of homelessness. They are the experts! Given the overlaps between homelessness and police/court involvement, YABs should ensure that some members also have lived experience with policing and incarceration. You should intentionally center youth and young adults with lived experiences of homelessness, with specific efforts directed on centering BIYOC and LGBTQIA young people, who disproportionately experience homelessness, encounter and have negative police interactions, and are incarcerated at disproportionate rates when compared to white cisgender individuals. Some key steps to centering youth and young adults with lived experience from NN4Y's Local Cross Systems Collaboration Approach are (See Appendix A):

- 1) Engage and build relationships with youth and young adults with lived experience of homelessness- being deliberate and inclusive in including BIYOC and LGBTQIA young people and young people with experience with policing and incarceration.
- 2) Provide training and facilitation with YYA and Community Partners.
- 3) Share power with YYA.
- 4) Include YYA in all aspects of creating or transforming the prevention and crisis response system for YYA.
- 5) Be intentional on how you include YYA. Mentoring members of YABs is vitally important. NN4Y has been co-developing a cascading mentorship model for YABs with UC Berkeley i4Y.
- 6) Create a brave space for young people to speak up about negative experiences they may have had with the police, courts, incarceration, or with a youth service provider.

## YOUTH-CENTERED CASCADING MENTORSHIP

The cascading mentorship model emphasizes meaningful and empowering relationships and support between supervisors, program facilitators/mentors, and youth participants. The model should be informed by grounding values and youth input. Supervisors and program facilitators work alongside youth participants as mentors providing skill-building workshops and leadership training. Youth participants cultivate and enhance their leadership skills and are given opportunities to lead projects and mentor other young people.

- 7) Be intentional about not putting young people in positions where they will be retraumatized. Be sure to frequently check-in with the youth you partner with to make sure they are ok and to see if they need any support or services.
- 8) Pay all YYA you partner with for their time.

Many agencies and organizations serving court-involved youth also have youth advisory committees; if these exist in your community consider partnering with them on joint meetings or initiatives.

**Example:** One survey respondent shared that their community's Youth Advisory Board identified police and youth incarceration as the biggest barriers they had to overcome on their journey to access safe and stable housing and employment. This then made the community focus their efforts on reducing the criminalization of homelessness and survival and instead providing services, support, and diversion for the incarceration system.

4

#### **Identify the top challenges and opportunities for collaboration. Be honest.**

**GOAL:** Youth homelessness providers, the youth policing and court system, and other community partners acknowledge and agree on the community's top challenges and opportunities to change.

You need to develop a shared understanding of the existing policies and practices that are failing to appropriately serve young people before your community can truly move the dial on reducing youth homelessness and incarceration. What data do the systems have that can be examined? What evaluations or surveys have been conducted to learn more?

**Examples:** In Washington state, one survey respondent shared that that a key to increasing collaboration was when the results of an evaluation found an extremely high percentage of youth experiencing homelessness across the state having been involved in the youth probation and incarceration system. Another respondent identified that the community had been meeting collaboratively to address persons in need of supervision (PINS), a term used in their jurisdiction for minors who are adjudicated for status offenses<sup>1</sup> and diverted from the system.

Data sharing can be challenging due to privacy protection laws and due to systems and programs being unwilling to share their data. Having formal data agreements between partners are very useful to helping partners feel comfortable sharing data. Sharing aggregate program and community level data is not protected and can be very helpful in telling the story of young people and systems in any given community.

**Example of How to Use Data to Drive Change:** Philadelphia wants to do community report outs of their youth homelessness data. In order to do this, a team of community providers have come together to build capacity among the YABs to help them understand data. These capacity building sessions have led to discussions where young people want to use the data for advocacy. Community providers are helping by sharing de-identified data that can be used by the YAB to advocate for their community.



### **Top Ten Tips for Accelerating Collaboration**

1. Dedicated funding that pays for the time staff spend in collaborative community meetings and system and policy reform work. What gets paid for gets done.
2. Truly partner with and share power with young people who have experienced homelessness and/or systems. They are the true experts and if you create a brave space, they will tell you exactly where programs and systems need to focus their attention.
3. Research and data that highlights the key issues and failings of systems/collaboration.
4. Don't put off the hard conversations. Change takes time, so reach out to start having conversations now--the sooner you do the sooner you can identify ways to partner together. Don't be afraid to identify problems and develop youth-centered solutions.
5. Judges are key partners-- they can be critical allies in community meetings and in transforming systems.
6. Trust, communication, understanding, and more services for youth in homelessness situations.
7. Do not give up if things get tough. Keep showing up and remain dedicated to the work. Systems do not change overnight. Continually engage YYA and stakeholders to figure out solutions. Systems change is an iterative process.
8. Do not assume that only one response or approach will work for all youth.
9. Be creative and don't be afraid to think outside of the box and try new things.
10. Accountability and honesty go hand in hand. Every partner needs to be honest with current practices/policies and honest and accountable to how things have or have not changed.

## Set clear goals and be persistent in achieving them.

**GOAL:** Youth homelessness providers, the youth policing and court system, and other community partners all buy-in, support, and have a role in accomplishing the shared goals.

Once the community - led by BIYOC and LGBTQIA young people with lived experience - has openly and honestly identified the biggest challenges as well as potential opportunities, you need to set collective goals. Together, the community must agree on the goals that they are trying to accomplish together with clarity about the role of each system and community-based partner in achieving that goal. These goals must address change not just within systems, but across systems, and must reflect the ways that different experiences (e.g., homelessness, police encounters) impact youth and community success. Setting clear goals that have broad buy-in ensures that your community collaboration will have the focus, direction, and accountability that is needed to create true systems (policy + practice) change.

**Example:** One survey respondent shared that a state task force started in 2014 was key to building consensus around how the court and probation system should change, which led to clear policy recommendations as one of their goals and ultimately it resulted in changed state laws that have reduced the number of incarcerated youth and resulted in more funding for community-based services for youth. For example, their department of housing created special housing vouchers for youth leaving youth detention.

### Top Nine Actions with the Biggest Impact

1. Cultural competency is key to this work because bias and structural racism leads to a majority of youth who are punished and incarcerated being BIYOC.
2. External training and technical assistance helps to engage a diversity of community collaborative efforts in a sustained way.
3. Decriminalizing status offenses. 1/3 of youth arrests statewide in Washington were for running away from home.
4. An honest analysis of funding sources and how that impacts everyone's ability to best serve youth.
5. More service and housing options specifically targeted to youth.
6. Creative partnerships that allow for each provider to stay within their scope while also understanding the other can/does do things differently (i.e., confidentiality, harm reduction, positive-youth development).
7. Commitment and leadership for child welfare and juvenile justice agencies to make a plan on how they will address the housing needs of system-involved youth.
8. Including mental health providers who can bill Medicaid for services helps improve access to mental health and substance abuse treatment services for youth and families.
9. Better data about the flow between programs and systems with clear goals of how to improve the flow. Be sure to include all forms of homelessness and develop MOUs to share information.

6

**Evaluate progress towards goals and reaffirm or create new goals at least every six months.**

**GOAL:** Youth homelessness providers, the youth policing and court system, and other community partners are held accountable for making progress on the goals that were set and establish a culture of continuous quality improvement.

At least annually (ideally every six months), you and your partners should evaluate the progress that has been made in achieving the goals you have collectively set. This accountability is critical to actually driving the systems change (inclusive of policy and practice) that is truly needed to ensure that fewer young people encounter youth systems of policing, court, and incarceration as well as ensuring that fewer young people experience homelessness. This evaluation should include a reevaluation of the goals set. Consider asking these questions:

- 1) Are these still the right goals?
- 2) Should we complete another needs assessment?
- 3) Do we need to add new goals?
- 4) Are these goals really driving the type of systems change that is needed?

As always, this critical step of accountability and evaluating progress should be driven by young people with lived experiences, ideally the YAB in your community. These young people should feel empowered to provide their honest and unfiltered feedback without any pressure to put a positive spin on what they truly think.

### **Quality Improvement in Action**

Communities should strategize and plan to incorporate young people into their quality improvement process. One way of doing this is to include YYA in your quality improvement teams. This requires communities to be mindful and build processes to help support the young person. Professional development for the YYA is vital to help them grow as a professional (this could be done through cascading mentorship - see above). Quality Improvement Teams that have YYA on them can view the problem/barrier from different perspectives and engage in meaningful solution-focused strategies. See Appendix B for some examples.

## **Conclusion**

Across the country, youth homelessness providers, the youth policing and court system, and other partners in many communities work together at least at a basic level. In some communities, deeper collaboration is present, the work centers the voices of impacted youth, and systems and services are honestly assessed and improved. Every community has the potential to achieve more and have a greater impact on youth at-risk of and experiencing homelessness and the court systems. We hope that your community uses this resource guide to

start conversations, accelerate work that has already begun, or restructure how you are currently doing this work, including centering the experiences and expertise of young people.

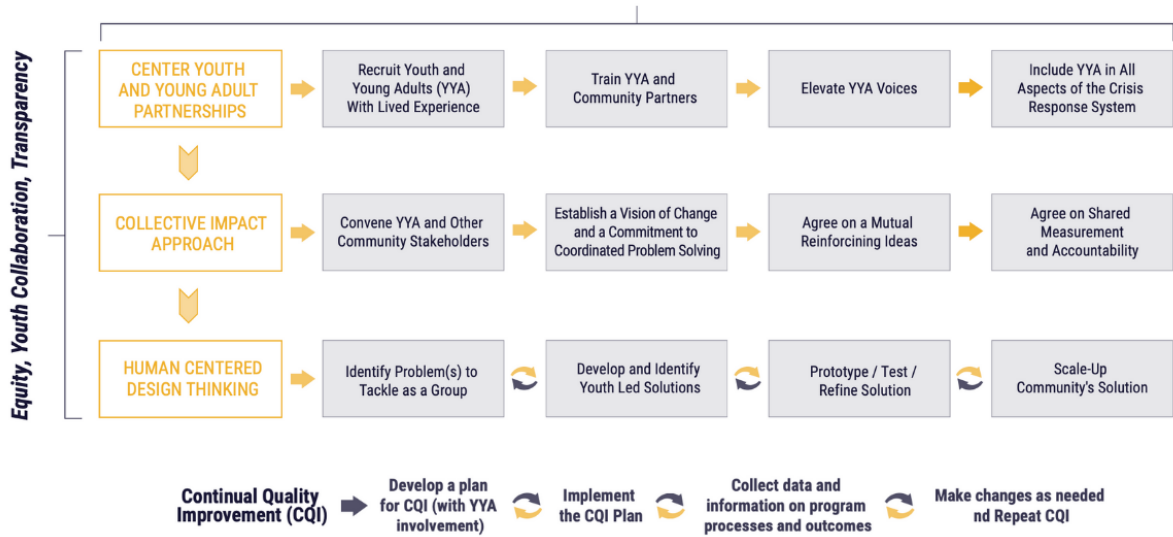
### **Top Nine Keys to Maintaining Relationships Between Community Partners**

1. Consistent ongoing communication between runaway and homeless youth (RHY) service providers and commitments from leadership with the juvenile system. E.g. regular meetings and check-ins.
2. Joint planning focused on finding common ground and developed shared goals. Time for meetings, communication and planning. Shared policies and program practices to ensure developmentally appropriate options.
3. The political will to do things differently.
4. Outside training and technical assistance to support the community and systems doing things differently.
5. Streamlining referral processes and how systems and providers communicate and collaborate in an ongoing and consistent manner.
6. Transparent and open dialogue in relationships at both the leadership and staff levels.
7. Understanding and valuing what each system and program partner has to contribute. Such as housing, employment services, and an array of supportive services. It is important to know what each partner is working on and how exactly you can collaborate. Understanding of each other's roles.
8. Formal signed agreements/MOUS between the partners helps to formalize.
9. Sharing information with each other.

# APPENDIX A: NN4Y's Local Cross-System Collaboration (LCSC) Approach



## Increasing the Capacity of Communities to Transform Systems A Local Cross-System Collaboration Approach





## **APPENDIX B: Examples from N4Y’s publication: NN4Y’s Position on Investing in Prevention of and Services for Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness, NOT in Policing and Incarceration**

### **Some examples of police and community-based provider partnerships:**

[Project Oz in Bloomington, IL](#) strives to maintain a cooperative relationship with law enforcement throughout all of their programs so that young people are referred for services instead of criminalized. Local officers trust Project Oz to provide effective, professional services to youth in need, allowing the officers to return to their own job duties more quickly. Some examples of Project Oz’s partnerships with police, courts, and detention systems are:

- Project Oz is the Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services (CCBYS) provider for their county. In the State of Illinois, every county is covered by a CCBYS provider as outlined in the Illinois Juvenile Court Act. The core population for CCBYS services are young people ages 11-17 who are not current DCFS wards and who are either absent from home without parental consent, beyond the control of his or her parent, or whose parent or caregiver has denied the child access to the home and has refused or failed to make provisions for another living arrangement for the child. Further, the IL state Juvenile Court Act of 1987 was amended to include the following language: *A minor under 13 years of age shall not be admitted, kept, or detained in a detention facility unless a local youth service provider, including a provider through the Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services network, has been contacted and has not been able to accept the minor.*

As a result, many of Project Oz’s calls for service come from local law enforcement agencies, who are often the first point of contact when conflict erupts in a family or who may encounter runaway and homeless youth during the course of their duties. Each year Project Oz staff speak to every shift in every local law enforcement department during their “roll calls” in order to remind officers to call when they contact a runaway or homeless youth so that services can begin immediately and further involvement with juvenile justice can be avoided. In addition, every “Missing Person Alert” issued for a youth by the Bloomington Police Department includes Project Oz’s contact information. (This raises community awareness of Project Oz and provides an alternative point of contact for youth or community members who do not feel comfortable contacting the police directly about youth who have run away.)

Project Oz staff are on-call 24/7 to respond to crisis calls. When they receive a call for assistance, CCBYS standards mandate that they have 15 minutes to respond to a request for services by phone and an additional 60 minutes to respond in person (90 minutes in rural locations). They then work to stabilize the youth and mediate the situation between the youth and caregiver. Project Oz’s first priority is to ensure the youth’s safety and return the youth home when possible and safe. If the youth’s home is not a safe and viable option, staff works with the youth and family to identify a mutually agreeable short-term alternative. This may include staying with a relative or friend or placement in the organization’s own network of DCFS-licensed Host Homes. This allows time to continue to work with the young person and family to address conflicts, strengthen communication, and determine the best long-term, stable living option for the young person. Of course, they immediately report any alleged child abuse or neglect to DCFS, in accordance with their status as mandated reporters.

- Project Oz is also in regular contact with law enforcement receiving referrals for services of older youth experiencing homelessness.
- Project Oz also runs the Youth Empowered Schools program with embedded counselors in several local high schools and these counselors work closely with the School Resource Officers in each school to identify students who are struggling with peer relationships, family or school conflicts, truancy, and otherwise need extra support to stay on track and graduate.
- Project Oz is also a founding member of the McLean County Juvenile Justice Commission and works closely with McLean County Court Services/Probation to ensure eligible youth receive referrals to their program.
- Project Oz also participates in the regional U.S. Attorney's Office Central Illinois Human Trafficking Task Force alongside law enforcement agencies to improve identification of youth victims of trafficking, ensuring they receive the services they need and the respect they deserve.

**The Link in Minneapolis, MN has several examples of partnerships:**

- The Link is a signatory partner of the "Joint Powers Agreement" program with the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Schools, and Hennepin County, which created The Link's Youth Supervision Center. The program is located within Minneapolis City Hall and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing a safe alternative place for any law enforcement agency within Hennepin County (all police jurisdictions, U of M PD, transit PD, county sheriff) to drop off youth. Youth served are between the ages of 10 and 17 and may have been picked up for a low level or status offense, no offense, or felony car theft and/or have been sexually exploited. The officer drops off the youth at the Juvenile Supervision Center instead of bringing the youth into a juvenile detention facility or other criminal justice response. The Link provides assessments, helps youth back home/with their family (whenever it is safe and appropriate), or, if they are experiencing homelessness, connects them to emergency shelter. Youth and their families are also provided with on-going supportive services that include mobile case management, groups, assistance with basic needs, education, etc.
- The Link also has three programs for youth (Marshall Reed Youth Center, the POWER Program and the Community Navigator Program) which work in partnership with Hennepin County Juvenile Probation. These programs take referrals from Hennepin County Juvenile Probation Officers and then provide an alternative to a detention/corrections response that includes case management, structured groups, and support/assistance with the youth and families basic and ongoing needs. All of these programs are located in north Minneapolis Link locations.
- The Link also has a School Matters program in partnership with the Hennepin County Attorney's Office Be at School Program. They take referrals for youth who are truant from school and provide a program for them to address the underlying reasons the youth isn't attending school, while also providing supportive services, mobile case management, and groups.
- The Link also has, within its Housing and Services Division, a housing program (the Periscope Program) specifically for youth coming/aging out of child welfare, juvenile justice and/or children's mental health placements, funded through Hennepin County. The program provides scattered site housing and supportive services/case management for these young people who are referred by their county worker.

**New Beginnings in Maine** has had a detention alternative contract with Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) for decades. Youth who, through no fault of their own, cannot return home but who are not a threat to the community are referred to New Beginnings' emergency shelter rather than to the Long Creek Youth Development Center while other housing alternatives can be developed. Over the past two months they have expanded this contract with the Department of Corrections to include reserved

beds in their Transitional Living Program for youth under age 18; this gives youth 18 months of housing, case management and life skills development rather than being incarcerated. This improved contract includes funding for two new staff positions (a case manager and youth worker) specifically trained to work with youth in the juvenile system and build working relationships with Juvenile Correctional Case Officers (Maine’s version of juvenile probation officers) to help youth live independently in the community with “supervision” levels that meet their specific needs.

**[Bill Wilson Center in San Jose, CA:](#)** The Santa Clara County Policy Department has a policy to minimize the unnecessary incarceration of youth by seeking alternatives to custodial confinement. The policy, developed in 2009, details the specific circumstances under which police officers take young people to community alternatives to incarceration. The Bill Wilson Center is one of three agencies specified as an alternative to incarceration. (Read the full policy in Appendix A.) Santa Clara County court also have a standing court order (Appendix B) that allows the Bill Wilson Center to serve probation-involved minors in the absence of parental consent.

To learn more, visit:  
[www.juvjustice.org/homelessness](http://www.juvjustice.org/homelessness)  
and  
[www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)

