




“TO BECOME THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF”:

Youth-Supportive Transitional Housing Programs as An Essential Resource for Addressing Youth Homelessness



This paper shares research demonstrating the effectiveness of transitional housing programs and argues for greater investments and wider availability of this essential housing model. This includes offering transitional programs and other types of homelessness services to minors. The need for expanded programming is great among this population, as the vast majority of students experiencing homelessness are not in shelters or other housing programs.^[i]

[i] National Center for Homeless Education. (February 2019). Federal Data Summary: School Years 2014-15 to 2016-17. <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Federal-Data-Summary-SY-14.15-to-16.17-Final-Published-2.12.19.pdf>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, millions of youth experience homelessness across the United States, and they need proven housing models and an array of services and supports to help them achieve stability and independence – all in an effort to ultimately prevent and end youth homelessness. Covenant House International, National Network for Youth, and SchoolHouse Connection published this paper to highlight an essential, but often under-resourced, housing model for young people: transitional housing.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES

Transitional housing for youth offers young people a stable place to live for a significant period of time and also provides case management and other supportive services (e.g., behavioral health services, educational and career development assistance). For minors or young adults—including those who are pregnant and parenting—this can be an ideal approach that serves as a bridge from homelessness to lifelong stability.

“Because of transitional housing I was able to save up to buy my own car, learned how to file my taxes and a lot more life skills. Now I am a business owner with a passion to give back to the community. Transitional housing has helped and support[ed] me to become the best version of myself.”

- Member of NN4Y’s National Youth Advisory Council

Youth who access transitional housing, particularly for longer periods, experience positive outcomes related to housing, employment, education, and access to services. An analysis by Covenant House International found that among 564 young people who exited transitional housing programs in 15 U.S. cities over a 12-month period:

- 73% exited the program into stable housing; and
- 69% were employed or enrolled in school when they left the program.

CHI’s research team also found that youth who stayed in the program longer were more likely to exit to stable housing, and to be employed when they exited the program. They also found that youth who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (“BIPOC youth”) had higher rates of stable housing exits and higher rates of employment at exit (but lower rates of school enrollment). This is an important finding for achieving equity, given that BIPOC youth are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness.

Data from other programs also have demonstrated positive outcomes for young people accessing transitional housing, including for minors and for youth in rural communities.

FEDERAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the largest funder of homelessness and housing services in the U.S., with appropriations of more than \$3 billion for homelessness programs in FY21. HUD has structured its funding applications in ways that incentivize other housing models over transitional housing. In contrast, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), which focuses on youth homelessness, was appropriated just \$136 million in FY21 to distribute to its Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program grantees (part of which went to transitional housing, with the remainder funding emergency shelter, street outreach, and other services). As a result, HUD's prioritizations have an outsized impact on the kind of housing models and services that are available in local communities to address youth homelessness, and who can access those services. (Additionally, HUD's statutory definition of homelessness, and additional eligibility criteria imposed in its funding applications, can make it nearly impossible to serve youth experiencing homelessness who are "couch-surfing" (i.e., staying with others temporarily) or staying in motels.)

The models HUD prioritizes can be beneficial for some individuals experiencing homelessness, but do not meet the same needs that transitional housing does. For example, Permanent Supportive Housing is designed for individuals with disabilities, which may be unnecessary for young people who only need a time-limited program, or a lower level of support because they can live more independently. Rapid Rehousing (RRH), which focuses on finding and temporarily subsidizing housing will not help minors who cannot sign a lease due to their age, and may still be in school full-time, limiting their ability to work and pay rent when the RRH assistance ends. Even young adults who are just starting out in their careers, or in school part- or full-time, may not be able to pay market-rate rent when their RRH support ends, which could lead to eviction and/or negative credit histories, making it even harder to secure stable housing in the future. In contrast, transitional housing provides a bridge to long-term housing stability for young people by allowing them a significant period of time to complete their education, prepare for and obtain living wage jobs, and meet other needs such as life skills development and behavioral health treatment.

"If I had Transitional Housing as a minor, I could have created a much safer environment for me and my younger sister. Both of my parents were abusive and used drugs, and we lived very far away from any relatives who could take us in...There are so many minors who are in that situation right now whose future could be much brighter with this option."

- SchoolHouse Connection Scholar

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transitional housing is a valuable resource for young people who are able to access it, but it is not available (at all, or to all who need it) in many communities. To ensure that all young people experiencing homelessness can access what they need to *sustainably* exit homelessness and avoid chronic adult homelessness, our organizations recommend the following:

CONGRESS, HHS, HUD, STATE AND LOCAL POLICYMAKERS AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES, AND PHILANTHROPY SHOULD:

- Ensure that every community provides service-rich transitional housing program options (in some form) for minors, young adults, and young families experiencing homelessness.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

- Deepen its investments in combatting youth homelessness through increased funding of Transitional Living and Maternity Programs and other Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programming.
- Amend HUD's definition of homelessness so that the "definition" reflects the lived experiences of youth, young adults, and young families, and young people are not required to stay in tenuous, unstable, and often unsafe situations with other people, adult shelters, or the streets before they can access and are prioritized for appropriate services. (Future Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) should also reflect these changes.)

HHS/FYSB SHOULD:

- Continue to support its Transitional Living and Maternity Program grantees, and expand these efforts as increased funding allows.

HUD SHOULD:

- Write future NOFAs incentivizing Transitional Housing for youth, young adults, and young families, in accordance with local needs and priorities.
- Assess youth programs for effectiveness using youth-appropriate outcome measures (through its NOFAs).

PHILANTHROPY AND STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Support programs that will best meet the needs of young people in their local communities, including transitional programs, rather than tying funding to federal priorities.



INTRODUCTION

An estimated 4.2 million young people^[i] experience unaccompanied homelessness each year, including 3.5 million youth ages 18-25, and 700,000 youth ages 13-17.^[1] Today those numbers may be even higher due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic volatility. “Unaccompanied” homelessness means that youth are experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian, but many of these young people are parents themselves, with research estimating that 43% of young women who experienced homelessness within the past year were pregnant or parenting.^[2] Youth who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (“BIPOC youth”) are also disproportionately likely to experience homelessness: in a national study, African American youth were found to have an 83% higher risk and Latinx non-White youth a 33% higher risk of homelessness compared to their White non-Hispanic peers.^[3] Data from the same study indicate that just over 12% of American Indian/Alaska Native young adults experienced homelessness that year, three times the rate of White non-Hispanic young adults.^[4]

4.2 MILLION

Number of young people
experiencing
unaccompanied
homelessness

3.5 MILLION

Number of youth
ages 18-25 experiencing
unaccompanied
homelessness

700,000

Number of youth
ages 13-17 experiencing
unaccompanied
homelessness

A comprehensive array of services is necessary to reduce these numbers, to help young people overcome homelessness more quickly, and to prevent both youth and later chronic adult homelessness. This service array must include immediate, short-term options such as street outreach programs, family mediation, and emergency shelters/respice care. For many youth, these services can help youth quickly return or connect to safe and stable housing and the supports that they need to maintain stability and thrive. However, many other youth who experience homelessness have deep and complex needs; therefore, **an adequate service array must also include longer-term and service-rich options to help these youth sustainably overcome homelessness, and prevent future generations from experiencing it.** This more intensive level of service-rich, medium- to long-term, youth-focused housing is in short supply – or even absent – in many communities. In light of the significant racial disparities among youth experiencing homelessness described above, ensuring that a comprehensive continuum of services exists in every community is an essential part of achieving racial justice.

[i] In this paper the terms “youth” and “young people” are used interchangeably to refer to individuals ages 12-25. “Minors” refers to individuals younger than age 18, and “young adults” refers to individuals aged 18-25.

This paper reviews research and shares new data demonstrating that transitional programs for youth and young adults are effective, and an essential and core element of efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. In one of the most comprehensive analyses ever undertaken on transitional housing outcomes for youth, Covenant House International found that among 564 young people who exited transitional housing programs in 15 U.S. cities over a 12-month period, 73% exited the program into stable housing and 69% were employed or enrolled in school when they left the program. These data underscore the vitality of transitional living programs with robust supportive services as an effective pathway from homelessness for young people, including families with children headed by young parents. Other findings demonstrate that transitional programs have positive outcomes in both rural and urban areas, and for minors as well as young adults.

This paper also discusses the different ways transitional housing programs can be implemented, and argues for greater investment in these programs, so that more young people can receive what they need to become healthy and productive adults, and avoid experiencing chronic adult homelessness.

WHAT ARE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS?

“Transitional [programs are] a much more stable environment than a motel or the streets. Having a safe place to sleep freed my mom and I to worry about other things and gave us time to focus on work and education. It’s frightening to be homeless on the streets or in a volatile housing situation, and it’s nearly impossible to prioritize your health and well-being when you’re preoccupied with ensuring your survival.”

- SchoolHouse Connection Scholar

There are two main federally funded types of transitional programs: Transitional Living Programs (funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS) and Transitional Housing (funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD) (see Appendix E). Additionally, providers may design and implement other types of service-supported housing programs, using private, state, or local funding.^[5]

For the purposes of this document, youth-supportive transitional programs mean housing coupled with services that is:

1) Longer-term (but not indefinite/permanent): Allows youth a period of time to settle in and focus on overcoming trauma, continuing or re-starting their education, developing career-readiness, stabilizing or addressing their health needs, and parenting their children (if applicable), without having to worry about where they will sleep tonight or next week, and how they will eat.

- The type of housing can vary based on community context, or youth age and needs, ranging from family-style group homes (e.g., separate bedrooms but with some shared living space) to scattered-site apartments (all in a single building or campus, or located throughout a community).
- Providers report that 18 to 24 months is sufficient for many youth, and some need far less, but that it is important to have the flexibility to provide longer-term housing when warranted. It is important to note that “permanent” housing has a different meaning for young people than it does for older adults, since young people are in a phase of their life where it is appropriate to move into time-limited living situations (e.g., entering a dorm).

2) Service-intensive: Services are targeted to youth’s needs, and case management is an integral part of ensuring youth can fully benefit from both onsite and other services. For young parents, this includes support for both the parent and their child(ren). Common services offered by current transitional programs include: assistance enrolling and engaging in high school (or high school equivalency (e.g., GED) programs), college or other post-secondary education; resume-building and interview preparation; job training and credentialing with a goal of achieving living wage employment; substance abuse services; and mental health counseling or therapy. Parenting classes and child care are essential for many young families.

3) Structured: Having rules and expectations ensures that all residents are able to accomplish their goals without unnecessary stress or chaos. Young people, in particular, can benefit from having clear rules and structure, due to the nature of adolescent development, as discussed below.



OTHER HOUSING MODELS

Three other common housing models beyond crisis/emergency shelter are permanent supportive housing (PSH), rapid re-housing (RRH), and host homes. PSH is service-intensive and long-term, but intended for individuals who have disabilities. RRH primarily offers short- or medium-term rental assistance, along with some support finding housing. This type of intervention is best suited to individuals who will be able to continue paying market-rate rent after a short period of assistance, and who would be able to obtain a lease from a private landlord.

Host homes are a model where community members offer space in their homes to minors and/or young adults, providing a more family-like setting for some period of time. This model is dependent on recruitment of community hosts, which may limit the scale of its use in many places. All three of these models can be the right fit for some young people—and should be part of a comprehensive service array—but many other youth need a housing solution that is longer-term, service-intensive, and available to any young person. (See Appendix E for a longer description of the characteristics of each of these models.)

Outcome data from transitional programs summarized below show that most young people who are able to participate in transitional programs are employed and/or enrolled in school when they leave and also exit to stable housing. They also receive services, such as life skills training and trauma-informed behavioral health care, that will allow them to sustain their housing, education, and employment gains, and transition successfully to adulthood. *For many youth, transitional programs work and are a needed bridge from homelessness to lifelong stability.* Every community in the country should have this type of solution as part of their array of services for youth experiencing homelessness.

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

CHARACTERISTICS, NEEDS, AND STRENGTHS OF YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

As discussed above, youth homelessness is far too common, with an estimated 1 in 10 young adults and 1 in 30 younger adolescents experiencing unaccompanied homelessness in a single year, according to research from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.^[6] (This number is likely a significant underestimate for minors, as it is based on adult reports and other studies have found potentially higher rates.)^[7] Young people become homeless for a range of reasons, and have unique needs and strengths. The characteristics that were most significantly correlated with homelessness among young adults in the Chapin Hall study were, in order: 1) an incomplete education (not having a GED or diploma); 2) single parenthood (being an unmarried parent); and 3) poverty (annual household income less than \$24,000)^[8] Young people in rural and urban areas experienced homelessness at similar rates, and LGBTQ youth and BIPOC youth were shown to be at greater risk of experiencing homelessness, consistent with other research.^[9]

“Housing and resources are a necessity. Because how else can someone begin to live with themselves and away from the source of the trauma while fighting abuse currently and its after-effects? In order for a victim or victims to begin to find the strength to live for themselves, they need support and stability, and both of those things are impossible without housing and the right kind of community resources.”

- SchoolHouse Connection Scholar

“Our young people are already in survivor mode, so they are very vulnerable. Worrying about getting kicked out of shelter, or any short-term housing is just another added trauma to their lives.”

- Member of NN4Y’s National Youth Advisory Council

In a survey of young people accessing street outreach services, the most commonly reported needs were help getting a job (or job training), transportation assistance, and clothing.^[10] Additionally, more than half of respondents said they needed a safe place to stay, educational assistance, ability to do laundry, somewhere to spend time during the day, and a phone.^[11] More than 40% needed access to showers and/or needed medical care.^[12] Young people experiencing homelessness also reported key strengths, including positive future goals (such as higher education or career aspirations), and supportive family or peers (more than two-thirds said they had someone they could count on for help, most commonly a non-parent relative or a friend they'd met before or while experiencing homelessness).^[13]

All of this research illustrates a key benefit of transitional programs—the provision of a range of services and supports that go beyond simply a place to sleep at night. This service provision is likely a major part of what makes transitional programs so effective for youth, and an important reason why these programs need to be more available in communities across the country.

HOMELESSNESS AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Adolescence is a pivotal period in any individual's life as it represents a shift from dependence to independence, and is a time of great physiological change. While early childhood is widely viewed as a critical period of learning and brain development that sets the stage for the rest of life, recent research has begun to focus on adolescence as an additional period of key growth and development. During this time, the external environment combines with brain plasticity to present “a second, crucially important window of opportunity to influence the development of children's brains – and thus, their futures.”^[14]

During this phase, adolescents are more focused on their peers, and on short-term rewards and consequences, yet societally they are often required to take on adult responsibilities and independence.^[15] The brain is making the transition to adult thinking and reasoning during this period, but is also “extremely sensitive to stress, with a chronic production of stress hormones affecting learning, memory, emotional processing and mental health.”^[16] All of these factors impact how young adults engage in services, and require that programming to address homelessness be youth-specific.

Applying models that have helped older adults may not “fit” unaccompanied youth or young parents, and may not serve them well. Transitional programs, however, are uniquely suited to young people experiencing homelessness, as their longer-term nature, structure, and paired services support youth in achieving better outcomes, while giving them the independence they need to grow and transition into adulthood.

YOUNG FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

As discussed above, being an unmarried parent is one of the biggest risk factors for homelessness among young adults. In 2019, SchoolHouse Connection (SHC) undertook a learning process involving young families experiencing homelessness, including a brief literature review, key informant interviews, input from young people, and a survey of service providers. The project identified the key strengths and barriers common to young parents experiencing homelessness (and their children) and mapped the services and policy responses that can best support these young families. The strengths, needs, and barriers highlighted in that process are summarized briefly in Appendix D, and in more detail in the SHC publication *Interrupting Generational Homelessness Among Young Families Through A Two-Generation Approach: Opportunities for Impact*.^[17] The findings underscore the need for young families experiencing homelessness to receive more than housing-only services, including two-generation supports that address both parents' and children's needs.

“Transitional housing is very beneficial to young parents. The TLP that I worked for was only for the mothers, but we invited the fathers to join them during events, life skill classes and more. I have watched so many young mothers graduate from high school, sign leases to homes and accomplish many goals. With the guidance of staff and educational tactics, the mothers were able to implement knowledge learned in caring for their children, partnership guidance and several other areas of life. Transitional Housing is a great tool for young parents, especially those who are alone.”

- Member of NN4Y's National Youth Advisory Council



SHC's conversations with, and surveys of, providers also resulted in a list of recommendations for policy change and advocacy, including “[s]tatewide or local investments in, and prioritized access to, shelter and *transitional housing options appropriate for young families experiencing homelessness*, and policies that support affordable housing generally in communities” (emphasis added). This and other findings of SHC's work around young family homelessness contributed to the recognition of the need for this report and for more support for service-rich housing options for young people experiencing homelessness and their children.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Young people experiencing homelessness need far more than a roof and four walls. In order to sustainably exit homelessness, youth need to complete their education and begin careers that will allow them to support themselves and their families. They also need to overcome the trauma and other behavioral health needs that may have developed from or have been exacerbated by their experiences while homeless. Many youth need to learn basic life skills, such as managing finances, cooking and keeping house, and navigating administrative tasks (e.g., filling out financial aid forms, or applications for employment). While managing all of the above, young people need to meet their basic needs, including food, shelter, health, and hygiene. Like all adolescents, young people experiencing homelessness are becoming more independent and more capable every day, but also like other adolescents, they need support and opportunities to help them fully learn to be successful and self-supporting adults.



TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION

SchoolHouse Connection (SHC), co-publisher of this paper, is an advocacy organization focused on overcoming homelessness through education. SHC has chosen to devote significant attention towards advocating for transitional programs because research on high school students experiencing homelessness demonstrates the need for the service-rich environment that these programs provide:

- High school students who had experienced homelessness were more likely to report having been raped, having attempted suicide, and having abused prescription drugs or alcohol.
- They were also more likely to miss school because of safety concerns, and to experience dating violence or bullying.
- These risks were comparable across homeless living situations, whether sleeping in a motel, a car, a shelter, temporarily with other people, or moving so frequently that they could not identify a usual sleeping arrangement over a thirty-day period.^[i]

Having long-term, service-rich housing can give students the freedom to focus on their studies and the support to overcome trauma, rather than having to focus all of their energy on meeting basic needs. Given the strong outcomes transitional programs generate—both on education and stable housing metrics—we believe that these programs must be available in every community, and to every young person who needs them.

[i] SchoolHouse Connection. (2019). [“Student Homelessness: Lessons from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\).”](#)

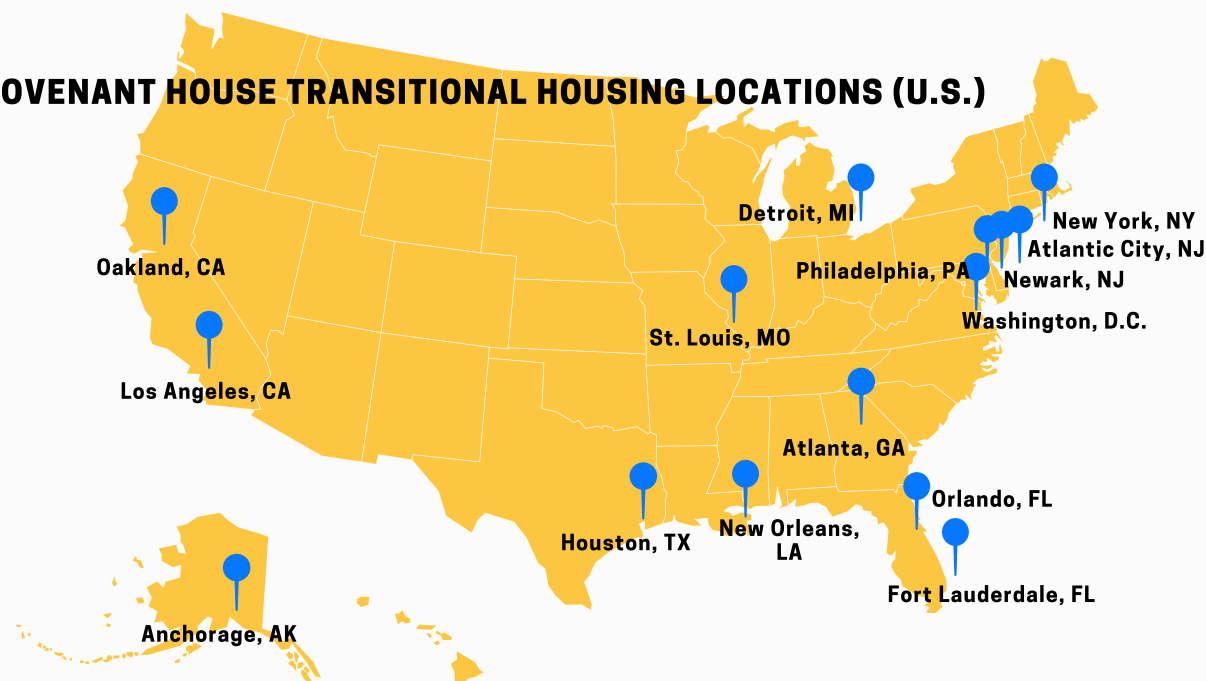
TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS: YOUTH OUTCOMES

COVENANT HOUSE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

Covenant House (CH) provides housing and support services to young people facing homelessness across 31 cities in six countries. In the U.S., Canada, and Latin America, local CH sites employ a program continuum that includes street outreach, drop-in or other non-residential services, and a tiered residential program model. Residential services in the U.S. and Canada tend to include emergency overnight accommodations, short-term housing (typically up to 90 days), transitional housing (typically up to 18- to 24-months), rapid re-housing, and permanent housing programs. CHI's transitional programs, most commonly referred to as *Rights of Passage (ROP)*, largely adhere to the transitional program model components described above, allowing young people a more stable and longer-term housing option to help them transition into independence. The programs are largely offered in on-site settings, in which staff are present 24 hours a day. A few smaller programs are designed as clustered, off-site apartments, where staff do not have a 24-hour-a-day presence.

For this paper, Covenant House International (CHI), the organization's central headquarters, performed an original analysis of data from transitional programs at 15 CH sites in the United States. The data were exported from the agency's organization-wide performance management system, Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), and were analyzed by CHI's Research, Evaluation & Learning (RE&L) team. CH program data are vetted with affiliate sites on a quarterly basis and shared across the agency through multiple reporting tools.

COVENANT HOUSE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING LOCATIONS (U.S.)



The analysis includes all young people who exited one of the transitional programs, regardless of length of stay or youth demographics (e.g., age, lived experience, etc.). In total, 564 youth exited the program between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019, with an average length of stay of 221 days^[ii], and had the following overall outcomes:

73% OF YOUTH

EXITED THE PROGRAM INTO STABLE HOUSING (E.G., THEIR OWN APARTMENT, TO A COLLEGE DORM ROOM, OR OTHER LONG-TERM SITUATION, SEE APPENDIX C FOR A FULL LIST).

69% OF YOUTH

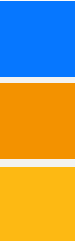
WERE EMPLOYED OR ENROLLED IN SCHOOL WHEN THEY LEFT THE PROGRAM.

Overall, BIPOC youth exited to stable housing at a higher rate than their counterparts (74% vs. 69%) and had higher rates of employment at exit (64% vs. 60%). The percentage of youth enrolled in school at the time when they exited the program was lower among BIPOC youth as compared to their counterparts (19% vs. 24%). The difference in school enrollment rates may be reflective of the fact that BIPOC youth were more likely to be employed at exit than their counterparts. In addition, BIPOC youth were more likely to have earned their high school diploma or equivalent before entering the program.

Additionally, young mothers (who comprised 17% of the young women overall), were more likely to exit to stable housing (79% vs. 73%), but were less likely to be employed (57% vs. 70%). This finding is not completely surprising given the child care needs and responsibilities for young mothers, as well as their potential eligibility for income assistance programs.

These outcome data clearly show the benefit of transitional programs for young people, but the CH analysis went further to determine how and when transitional programs can be most effective.

[ii] Just over half of the participants stayed for 91-365 days, 31% stayed fewer than 90 days, and 19% stayed more than 365 days.



Youth Demographics

The overall demographics of CH transitional program participants were as follows:

- 67% were African American, 13% were Latino/Hispanic, 10% were White, and 9% had their race/ethnicity recorded as “other.”*
- 52% were male, 45% were female, 2% were transgender or gender nonconforming, 1% were “other” or did not have a gender recorded.*
- 79% were age 19-22; 1% were age 17, 6% were age 18, and the remainder were age 23-26.
- More than one-third (35%) had a self-reported history of mental health issues.
- 39% reported involvement in the criminal justice system.
- 31% reported experience in foster care.
- 29% did not have their high school diploma or equivalency when they started the program.

*(Note that terms used to reflect the terms used in the data collection process.)

Among CH transitional housing program participants:

- Young people who stayed in the program longer were more likely to exit into stable housing.
 - 83% of youth who stayed in the program 365+ days exited to stable housing, compared to 63% of youth who stayed less than 90 days.
- Young people who stayed in the program longer were also more likely to be employed when they exited the program.
 - Approximately three quarters of youth who stayed at least one year, compared to 54% of youth who left within three months, were employed at exit.
- “Longer stayers” were more likely to have completed their high school education. 77% of youth who stayed in the program 365+ days had earned their high school diploma or equivalent before starting the program compared to 67% of youth who left before 90 days.
 - This may help explain why youth who stayed for shorter periods of time were more likely to be enrolled in school at program exit.
 - When considering combined numbers for if young people were either in school or working, longer lengths of stay again had a positive effect, with youth who stayed 181+ days being enrolled in school or working 76% of the time, compared to 70% of youth who stayed 91-180 days and 59% of youth who stayed 90 or fewer days.
- Age did not have a substantial impact on whether a young person exited to stable housing.
 - Older youth had slightly higher rates of stable exits, with approximately 74% of youth age 20 and older and 70% of youth under age 20 exiting to stable housing.
- Young women were more likely to exit to stable housing than young men or youth who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.
 - 76% of young women; 71% of young men; and 62% of young people who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming exited to stable housing.
- Stable exits were slightly lower for the youth transitioning from off-site apartments (69%) compared to youth exiting from on-site (74%) settings. This finding suggests that on-premises services, which can provide a consistent set of wraparound supports (e.g., employment, education, mental health, medical care, etc.), may lead to better outcomes. (Note, however, that the youth living in off-site programs were slightly younger than the on-site cohort, which may have also impacted the difference in stable exit rates.)

In terms of specific destinations for youth, the two most common housing destinations for all youth regardless of length of stay were rental housing (28%) and long-term placements with family (24%). In cases where youth leave to a long-term family setting, staff work with young people and family members to ensure there is sustained support. Further, the “long-term” designation indicates that a youth would not be restricted to a stay fewer than six months. For youth who stayed three months or longer, 36% exited to a rental apartment, with 21% going to long-term family settings. For those >3-month stayers who were employed full-time at exit, 53% exited to rental housing, with 13% going to family (long-term). For those >3-month stayers who left without employment, 31% exited to family (long-term) and 38% left to any family placement.



In an effort to gauge longer-term housing stability for youth who exited the transitional programs, CHI analyzed data on program re-enrollment rates within 12 months of exit. Consistent with the findings above, young people who stayed longer in the program originally were less likely to need to re-enroll within 12 months. (There was little difference based on length of stay, however, for young people who exited to non-stable housing.) Older youth were also less likely to re-enroll. CH also believes strongly in welcoming back young people who need housing again after exiting its programs, and feels that youth re-entering when needed is evidence of the strong relationships between young people and providers.

The data shared above show that transitional programs work to provide a solid bridge for young people experiencing homelessness to successful and self-sufficient adulthood. However, these types of programs are needed far beyond the 31 cities currently served by Covenant House; in fact, they should be a part of the housing continuum for youth in every community.

OTHER TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

The positive youth outcomes from Covenant House’s transitional programs described above are also occurring for youth, young adults, and young families in a variety of transitional programs across the country, including through other NN4Y member organizations. For example, outcomes from other transitional programs include:

- 70% of young people accessing housing through YouthCare’s transitional living programs in Seattle exited to safe and stable housing.^[18]
- For former foster youth who participated in Larkin Street Youth Services’ “Avenues to Independence” program in San Francisco for two years or more, all secured stable housing. Additionally, those who participated in employment-related programming were able to earn higher wages, and stay employed for longer.^[19]
- Of participants in Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher, a New York City-based trauma-informed transitional program for young adults ages 18-25 aging out of foster care or experiencing or at risk of homelessness: 91% were employed and 40% were enrolled in college within 2 years of entering the program^[20] Participants were also 36% less likely than a comparison group to have a later stay in an adult shelter and 55% less likely to have a jail stay.^[21] (Under Chelsea Foyer’s model, residents live “semi-independently” for up to 24 months while accessing on-site or closely integrated services such as case management, educational services, job-related support, and life skills education.)

Note that although the program data in this report demonstrate the efficacy of transitional programs, outcomes should not be compared between these programs as they are all serving different populations and they reside in different local contexts where more or fewer resources and barriers may be present.

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR MINORS

HHS-funded Transitional Living Programs are able to serve youth aged 16 – 22, but many of the programs NN4Y and SHC work with do not serve 16- and 17-year-olds, largely due to state licensing restrictions, the higher costs of staffing a program serving minors, and other challenges. For HUD-funded Transitional Housing, programs also report that they serve primarily youth ages 18 and older. Yet transitional programs can successfully serve minors and should be considered as part of a comprehensive service array. This should include programs for parenting youth, as researchers have found a particular lack of resources for minor parents and their families.^[22]

“If I had Transitional Housing as a minor, I could have created a much safer environment for me and my younger sister. Both of my parents were abusive and used drugs, and we lived very far away from any relatives who could take us in...There are so many minors who are in that situation right now whose future could be much brighter with this option.”

-SchoolHouse Connection Scholar

Cocoon House serves youth experiencing homelessness in Snohomish County, Washington, in a variety of ways, including a transitional program exclusively for 16- and 17-year-olds. Youth in that program achieved the following outcomes in 2019-2020:

- 84% of youth exited to safe housing.
- 72% of youth reunited with parents and/or had improved relationships.
- 76% of youth were enrolled in school and attending regularly, graduated from high school, or completed GED.
- 100% of youth participated in case management.
- 96% of youth received medical and/or dental services.
- 100% of youth participated in Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse services.
- 100% of youth were able to identify permanent supports.

SERVING YOUTH FROM SMALLER TOWNS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Most of Covenant House's sites in the United States are located in urban communities, but many successful transitional programs also exist in smaller towns and rural communities. Maine and North Dakota are largely rural states, where youth may have to travel to larger towns to receive services.



In North Dakota, Youthworks is the only youth homelessness provider, and serves youth from across the state in transitional programs in Fargo and Bismarck. Youthworks' transitional programs serve young adults ages 18-24 (with their children if they are parents). Approximately 43% of clients are American Indian/Alaska Native, 17% are Latinx, and 10% are African

American. 53% of transitional program participants are female and 47% are male.^[23] Young adults participating in Youthworks' Bismarck transitional program achieved the following outcomes:

- 94% exited to a safe and appropriate location.
- 71% attended high school, worked toward completion of a GED, or graduated from high school/received a GED while a resident of the program.
- 68% of unemployed or underemployed participants found and started jobs.^[24]

For Youthworks' Fargo transitional program, all youth maintained stable housing in the program and/or transitioned to stable housing, and 63% were enrolled in school or have completed their GED or diploma. All youth also received case management services.^[25]



New Beginnings also offers transitional programs in Lewiston, Maine, and serves youth from throughout the state. In addition to providing housing, they focus on giving young people what they need to successfully live on their own. The program includes supervised apartments for 16- to 20-year-olds, as well community living assistance (including housing and case management

services) for young adults who are 18, 19, or 20 (and emancipated minors).^[26] In addition to case management, young people served by New Beginnings receive services and education related to independent living, substance abuse, sexual health, and pregnancy prevention, as well as academic and career-related support. Youth can also participate in "experiential learning and adventure challenge trips," such as camping, skiing, horseback riding, or visiting new cities, which help build skills, self-esteem, and positive motivations. The program also helps youth sustain the gains they make by offering support and counseling after they are discharged from the program (which has a maximum stay of 18 months).

Between September 2018 to September 2019, New Beginnings served 19 youth in their Transitional Living Program. Of the 12 youth who discharged from the program during that period:

- 100% transitioned into safe and stable housing situations.
- 75% “had either graduated with a high school diploma, gotten their GED, or were attending school at discharge.”
- 84% “were employed or looking for work at discharge.”^[27]

As the data shared above illustrate, transitional programs work for youth of different races and ethnicities, for youth from urban and rural areas, and for minors and young adults. This model is an essential part of the housing continuum, and should be part of any constellation of services to address youth homelessness.



FYSB'S TLP SPECIAL POPULATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

From September 2016 to September 2018, the HHS Family and Youth Services Bureau's Transitional Living Program (TLP) Special Population Demonstration Project funded grantees to develop and implement TLP programs for LGBTQ youth and/or young adults who left foster care after age 18. A recently released process study of that demonstration project highlighted the “enhanced and innovative services” delivered by grantee organizations and documented the ways they “helped youth build protective factors... [and] encouraged a sense of inclusion, relevance, and respect.” The process evaluation found that the programs faced some consistent barriers in serving the specified populations (e.g., referral sources, more significant than anticipated mental health needs), but also developed and implemented many promising practices. The work of the demonstration sites, and the report describing their efforts, is an important resource in ensuring that these groups of youth, who are particularly likely to experience homelessness, can successfully access and benefit from transitional programs.

Source: Sousa, Tanya, Adrienne Smith, Hannah Engle, Alisa Santucci, Meghan Henry, Alvaro Cortes, and Jessica Thornton Walker (2021). Transitional Living Program Special Population Demonstration, OPRE Report # 2021-35, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

SERVING YOUTH IN TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS DURING A PANDEMIC

The data shared by Covenant House International, and most other data shared in this paper, was collected before the U.S. experienced the 2020-2021 COVID-19 public health crisis. In response to the pandemic, CH and other transitional program providers across the country quickly adapted to continue to serve youth, including young families, as safely as possible, and to support them during a tremendously challenging time.

In Covenant House's programs, youth experienced almost immediate and widespread job loss and/or reductions in work hours due to the pandemic in March and April 2020, and those enrolled in school were forced to quickly pivot to virtual learning. Fortunately, staff were able to support youth in seeking new jobs (employment rates among youth largely rebounded in May – July 2020) and in maintaining school enrollment throughout the year.

While CH's shelter programs needed to make changes to physical layouts (in most cases) to ensure social distancing, there was less need for repurposing space in TH programs given the lower bed counts per room. More broadly, COVID-19 provided new opportunities to focus on the mental health needs of youth, recognizing the triggering potential of an event like a pandemic.

Several of NN4Y's other members also changed their programming by putting youth in single (rather than shared) rooms, and one provider placed youth in high-end hotels that had vacancies due to the pandemic to keep them safe. Providers felt that these were positive changes, as single rooms provided more privacy and better outcomes for youth struggling with mental health issues, or in substance use recovery, and that nicer and more private surroundings were helpful for youth's self-esteem. This has led to conversations about what it looks like to provide housing services with dignity and respect for privacy that members hope will last beyond the pandemic.

In the longer term, the COVID-19 pandemic may make transitional programs even more essential, as more young people will likely experience homelessness, trauma, and increased economic barriers to self-sufficiency as they transition to adulthood.



FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

HUD is the largest funder of homelessness and housing services in the U.S., with appropriations of more than \$3 billion for homelessness programs in FY21.^[28] In contrast, HHS' Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) was appropriated just \$136 million in FY21 to distribute to its Runaway and Homeless Youth program grantees, and not all of this funding goes to transitional housing programs.^[29] As a result, HUD's prioritizations have an outsized impact on the kind of housing models and services that are available in local communities to address youth homelessness, and who can access those services.^[30]

Approximately ten years ago, HUD's Notice of Funding for Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) began to be structured in ways that incentivized rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing over TH. As family homelessness provider HomeStretch described the impact in Fairfax County, Virginia:

"The shift in HUD funding to rapid rehousing programs was seismic for nonprofit organizations providing homeless services at the local level. Nearly all depended on HUD-sourced funds, with many receiving 60% or more of their total funding from HUD. All of these service providers were required to either adopt rapid rehousing or risk losing HUD-sourced funding. Following the HUD money, emphasis in the field shifted to finding landlords willing to take a risk by renting to referrals from homeless services agencies instead of providing services. Service providers, encouraged by HUD, eliminated case manager positions and hired housing locators instead."^[31]

This disinvestment in transitional programs - a crucial part of the homelessness continuum of services for young people and young families - continues today. Left without sufficient funding to serve young people with the type of housing response that would best meet their needs, transitional programs often must raise private funds or gather state and local government support to provide this programming. Moreover, in some communities, private philanthropy has emulated federal priorities, reducing the overall level of support for transitional programs. No comprehensive estimates are available as to the amount of the supplemental funding available to fill the gaps left by federal disinvestment, but many youth service providers report that current resources are not enough to meet the need for transitional programs that they have identified in their communities. As a result, many young people—and their children—are not able to access the programming that they need to *sustainably* exit homelessness, and are at great risk for continued or repeated homelessness, as well as dependence on public benefits and emergency assistance.

It is important to note that in addition to the barriers created by HUD’s legacy priorities and incentives, HUD’s statutory definition of homelessness, and additional eligibility criteria imposed in the NOFA, can make it nearly impossible to serve youth experiencing homelessness who are “couch-surfing” (staying with others temporarily) or staying in motels. This policy, too, must be revised in order to reflect how young people experience homelessness, and their unique vulnerabilities. For more on this issue, see National Network for Youth’s *Accurately Defining Homelessness: A First Step Towards Ending Youth Homelessness*.^[32]

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people experiencing homelessness have often experienced trauma and victimization. Many come from families who also are homeless, and many have spent significant portions of their adolescence in foster care. All of these experiences may mean that young people enduring homelessness may not have basic independent living skills, or may be struggling with significant behavioral health needs while trying to take care of themselves, often without support from family members or healthy relationships with other adults. For young parents, obtaining and keeping housing while also providing basic necessities for themselves and their children may be particularly difficult. For all of these reasons, emergency shelters, or short-term housing-

only responses may not be enough to meet the needs of young people experiencing homelessness.

In fact, short-term housing-only responses may worsen young people’s situations, especially if they are unable to pay rent after subsidies end and develop bad credit or eviction histories, as well as the trauma associated with repeat experiences of homelessness.

“I strongly believe short term of any resource is not as effective as are the long-term programs because in most cases youth usually need resources that they can rely on for enough time to seek for a firm future plan or become stable and independent without rapid transitions within their life. Short-term options should always be available but more as an alternative option for youth if needed.”

- Member of NN4Y’s National Youth Advisory Council



This report reviewed extensive data that showed the success of transitional programs. Young people participating in Covenant House’s transitional programs in 15 U.S. cities made important strides in achieving self-sufficiency, with 73% exiting the program into stable housing and 69% of youth employed or enrolled in school at exit. Transitional programs from other providers have shown similarly positive results, proving that this service model works for young people experiencing homelessness across a range of circumstances.

Our organizations have extensive experience working directly with young people experiencing homelessness, and the providers and educators who serve them. Our efforts, the data presented in this paper, the experiences of youth service providers, and, most importantly, young people themselves, underscore that many youth experiencing homelessness need more than just emergency shelter or simple housing location services and subsidies.

They need a safe and stable place to stay, combined with the services that will help them develop the skills and credentials they need to support themselves (and their children) for the rest of their lives. To ensure that all young people experiencing homelessness can access what they need to sustainably exit homelessness and avoid chronic adult homelessness, our organizations recommend the following:

CONGRESS, HHS, HUD, STATE AND LOCAL POLICYMAKERS AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES, AND PHILANTHROPY SHOULD:

- Ensure that every community provides service-rich transitional housing program options (in some form) for minors, young adults, and young families experiencing homelessness.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

- Deepen its investments in combatting youth homelessness through increased funding of Transitional Living and Maternity Programs and other Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programming.
- Amend HUD's definition of homelessness so that the "definition" reflects the lived experiences of youth, young adults, and young families, and young people are not required to stay in tenuous, unstable, and often unsafe situations with other people, adult shelters, or the streets before they can access and are prioritized for appropriate services. (Future Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) should also reflect these changes.)^[iii]

HHS/FYSB SHOULD:

- Continue to support its Transitional Living and Maternity Program grantees, and expand these efforts as increased funding allows.

HUD SHOULD:

- Write future NOFAs incentivizing Transitional Housing for youth, young adults, and young families, in accordance with local needs and priorities.
- Assess youth programs for effectiveness using youth-appropriate outcome measures (through its NOFAs).

PHILANTHROPY AND STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- Support programs that will best meet the needs of young people in their local communities, including transitional programs, rather than tying funding to federal priorities.



[iii] For more on this issue, see National Network for Youth. (2019). Accurately Defining Homelessness: A First Step Towards Ending Youth Homelessness. <https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/NN4Y-WP-Homeless-Definitions-2019.pdf>.

SHC, NN4Y, and CHI joined forces to develop this paper and its recommendations because of a shared belief that youth deserve more than just a roof over their heads—they deserve meaningful opportunities to successfully transition to adulthood and achieve their fullest potential. For youth experiencing homelessness on their own, they need more than just four walls and a bed. They need essential services and supports to complete their education, obtain living wage jobs, and learn life skills necessary to sustain themselves and their families over a lifetime.

Recommended Citation: Covenant House International, National Network for Youth, and SchoolHouse Connection (2021). "To Become the Best Version of Myself:" Youth-Supportive Transitional Housing Programs as An Essential Resource for Addressing Youth Homelessness.



ABOUT SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION

SchoolHouse Connection is a national non-profit organization working to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with early childhood programs, schools, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth. We believe education is the only permanent solution to homelessness. Our vision is that children and youth experiencing homelessness have full access to quality learning, birth through higher education, so they will never be homeless as adults, and the next generation will never be homeless.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y) is dedicated to preventing and eradicating youth homelessness in America through partnering with youth and service providers to advance federal policy solutions and community-based transformation. Together, we envision a future in which all young people have a safe place to call home with endless opportunities to achieve their fullest potential. To learn more visit www.nn4youth.org



ABOUT COVENANT HOUSE

Covenant House builds a bridge to hope for young people facing homelessness and survivors of trafficking through unconditional love, absolute respect, and relentless support. Our doors are open 24/7 in 31 cities across six countries and our high-quality programs are designed to empower young people to rise and overcome adversity, today and in the future.

APPENDIX A

VALUE OF TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS: PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES

Many of NN4Y's member organizations provide transitional programs as part of their service offerings, or are familiar with them as part of their community's service array. Members of NN4Y's Policy Advisory Committee, who lead youth homelessness programs across the country, shared the following insights on why transitional programs are essential to have as an option for youth and young adults:

Supportive Environments and Valuable Structure

- For youth under age 18, transitional programs create opportunities to develop skills needed for independent living. They also create an environment in which failure does not create a housing crisis, but an opportunity to learn and/or be mentored.
- For young adults (age 18+) transitional programs provide access to supports needed for success as they transition into young adulthood, specifically around budgeting, higher education, and maintaining employment.

Development of Long-Term Skills Needed for Independence and Self-Sufficiency

- Many young people can benefit from learning extra skills in group settings, such as in a shared housing situation. Learning the long-term skills needed for lifelong independence in group settings allows for valuable peer-to-peer learning and sets young people up to successfully transition to independent living.
- All young people (homeless or not), have transitional needs from a developmental perspective; this means that time-limited services can be particularly effective for transition-age youth as they finish their education and embark on careers.
- Many young people experiencing homelessness don't get to learn life skills (and develop strategies to overcome challenges that could contribute to homelessness) from their parents. Transitional programs can help with everyday living skills (budgeting, how to do laundry, how to prepare a shopping list), as well as developing competencies like dealing with conflicts with an employer, how to talk to a landlord, and how to live successfully with roommates (which young people in high-cost areas may need to do well into adulthood).

As discussed above, "permanent" housing can mean something different for young people than for older adults, since some time-limited living situations (e.g., living in a dorm) are appropriate and healthy for youth in some circumstances.

APPENDIX B

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM EXAMPLE: DAYBREAK'S STORY

A 2016 report from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency shared in-depth outcomes from Daybreak, Inc.'s housing program (Dayton, Ohio), including:

- 97% of young people exited Daybreak for a safe destination, with 53% going to live with family or friends, and 36% renting their own apartment.
- 47% of participants completed the full program before exiting.
- All clients showed increases in an assessment of life skills, with the largest increase in the area of housing and money management.
- 55% of participants were employed at least 20 hours per week when they exited the program, with 50% having increased wages compared to when they entered.
- 48% of participants had increased educational attainment or were enrolled in a higher education program when they exited.
- Young people who stayed in Daybreak housing for 18 months or more were more likely to experience positive outcomes.^[33]

Daybreak's housing programming includes 24 on-site apartments for young people, as well as 30 apartment units in the community which are available for young people who've gotten what they needed from the on-site housing, and/or are more stable (young people can transfer between settings as needed). In both settings, young people must sign a lease and pay rent, but receive subsidies/rental assistance. As residents work to complete their education or improve their employment, they have access to many supportive services, ranging from a 24-hour crisis hotline to child care. Daybreak's services also include transition planning before young people leave the program, and aftercare services participants can access for up to two years.^[34]

Daybreak's outcomes report also noted several barriers that make it difficult to comprehensively address youth homelessness in their community. The prioritizations set by HUD, which guide the local Continuum of Care (which is responsible for referrals to housing), mean that "to qualify for Daybreak's housing or any other HUD-funded homeless housing program, a youth must meet HUD's definition of homelessness, which means living in a shelter, on the streets, or in a place unfit for human habitation."^[35] Daybreak notes that part of the challenge with this prioritization is that "it has been suggested that many youth avoid shelters, particularly adult ones, because they perceive them to be unsafe."^[36]

(This concern is also widely held by NN4Y's National Youth Advisory Council and service provider members, as well as SchoolHouse Connection's network of school district McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons and other educators.) Daybreak is also only able to serve young parents who are single and have only one or two children because of the size of their apartments. Finally, once young people leave Daybreak, the lack of sufficient rental subsidies in their community can be a significant challenge. As Daybreak explains, "[f]or many former residents, the leap from paying no more than 30% of their income on rent to paying market rate can be too big to manage and can put them at risk, once again, of housing instability."^[37]

APPENDIX C

STABLE VS. NON-STABLE HOUSING BREAK-DOWN



U.S. & CANADA (SHORT-TERM AND TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS)

Stable

- College dorm room
- Job corps
- Foster care/foster care group home
- Living/staying with family (long-term)
- Living/staying with friends (long-term)
- Military
- Own house/apartment (no subsidy)
- Own house/apartment (with subsidy)
- Permanent supportive housing (Covenant House)
- Permanent supportive housing (non-Covenant House)
- Rental (no subsidy)
- Rental (with subsidy)
- Safe Haven
- Transitional housing for formerly homeless (Covenant House)
- Transitional housing for formerly homeless (non-Covenant House)



Covenant House defines "short-term" destinations to denote instances where a young person knows they cannot live or stay with a family member or friend for more than six months. "Long-term" destinations reflect instances where a young person either knows they can live or stay with a family member or friend for more than six months or their length of stay is indefinite.

Non-Stable

- Emergency shelter (including hotel/motel paid for with voucher)
- Hospital (non-psychiatric)
- Hotel or motel, paid by youth
- Jail/prison/juvenile detention
- Living/staying with family (short-term)
- Living/staying with friends (short-term)
- Place not meant for human habitation (e.g., street)

Other

- Deceased
- Don't know
- Hospital (psychiatric)
- Other
- Refused to Answer
- Substance abuse treatment/detox center

APPENDIX D

SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION FINDINGS ON YOUNG FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

NEEDS OF YOUNG FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (YFEH)

Primary services:

- Basic needs: Housing, food, clothing
- Education/vocational training
- Quality child care/early childhood education/early intervention
- Parenting education
- Physical health care for parents and children, including prenatal care, needed medications, hygiene products
- (Behavioral health care)
- (Employment assistance)

Secondary/supportive services (allow youth to access the above or contributes to long-term success):

- Transportation
- Case management
- Public benefits
- Legal advocacy
- Respite care

Relationship support:

- Young parent-child
- Between young parents
- Between young parent and their own parents or family

STRENGTHS/RESOURCES OF YFEH

Youth expertise & resilience

Child as positive motivator for young parent

Service providers:

- Family/youth shelters
- Drop-in centers
- Street outreach programs
- Other housing/homelessness programs (e.g., Transitional Housing/Transitional Living Programs, Maternity Group Homes)
- Schools/McKinney-Vento Liaisons
- Institutions of higher education
- Early childhood education/child care programs
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grantees
- Home visiting
- Food banks/WIC
- Health
- Faith-based groups

Existing laws and prioritizations (e.g., Head Start/Early Head Start, WIOA, McKinney-Vento Act education rights, FAFSA)

For more on young families experiencing homelessness, see SchoolHouse Connection's Interrupting Generational Homelessness Among Young Families Through A Two-Generation Approach: Opportunities for Impact, click [here](#).

APPENDIX E

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS: FEDERAL DEFINITIONS AND RULES; OTHER PROGRAM TYPES

Transitional Housing: According to HUD, “Transitional housing (TH) is designed to provide homeless individuals and families with the interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. Transitional housing may be used to cover the costs of up to 24 months of housing with accompanying supportive services. Program participants must have a lease (or sublease) or occupancy agreement in place when residing in transitional housing.”

Transitional Living Program: The Family and Youth Services Bureau of HHS explains that the goal of its Transitional Living Program (TLP) is “to provide a safety net and strong emotional support system for young people to transition into self-sufficiency,” by providing long-term residential services to homeless youth ages 16 to 22. Young people can access TLP for approximately 18 months, but under “exceptional circumstances” may be able to stay for approximately 21 months (or longer if they have not yet turned 18). Under FYSB rules, TLPs must offer long-term residential care (in a group home, host family home, or supervised apartment), coordinated service planning and referrals, and planning and services supporting a young person’s transition to adulthood and independent living (or another safe living arrangement).

Maternity Group Home: The Family and Youth Services Bureau of HHS explains that the goals of its Maternity Group Homes (MGH) are to “promote long-term, economic independence for homeless parenting youth and ensure the well-being of their children. The Maternity Group Home Program supports community-based, adult-supervised, transitional living arrangements for homeless pregnant or parenting young people between the ages of 16 and under 22, as well as their dependent children. Services are provided for up to 21 months or until a young person turns 18 years old if they enter a program at age 16. MGH grantees are required to teach young people parenting skills as well as child development, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills.”

Other Housing Models

Three other common housing models are permanent supportive housing (PSH), rapid re-housing (RRH), and host homes. **PSH** is described by HUD as “permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability.”

RRH: According to RRH, “emphasizes housing search and relocation services and short- and medium-term rental assistance to move homeless persons and families (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into permanent housing.”

Host homes are a more informal way of providing housing that is increasingly being used for youth and young adults, particularly in rural areas and particularly for minors. Though the specifics of this model vary according to program and geography, it generally involves community members opening their homes to youth who need a safe place to live (in some cases, the family and youth may have a prior relationship, in others an agency helps with matching). Host families typically are subject to a background check before youth are placed with them, and may receive a small stipend to cover expenses like food and utilities. Host homes are not intended to be permanent, but may be very short term (e.g., as an emergency solution for a few days or weeks), or can last longer (e.g., a high school junior who may need a home until she graduates from high school in 18 months).

Sources: HUD Exchange (nd) “[Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Program Eligibility Requirements](#).” Family and Youth Services Bureau (2018) “[Transitional Living Program Fact Sheet | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#).” Family and Youth Services Bureau (2020) “[Maternity Group Home Program](#).”

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- [23] Data provided to authors by e-mail dated 10/20/20 from Youthworks.
- [24] Data based on 49 youth served between January and September 2020. Data provided to authors by e-mail dated 10/20/20 from Youthworks.
- [25] Data based on 8 youth served between January 1 and June 30, 2020. Data provided to authors by e-mail dated 10/20/20 from Youthworks.
- [26] Age restrictions refer to age at date of referral.
- [27] Email to authors from Chris Bicknell, New Beginnings (Feb. 14, 2020).

[28] House Committee on Appropriations. (July 2020). *Appropriations Committee Releases Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation-Housing and Urban Development Funding Bill*.

[https://appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/appropriations-committee-releases-fiscal-year-2021-transportation-housing-and#:~:text=Department%20of%20Housing%20and%20Urban%20Development%20\(HUD\)%E2%80%94%20For%20fiscal,the%20President's%202021%20budget%20request.&text=The%20President's%20budget%20request%20proposed%20eliminating%20this%20program.,-%243.2%20billion%20for.](https://appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/appropriations-committee-releases-fiscal-year-2021-transportation-housing-and#:~:text=Department%20of%20Housing%20and%20Urban%20Development%20(HUD)%E2%80%94%20For%20fiscal,the%20President's%202021%20budget%20request.&text=The%20President's%20budget%20request%20proposed%20eliminating%20this%20program.,-%243.2%20billion%20for.)

[29] For an overview of appropriation levels over the past several years see: SchoolHouse Connection. (November 2020). *Senate Releases FY2021 Spending Bills*.

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[30] For FY20, \$113.8 million was allocated for FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (which includes the Transitional Living Program, the Basic Center Program and the Street Outreach Program). In contrast, HUD's FY20 Continuum of Care Program had \$2.5 billion in funding for TH, RRH, PSH, and related services to distribute. (Both HUD and FYSB also received additional homelessness funding through federal pandemic relief packages). HUD. (2021). *FY20 CoC Non-Competitive Notice and Funding Report*. https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/coc/fy20-funding-report Congressional Research Service. (April 2020). *Support for Homeless Youth in the Context of COVID-19: A Brief Overview*.

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