MARYLAND
Governor's Office for Children
Promoting the well-being of Maryland's children

State of Maryland Executive Department

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony Brown
Lieutenant Governor

Anne Sheridan
Executive Director

November 1, 2013

Dear Governor O'Malley:

On behalf of the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Task Force, I am writing to submit to you the SB 764/HB832: Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth report (The Report).

Senate Bill 764/House Bill 823 of the 2013 General Assembly Session required GOC to convene the Task Force to address the following:

1. Compile existing information on and identify the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, and identify the public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs.
2. Identify gaps in public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth.
3. Collect and compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State, including the causes of homelessness in this population and the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each jurisdiction of the State.
4. Make recommendations on:
    a. Legislation and policy initiative to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and
    b. Funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and
    c. Make recommendations on any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the Task Force.

The attached report presents the Task Force's recommendations for action by the Maryland General Assembly and State executive agencies. It is a critical first step toward ensuring that no youth in Maryland become homeless. In order to achieve the goals outlined herein, Maryland's public agencies, community-based organizations, and youth must partner on a sustained basis to implement and expand upon the recommendations.

We recognize that stakeholders bring a wealth of real world knowledge and expertise to the table and wish to acknowledge with appreciation the skill, and

collaborative nature with which the members of the Task Force and workgroups approached their designated tasks. Over the course of the summer, the Task Force and workgroup members shared information and exchanged ideas about the unique needs of the unaccompanied homeless youth population.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (410) 767-6211 if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Anne Sheridan
Executive Director

# Report of the SB764/HB823 Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

**Governor's Office for Children**
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Baltimore, Maryland 21201

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November 1, 2013

### Where are the Unstably Housed Young People?

"Rec centers, and just even parks, sometimes you'll just see people just laying around parks. Soup kitchens. Salvation Army."

"I've seen people sleep in laundry rooms." "Right. Laundry rooms or in the hallway of buildings."

### How should outreach be done to young people?

"Cause you never hear no advertisement over the radio or nothing. Your car radio, nothing. You know what I'm saying. There's big programs people be getting into."

"A Facebook page, use social media, yeah, a lot of people are on Facebook, so you can reach a lot of people on Facebook. Like make a page for young people that are in need and I think you'll get a lot of feedback."

"...the first thing I thought about was school. Like you can go to high schools, people are homeless before they get out of high school."

### On the perception that resources are only available if they get in trouble

"Before I even went to jail I didn't get no food stamps, but when I come out of jail I had food stamps—all types of other stuff."

"I'm not lying. If I didn't ever get locked up I wouldn't have no job right now."

### Needed services

"...if you're young it's like you need more time. You need more time to finish your goals and basically grow into the programs, complete your goals, all that … something that has housing, everything, all that supportive … everything."

"And that's one of the hardest things out here, when if you get yourself in trouble or if you have to sleep in an apartment building over lunch. And you feel like nobody really cares. You need the services that show, 'Yes, we do care. We are going to be here for you. We are going to help you get through this.' That means a lot. That means a lot."

- excerpts from *Housing Instability Among Young People in Prince George's County: A Technical Report to the Department of Social Services.* Nan Marie Astone, Ross Pologe.

November 1, 2013

On behalf of the Governor's Office for Children (GOC) and the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (the "Task Force"), I am pleased to present the Task Force's findings and recommendations on housing and supportive services for unaccompanied homeless youth.

An unaccompanied homeless youth is, for purposes of this Report, an individual between the ages of 14 and 25 years who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The term refers to the highly vulnerable population of young people who are on their own and without a home during a critical period of their psychological, emotional, social, educational, and career development.

Senate Bill 764/House Bill 823 of the 2013 General Assembly Session required GOC to convene the Task Force to address the following:

1. Compile existing information on and identify the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, and identify the public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs.
2. Identify gaps in public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth.
3. Collect and compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State, including the causes of homelessness in this population and the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each jurisdiction of the State.
4. Make recommendations on:
    a. Legislation and policy initiative to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and
    b. Funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and
    c. Make recommendations on any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the Task Force.

I would like to thank each member of the Unaccompanied Homelessness Youth Task Force, their colleagues, and the work group members for their meaningful input, continued support, and the work we do together to benefit all of Maryland's children.

Sincerely,

Anne Sheridan, Executive Director

# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Task Force

In June 2013, GOC convened the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth which was tasked with implementing the requirements of SB764/HB823. The Task Force consisted of:

Edward Reilly, Senator
Maryland Senate

Mary Washington, Delegate
Maryland House of Delegates

Anne Sheridan, Chair
Governor's Office for Children

Elaine Cornick
Department of Housing and Community Development

Pat Flannigan
Department of Juvenile Services

Tim Gilbert
Department of Juvenile Services

Gabrielle Rebecca Lightfoot
Prince George's County Department of Social Services

Ingrid Lofgren
Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative

Trudy McFall
Homes for America

John McGinnis
Maryland State Department of Education

Jenghis Pettit, Youth Representative
Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative

Renee Ensor Pope
Prince George's County Department of Social Services

Al Zachik
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Governor's Office for Children Staff

Patricia E. Arriaza
Gina Colarusso, Summer Intern
Michael Hawkins
Kristine Latham, Summer Intern
Mark Scott
Christina Williams

The Task Force met six times in 2013: June 5; June 19; July 17; August 21; September 11; and September 25.

# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
# Task Force Workgroups

To accomplish the tasks laid out in SB764/HB823, the Task Force established three workgroups. The workgroups included individuals from advocacy organizations, service providers and State agencies:

## Housing

Mary Washington, Co-Chair
Maryland House of Delegates

Patricia E. Arriaza, Co-Chair
Governor's Office for Children

Anne Blackfield
FreeState Legal Project

F. T. Burden
AIRS/EHM

Elaine Cornick
Dept. of Housing and Community Development

Ingrid Lofgren
Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative

Trudy McFall
Homes for America

Renee Ensor Pope
Prince George's County DSS

Deborah Shore
Sasha Bruce Youthwork

Linda Webb
Dept. of Housing and Community Development

Ruth White
National Center for Housing & Child Welfare

Christina Williams
Governor's Office for Children

## Connection & Identification

Ingrid Lofgren, Co-Chair
Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative

Patricia E. Arriaza, Co-Chair
Governor's Office for Children

Pat Flannigan
Department of Juvenile Services

Tim Gilbert
Department of Juvenile Services

Lara Law
Youth Empowered Society

John McGinnis
State Department of Education

Jenghis Pettit
Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative

Ross Pologe, Fellowship of Lights, Inc.
Prince George's County DSS

Steven Schrieber-Stahl
Governor's Office for Children

Luther Thompson
Youth Empowered Society

Christina Williams
Governor's Office for Children

## Supportive Services

Monisha Cherayil, Co-Chair
Public Justice Center

Patricia E. Arriaza, Co-Chair
Governor's Office for Children

Burgundi Allison
City Steps Youth Resource Center

Bonnie Ariano
Department of Human Resources

Ann Marie Foley Binsner
Prince George's County CASA

Gabrielle Rebecca Lightfoot
Prince George's County DSS

Megan Lucy
Advocates for Children and Youth

Larry Owens
MD Foster Youth Resource Center

Ross Pologe, Fellowship of Lights, Inc.
Prince George's County DSS

Edward Reilly
Maryland Senate

Lisa Stambolis
Health Care for the Homeless

Christina Williams
Governor's Office for Children

Al Zachik
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

The Task Force would like to thank the workgroup members for their participation, dedication, and enthusiasm in the development of this report.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## TASK FORCE TO STUDY HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

In Maryland, a state that consistently ranks among the most prosperous in the nation, no young person should be homeless and alone, even for a single night. Yet in recent years the State has seen an increase in the number of "unaccompanied homeless youth," or young people between the ages of 14 and 25 who are homeless and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Maryland State Department of Education data revealed a 75% increase in the number of unaccompanied homeless students Statewide between the 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 school years. Consistent with this trend, the Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health identified 640 unaccompanied homeless youth in Baltimore City in 2011, a 50% increase from 2009. Prince George's County identified 185 unaccompanied homeless youth during its first count in 2011. These statistics raise the question: *Why are there so many unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland and what can we do about it?*

During the 2013 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly established the State's first Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (the "Task Force") in recognition that "these youth are urgently in need of safe, secure, affordable, and stable housing as well as supportive services that will prevent them from becoming permanently homeless and, instead, set them on a path towards self-sufficiency." The Governor's Office for Children chairs and staffs the Task Force. Other appointed members include representatives from the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee of the Maryland Senate, the Appropriations Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), the Department of Education (MSDE), the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative, the Prince George's County Homeless Youth Work Group, and the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition. Between June and October 2013, the Task Force engaged in an intensive process to fulfill its legislative mandate to: 1) collect data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in Maryland, including the number of unaccompanied homeless youth and causes of their homelessness; 2) identify unique needs of this population and gaps in the resources currently available to meet them; and 3) recommend legislation, policy initiatives, and budget priorities to address these needs and gaps.

The Task Force determined that it is unclear how many unaccompanied homeless youth reside in Maryland, particularly because they are a hidden group that has traditionally been undercounted and underserved, but existing data indicate that the population is growing. Contrary to stereotypes that youth often become homeless by choice, the Task Force learned through research and reports from youth and service providers in Maryland that the primary causal factors associated with unaccompanied youth homelessness are family dysfunction and abuse (including rejection due to sexual orientation, gender expression, pregnancy, or disability); exiting the foster care or juvenile justice systems without the skills and resources necessary to live independently; and inability or unwillingness of families to care for older children because of economic hardship. Unaccompanied homeless youth face significant threats to day-to-day survival and long term well-being, including disproportionately high risk of school dropout, physical and mental health problems, suicide, crime victimization, involvement in criminal activity, unsafe sexual activity, unplanned parenthood, and unemployment.

As a result of their age, developmental stage, and traumatic experiences, unaccompanied homeless youth have distinct needs that are not adequately addressed by housing and supportive services designed for adults. Additionally, certain sub-groups of homeless youth have a particular need for targeted interventions, including: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth; youth with disabilities; legal minors (youth under the age of 18); former systems-involved youth; rural youth; undocumented youth; and pregnant or parenting youth. While some youth-specific housing and supportive services currently exist in Maryland, the Task Force

found that these resources are insufficient to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State.

In assessing gaps in the resources currently available to meet the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland, the Task Force identified several focus areas. First, the Task Force recognized the importance of effectively identifying unaccompanied homeless youth, gathering data on their prevalence and characteristics, and connecting them to housing and supportive services. Additionally, the Task Force identified the critical need for a robust and flexible continuum of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing options designed to meet the diverse needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. Finally, the Task Force considered strategies to ensure economic stability and meaningful access to quality education and health care for unaccompanied homeless youth. Through a collaborative and intensive work group process, Task Force members engaged with key stakeholders to develop recommendations for action in each of these key areas.

This Report presents the Task Force's recommendations for action by the Maryland General Assembly and State executive agencies. It is a critical first step toward ensuring that no youth in Maryland becomes homeless. In order to achieve the goals outlined herein, Maryland's public agencies, community-based organizations, and youth must partner on a sustained basis to implement and expand upon the following recommendations.

| VISION I. Identification and Connection: *Public and private entities in Maryland will understand the scope and nature of unaccompanied youth homelessness in our state and will have the capacity to effectively identify homeless youth and connect them to housing and services.* | |
|---|---|
| **Objective 1: Obtain accurate, detailed information on the number, characteristics, and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland** | |
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 1.1: Review current data gathering protocols and assess the feasibility of using a common data standard to collect information about the housing status of all youth participating in government-funded programs | DHR, DHMH, DJS, DLLR, MSDE |
| 1.2: Establish a demonstration project to improve the identification of unaccompanied homeless youth through biennial Point-in-Time homelessness counts required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development | MD General Assembly |
| 1.3: Evaluate adding specific questions about housing status and homelessness to Maryland's version of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which is administered biennially to high school students statewide | DHMH |
| **Objective 2: Expand and coordinate outreach efforts to unaccompanied homeless youth to reunite them with caregivers or connect them with housing and services as quickly as possible** | |
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 2.1: Utilize the Local Access Mechanisms (LAMs) to connect unaccompanied homeless youth to services in their communities | Local Management Boards, GOC |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2.2: Provide technical support, capacity building opportunities, and matching funds for public and non-profit service providers to increase their chances of securing competitive federal funding for new programs serving unaccompanied homeless youth | MD General Assembly, Interagency Council on Homelessness |
| 2.3: Explore the feasibility of an interagency collaboration to develop strategies for using technology to connect unaccompanied homeless youth to resources and services | Interagency Council on Homelessness |
| 2.4: Evaluate and develop training options for law enforcement officers to identify unaccompanied homeless youth and connect them with services | Interagency Council on Homelessness, DPSCS |
| **Objective 3: Minimize the extent to which concerns about mandatory reporting laws and child welfare placement deter unaccompanied homeless youth from accessing services** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 3.1: Assess the extent to which concerns about mandatory reporting and child welfare placement deter unaccompanied homeless youth from accessing services and develop strategies to address this barrier | Interagency Council on Homelessness |
| **Objective 4: Ensure that all unaccompanied homeless youth have access to birth certificates and state-issued identification cards** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 4.1: Reduce fees charged for new and replacement state-issued identification cards for unaccompanied homeless youth | MVA |
| 4.2: Create consumer education materials and conduct outreach to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth are able to effectively and efficiently obtain state-issued identification and birth certificates | MVA, DHMH |
| 4.3: Ensure that youth leaving the foster care or juvenile justice systems have their birth certificate and State-issued identification | DHR, DJS |
| **VISION II. Housing:** *All unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland will have access to a robust and flexible continuum of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing options that appropriately respond to their diverse needs.* | |
| **Objective 1: Ensure that all unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland have access to emergency shelter that is safe, developmentally-appropriate, culturally competent, and trauma-informed** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 1.1: Identify possible sources of local and State funding for emergency shelters and drop-in centers for runaway and homeless youth | MD General Assembly |
| 1.2: Assess the need for State licensure or certification of runaway and homeless youth shelters to move toward establishing minimum standards of excellence | GOC |
| 1.3: Ensure that Maryland family shelters receiving federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding are in compliance with the HEARTH ACT mandate to serve families regardless of the age of children | DHCD, MD General Assembly |

| Objective 2: Support the development of permanent supportive housing for unaccompanied homeless youth | |
|---|---|
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 2.1: Explore the feasibility of establishing a collaborative, multi-agency pilot project to create permanent supportive housing for unaccompanied homeless youth in three Maryland regions | MD General Assembly, DHCD, DHR, DHMH |
| 2.2: Increase appropriation to the Shelter and Transitional Housing Facilities Grant Program | DHCD, MD General Assembly |
| 2.3: Participate in training sessions for developers and property management companies on model homeless youth housing projects throughout the country | DHCD |
| **Objective 3: Increase the number of rental subsidies received by unaccompanied homeless youth** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 3.1: Identify a source of funds to create a State rental assistance program to provide tenant-based and project-based rental assistance grants, comparable to the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program, that would include a set-aside for unaccompanied individuals | MD General Assembly, DHCD |
| 3.2: Evaluate current use of Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers for potential areas of improvement in providing subsidized housing and supportive services to youth leaving the foster care system | DHR, PHAs, DHCD |
| 3.3: Maximize referrals of qualifying homeless youth with disabilities to DHCD for project-based rental assistance through the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Program | DHMH/MDOD |
| **Objective 4: Ensure adequate funding for supportive services in housing** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 4.1: Explore strategies to use Medicaid funding for housing-based supportive services for unaccompanied homeless youth | DHMH |
| **Objective 5: Ensure that mainstream youth-serving agencies consistently assess and respond to housing needs of youth exiting systems of care** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 5.1: Ensure that transition and discharge planning include placement in safe, stable, affordable housing | DHR, DJS, DHMH |

| VISION III. Education: *All unaccompanied homeless youth will have complete access to primary and secondary education, and the opportunity for school stability and success.* | |
|---|---|
| **Objective 1: In collaboration with advocates for unaccompanied homeless youth, establish standards for implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Improvements Act by Local Education Agencies** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 1.1: Adopt and disseminate to the LEA community a written policy governing the education of homeless students, including unaccompanied homeless students, with provisions on identification, school choice, enrollment, services, and dispute resolution | LEAs |
| 1.2: Improve identification of unaccompanied homeless youth within schools | LEAs |
| 1.3: Promote school stability and choice among unaccompanied homeless youth | LEAs |
| 1.4: Ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth can enroll within one day, without the need for multiple visits, even if they are missing documents or are without a parent or guardian | LEAs |
| 1.5: Arrange school transportation for unaccompanied homeless youth within one day of a request by student or caretaker, including through the use of interim transportation services until longer-term services are in place. This transportation should be comparable in timeliness and safety to transportation services provided to other students, and accounts for any unique homelessness-related barriers confronting individual students | LEAs |
| 1.6: Provide unaccompanied homeless youth with services and supports for school success | LEAs |
| 1.7: Provide adequate staffing and training to meet the needs of homeless students, including unaccompanied homeless youth | LEAs |
| 1.8: Prohibit enrolling unaccompanied homeless youth or other homeless students into shelter-based schools, or schools targeted at students awaiting foster care placement, based on their status alone rather than individualized consideration of their best interests | LEAs |
| 1.9: Establish and disseminate a written dispute resolution process which complies with statutory/regulatory requirements, and explicitly covers disputes over homeless status, and ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth receive an explanation of that process | LEAs |
| 1.10: Collect and analyze data on unaccompanied homeless youth in order to assess the needs and measure the success of this population, evaluate the effectiveness of LEA interventions, and comply with state and federal reporting requirements | LEAs |

| Objective 2: Continue to monitor LEAs' compliance with above standards for McKinney-Vento implementation through regular technical support, oversight, and evaluation | |
|---|---|
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 2.1: Permanently fill Statewide McKinney-Vento Coordinator position, and ensure that Coordinator has sufficient time and capacity to oversee implementation of McKinney-Vento and related law | MSDE |
| 2.2: Develop Statewide guidance and training materials for LEAs on McKinney-Vento implementation | MSDE |
| 2.3: Facilitate development of MOUs between LEAs to ensure fair division of costs for inter-district transportation of unaccompanied homeless youth and other homeless students | MSDE |
| 2.4: Structure annual monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that LEAs are implementing best practice standards in their identification of, enrollment of, and provision of supports to unaccompanied homeless youth consistent with McKinney-Vento | MSDE |
| 2.5: Establish comparable procedures and standards for monitoring LEAs receiving McKinney-Vento sub-grants, and LEAs without subgrants | MSDE |
| 2.6: Incorporate McKinney-Vento monitoring into Title I monitoring process, requiring LEAs to comply with McKinney-Vento to be eligible for either Title I or McKinney-Vento sub-grants | MSDE |
| 2.7: Target LEAs reporting very low numbers of unaccompanied homeless youth, or homeless students generally, for intensive monitoring and support | MSDE |
| VISION IV. Higher Education: *Unaccompanied homeless youth will have the opportunity to access and succeed in higher education without financial barriers.* | |
| Objective 1: Mitigate the financial barriers preventing unaccompanied homeless youth from pursuing higher education | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 1.1: Assess the feasibility of extending the existing tuition waiver for former foster youth to all unaccompanied homeless youth, as verified under the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, and develop strategies for maximizing financial aid opportunities for this population | MD General Assembly, MHEC, USM |
| 1.2: Develop procedures for informing unaccompanied homeless youth in school of their eligibility for AP test, SAT/ACT and college application fee waivers | MSDE, MHEC |
| 1.3: Regularly train financial aid administrators on the independent status of unaccompanied homeless youth under the College Cost Reduction and Access Act | MHEC |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.4: Conduct outreach to inform unaccompanied homeless youth and transitioning/former foster youth of their ability to file FAFSA as independents and their right to appeal the financial aid administrator's determination of their dependency status | MSDE, DHR |
| 1.5: Ensure higher education institutions prioritize unaccompanied homeless youth for work-study, campus grants, scholarships, fee waivers and other forms of financial assistance | MHEC |
| **Objective 2: Ensure access to safe, stable and affordable year-round housing for unaccompanied homeless youth pursuing higher education** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 2.1: Ensure higher education institutions prioritize on-campus housing and ensure year-round, on- or off-campus housing opportunities for unaccompanied homeless youth and former foster youth | MHEC |
| 1.2: Encourage higher education institutions to recruit host families for the holidays and summers | MHEC |
| 2.3: Ensure higher education institutions waive parental consent/ signatures/co-signers for unaccompanied homeless youth applying for campus housing | |
| **Objective 3: Help unaccompanied homeless youth develop strong support networks that ensure academic and life-long success** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 3.1: Encourage higher education institutions to connect unaccompanied homeless youth with existing support and mentoring programs on campus | MHEC |
| 3.2: Encourage higher education institutions to appoint liaisons for homeless students and publish a directory of liaison contacts that is updated yearly | MHEC |
| **VISION V. Economic Stability:** *All unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland will have adequate economic stability to obtain stable, permanent housing and meet other basic needs.* | |
| **Objective 1: Ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth and youth exiting foster care are able to successfully access and maintain public benefits** | |
| **Action** | **Entities Involved** |
| 1.1: Assess the training needs of local departments of social services regarding the application of public benefits program rules to unaccompanied homeless youth and develop training, policy guidance, and consumer education materials as appropriate | DHR |
| 1.2: Encourage community-based organizations seeking to join Maryland's Food Supplement Program State Outreach Plan to explicitly target unaccompanied homeless youth | DHR |
| 1.3: Assess and improve access to public benefits for youth exiting child welfare, juvenile justice, and other institutional placements | DHR, DJS, DHMH |

| Objective 2: Improve job training and employment opportunities for unaccompanied homeless youth | |
|---|---|
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 2.1: Assist youth who are homeless in accessing job opportunities by increasing collaboration among Workforce Investment Act-funded programs, DLLR, and homeless services providers | DLLR |
| **Objective 3: Ensure that all unaccompanied homeless youth have the knowledge and skills to budget their financial resources, protect their credit history, and guard against identity theft** | |
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 3.1: In collaboration with financial education organizations, such as the Maryland CASH Campaign, develop a strategy for supporting unaccompanied homeless youth in achieving financial stability and independence | MSDE, DHR, DJS, DLLR |
| **VISION VI. Health:** *All unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland will have low-barrier access to comprehensive health care.* | |
| **Objective 1: Ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth under age 18 can apply for Medical Assistance without the need for participation by a parent or legal guardian** | |
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 1.1: Enact legislation to enable unaccompanied homeless minors to apply for Medicaid benefits on their own, *i.e.*, without the signature of a parent, legal guardian, or authorized representative, if they choose | MD General Assembly |
| 1.2: Clarify how an individual or organization can become an authorized representative under new federal regulations and create forms for designating such a representative | DHMH |
| **Objective 2: Conduct outreach and education to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth are aware of their rights and opportunities for access to healthcare** | |
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 2.1: Create consumer and provider education materials that explain the rights of unaccompanied homeless minors with regard to applying for Medicaid benefits and changing one's primary care provider under Medicaid | DHMH |
| 2.2: Create consumer and provider education materials explaining the rights of unaccompanied minors with regard to accessing their medical records and confidentiality of those records | DHMH, Office of the Attorney General Health Education and Advocacy Unit |
| 2.3: Conduct youth-targeted outreach to identify and enroll in Medical Assistance unaccompanied homeless youth who are newly eligible for coverage under changes resulting from the Affordable Care Act | DHMH/Maryland Health Benefit Exchange |

| Objective 3: Increase availability of youth-targeted mental health services, including substance abuse counseling | |
|---|---|
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 3.1: Encourage Maryland PATH program grant recipients and applicants to develop strategies to engage and serve unaccompanied homeless youth | DHMH |
| 3.2: Develop strategies to increase the availability of youth-specific mainstream mental health and substance abuse services, and to engage unaccompanied homeless youth in these services | DHMH |
| VISION VII. Leadership: *Through the ongoing strategic leadership of State agencies and their partners, no youth will be alone and without a home in Maryland.* | |
| Objective: Establish structures to enable government agencies, service providers, and youth to collaboratively develop policies to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and prevent youth homelessness | |
| Action | Entities Involved |
| 1.1: Continue the term of the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth for a time-limited period to facilitate the discussion and implementation of the Task Force's recommendations | MD General Assembly |
| 1.2: Reconvene, and consider combining, the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness to facilitate the development to end homelessness across the state, including among youth | GOC, DHR, MSDE, DJS, DHMH, DHCD, and non-government partners |

## WHO ARE UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH?

An unaccompanied homeless youth is, for purposes of this Report, an individual between the ages of 14 and 25 years who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The term refers to the highly vulnerable population of young people who are on their own and without a home during a critical period of their psychological, emotional, social, educational, and career development.

It is not clear how many unaccompanied homeless youth reside in Maryland, in large part because these youth frequently go unidentified or unserved, but there is reason to believe that the population is significant and growing. In 2011, the Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health identified 640 unaccompanied homeless youth in Baltimore City (203 of which were 14-18 years old), a 33% increase from the 426 identified in 2009.[1] Similarly, Prince George's County identified 185 unaccompanied homeless youth in 2012, 28% of who were under 18.[2] Unaccompanied youth homelessness is not only a local problem, however. School systems across the state identified more than 14,691 homeless students in their schools during the 2011-12 school year, up from approximately 13,000 only two years earlier, and virtually all reported that a portion of these homeless students were unaccompanied.[3] Nationally, it is estimated that 8% of youth between ages 13 and 21, approximately 1.6-1.7 million youth across the nation, experience homelessness over the course of a given year.[4]

Unaccompanied homeless youth face profound threats to their day-to-day survival and well-being. Compared to their peers, these youth are at disproportionately high risk of: school dropout; mental and physical health problems (including substance abuse, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and HIV infection, with little-to-no-access to health care); suicide; crime victimization, including homicide, assault, rape, and trafficking; involvement in crime and incarceration; unsafe sexual behavior, including submission to sexual exploitation; unplanned pregnancy; and, unemployment. Not only do the youth themselves suffer when confronted with these hardships, but the State at large bears the costs associated with fighting crime, reducing poverty, and foregoing the talents of young people who are not able to realize their full potential. Unaccompanied homeless youth, if they do not receive the proper supports, are also at risk of becoming chronically homeless adults, who cost the State approximately $40,000 per person per year in public resources.[5]

The vast majority of unaccompanied homeless youth do not become homeless by choice. Many factors contribute to youth homelessness, but studies indicate that the following are the primary causal factors:

- Family dysfunction and abuse: Most unaccompanied homeless youth become homeless as a result of family dysfunction and/or abuse in the home. Studies have found that 21-40% of homeless youth were sexually abused and 40-60% were physically abused prior to running away.[6] Unaccompanied homeless youth commonly experience family violence; heightened family conflict; death or incarceration of a parent or caretaker; and/or parental neglect due to poverty, substance abuse, or other mental illness. Additionally, many unaccompanied homeless youth have been rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, mental illness, and/or pregnancy.

- Aging out of the foster care system: Youth who have aged out of the foster care system without the skills and resources to support themselves sometimes become unaccompanied homeless youth. Studies estimate that 12-36% of youth ages 18 or 21 exiting the foster care system in the United States become homeless.[7]

- Exiting the juvenile justice system: Nationally, approximately 100,000 young people exit the formal custody of juvenile justice systems each year.[8] Many become homeless because they lack the skills and economic opportunity to become self-sufficient, lack family and community support systems, and face barriers to employment and re-enrollment in school.

- Economic hardship: Families may be unable to fully support themselves and their children when they are facing economic hardship due to joblessness; lack of education/skills; the rising cost of basic necessities, including sustainable and affordable housing; and the depressed economic climate. Many youth are forced to seek shelter on their own when their families are unable to support them.[9]

Within the broad population of unaccompanied homeless youth are several sub-groups that experience unique challenges that may need to be addressed through targeted services. These include:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning youth: Studies estimate that 20-40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.[10] LGBTQ youth are at increased risk of running away from or being kicked out of their homes and, as a result, are more likely than their peers to become homeless. Many are also at high risk of attempting suicide; suffering from depression; using illegal drugs; engaging in unprotected sexual behavior; bullying; and discrimination from service providers, including police, foster care agencies, and schools, as well as their peers.

- Youth with disabilities: Unaccompanied homeless youth with disabilities are at higher risk of becoming chronically homeless than their non-disabled peers; therefore, they need opportunities to obtain permanent supportive housing (housing with long-term financial and services support). To effectively serve unaccompanied homeless youth with disabilities, programs must have particularly low barriers to entry and avoid rules that could exclude youth because of their physical, mental, emotional, or developmental challenges.[11]

- Legal minors (youth under 18): In addition to being generally less mature and less skilled than older homeless youth, unaccompanied homeless minors face barriers to accessing services and records and making decisions for themselves based purely upon the legal limitations attached to their age. For instance, many subsidized housing programs are available to adults only and private landlords are often unwilling to contract with minors without the involvement of parents or legal guardians.

- Former systems-involved youth: Housing instability during a systems-involved youth's transition to adulthood and/or the outside community is particularly detrimental, increasing the likelihood that he/she will experience negative outcomes and compromising his/her ability to become self-sufficient. Well before emancipation, systems-involved youth require a range of services to support their transition to self-sufficiency.

- Non-systems involved youth over 18: Older homeless youth who have not previously been involved with the child-serving system may not be aware of services available to them through public agencies or may be reticent to reach out for help. Identification and focused outreach to this population is crucial to ensure that they are seeking housing, medical, educational, and supportive services that may assist them in achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency.

- Pregnant and parenting youth: Approximately one third of unaccompanied female youth have been pregnant, either before or after becoming homeless.[12] Unfortunately, homeless young parents often have difficulty accessing temporary income assistance and other services, and are likely to be relatively uninformed about health, sexual safety, and child-rearing. As a result, the children of these parents are at a high risk of being removed and placed into foster care. Furthermore, these parents tend to remain in poverty because

many drop out of school in order to work for basic necessities or to qualify for income assistance, thereby decreasing their chances of obtaining high-paying employment.[13] Lack of affordable childcare presents another barrier to employment.

- Rural youth: Unaccompanied homeless youth in rural communities tend to be less visible than their urban counterparts because such youth are more likely to "couch-surf" with relatives and friends than to live in public locations. Rural communities also face low or dwindling employment opportunities and scarce resources to meet community needs. The invisibility of rural youth homelessness and lack of rural housing facilities, public transportation, and safe places for youth pose significant barriers to providing adequate services for this sub-population.[14]

- Undocumented youth: Undocumented unaccompanied homeless youth include youth who come to the United States with family but are separated from their families after entering the country, as well as youth who come to the United States from another country without a parent or legal guardian. Some of these youth are involved in immigration proceedings, and many are fleeing human rights abuses, trafficking, persecution, poverty, and/or natural disasters. Language barriers and undocumented immigration status pose barriers for these youth in acquiring employment, obtaining affordable housing, and seeking services.[15]

The myriad harmful consequences and costs associated with unaccompanied youth homelessness have compelled states such as Maryland to devise strategies aimed at addressing this problem.

## The Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

During the 2013 legislative session, Maryland's General Assembly established for the first time a Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (the "Task Force") in order to gather information about this vulnerable yet relatively unknown population and make recommendations about how public and private systems of care could better address its needs. The General Assembly set forth the following responsibilities for the Task Force:

1. compile existing information on and identify the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and identify the public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs;
2. identify gaps in public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth;
3. collect and compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in Maryland, including the causes of unaccompanied youth homelessness and the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each jurisdiction of the state; and
4. make recommendations on:

a. legislation and policy initiatives to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland,
b. funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Maryland, and
c. any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the Task Force.

The Governor's Office for Children chairs and staffs the Task Force. Appointed members also include representatives from the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee of the Maryland Senate, the Appropriations Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates, the Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), the Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition, the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative, and the Prince George's County Homeless Youth Work Group. Of note, the representatives from the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative and the Prince George's County Homeless Youth Work Group include two service providers from the Homeless Persons Representation Project and the Prince George's County Department of Social Services who work with unaccompanied homeless youth and two young adults who have experienced homelessness personally. The term of the Task Force is June 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

To develop the findings and recommendations set forth in this Report, Task Force members divided into three work groups: 1) Identification and Connection, which investigated how to identify unaccompanied homeless youth, collect data on their numbers and characteristics, and link them with housing and supportive services; 2) Housing, which studied strategies to meet these youths' needs for emergency shelter and permanent housing; and 3) Supportive Services, which explored how to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth have full access to education, healthcare, and economic stability. In addition to Task Force members, these work groups included experts and stakeholders from youth-serving organizations, including the Public Justice Center, Health Care for the Homeless, AIRS, and Advocates for Children and Youth. Between June and October 2013, the Identification and Connection, Housing, and Supportive Services work groups researched and analyzed challenges, policies, and practices within the State, as well as effective strategies employed by other states. Each work group presented recommendations to the broader Task Force for discussion, guidance, and approval. This Report is the final product of that intensive process. It is a critical tool – the first of its kind in Maryland – to improve the identification and provision of housing and supportive services to our population of unaccompanied homeless youth.

## Principles for Interpreting and Implementing the Task Force Recommendations

This Report sets forth a number of visions, objectives, and concrete action steps for better identifying and serving unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland. In understanding and implementing these recommendations, government agencies and community stakeholders should take care to apply the following broad, research-based principles for serving vulnerable youth:

- Youth leadership: As experts on their own lives, youth must be partners in the decision making process. In working to improve the lives of unaccompanied homeless youth, policymakers and service providers must actively and regularly solicit input from those youth and use that input to guide their practice.

- Positive youth development: Strategies for providing services to youth should enhance the abilities of the youth themselves. Thus, in engaging youth in decision-making processes, as described above, policymakers and service providers should purposefully help them to develop competence (intellectual, behavioral, and social skills), connections (positive bonds with people and institutions), character, confidence, and healthy adult relationships.[16]

- Trauma-informed care: Services must be appropriate for youth who have experienced abuse in their homes and/or trauma on the streets, given the common experiences of unaccompanied homeless youth. Emphasis should be placed upon establishing emotional and physical safety, reinforcing personal strengths, and finding opportunities to regain a sense of control and empowerment while taking care to not add further

trauma as youth navigate through the various systems.

- Developmentally appropriate services: Services must be youth-specific and incorporate recent advances in adolescent brain development research because the needs of youth are different from those of adults. Youth-specific services are sensitive to the unique vulnerabilities, challenges, and opportunities attendant with the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development of youth.

- Non-judgmental approach: Service providers should accept youth as they are and avoid being judgmental. All youth should be valued, regardless of the behaviors they exhibit, and service providers should facilitate healthy behavior changes. Any positive change made by a youth should be celebrated because positive changes are expected to occur in an incremental fashion.

- Explicit focus on meeting the needs of sub-populations: Programs should be designed to meet the needs of key subpopulations (identified above), which experience unique harms, barriers, and vulnerabilities.

Perhaps most critical of all is a focus on *prevention* of homelessness among youth. Most of the recommendations in this Report are directed towards meeting the needs of youth after they lose their housing and parental support because these youth are extraordinarily vulnerable and in need of immediate support. However, policymakers and service providers can most effectively minimize the harms associated with unaccompanied youth homelessness by developing and implementing strategies to prevent youth from becoming homeless in the first place, including in particular family support. It is the vision of the Task Force that through prevention and remedial efforts, eventually no young person will be alone and without a home.

## Note on State Agency Roles

Wherever possible, agencies that could play an integral role in the implementation of the Objectives and Actions are identified within The Report. These agencies may already have policies and practices focusing on preventing youth homelessness and strengthening a youth's self-sufficiency or, through the implementation of new policies and protocols, could affect the changes necessary to address the problem of youth homelessness. None of the recommendations are meant to supersede or conflict with an agency's legislatively mandated requirements. However, the scope of the problem is such that Maryland as a whole should seek to improve its service delivery system to meet the real, day to day needs of this vulnerable population.

## Challenges to Consider

The following factors should be taken into consideration when implementing the Objectives and Actions outlined in The Report:

Serving transition-aged unaccompanied homeless youth: In developing a definition and a service delivery system that addresses the needs of Maryland's homeless youth population, consideration must be given to the challenges that exist in the transition into adulthood. That transition can be a slow process. More and more, milestones that can be used to define adulthood - completing school, attaining stable income, moving out of a parent's home - are happening in later stages of life. Many young people continue to receive financial and emotional support from their parents and family members long after their 18th birthday.[17] Even with those supports in place, young people can struggle with obtaining the skills necessary to make the successful transition into adulthood. For youth who do not benefit from stable home environments, and family and social supports, reaching these milestones and attaining these skills may prove to be even more difficult.

There are unique challenges inherent in serving transition age youth experiencing homelessness. They are too old to receive services through the child-serving agencies but often not fully equipped to live on their own or not comfortable accessing adult services. As the work on expanding and strengthening service delivery to the homeless youth population continues, it must be acknowledged that the term "unaccompanied homeless youth" does not neatly align with the way child-serving agencies deliver services. Youth under the age of 18 who are in the custody of a State agency are not technically "unaccompanied." Additionally, youth over the age of 18 are no longer considered minors under the law and the child-serving agencies do not refer to them as "unaccompanied." In creating a system that addresses the full spectrum of needs for this population, the State must look beyond the child-serving system to other State agencies and community partners to address the needs of non-systems involved older youth who could benefit from an array of services and supports that would help meet their basic needs. Meeting those basic needs would allow homeless youth to focus on acquiring the skills, education, and training necessary to exit from homelessness and thrive on their own.

Understanding the scope of the problem: It is not clear how many unaccompanied homeless youth reside in Maryland, or the full extent of their experiences and needs. What is clear, however, is that better data on the characteristics of the homeless youth population and its sub-populations is needed in order for Maryland agencies and service providers to be able to understand the potential financial ramifications of implementing some of the recommended Actions. A good understanding of the scope will also be necessary to effectively target limited State resources, draw down federal funding, and measure changes in the size and composition of the population over time.

# 01 IDENTIFICATION AND CONNECTION

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VISION: Public and private entities in Maryland will understand the scope and nature of unaccompanied youth homelessness in our State and will have the capacity to effectively identify homeless youth and connect them to housing and services.

Homeless youth are a hidden population that has historically been undercounted for both methodological and pragmatic reasons in efforts to enumerate the homeless population at the local, State, and national levels. Estimates of the prevalence of youth homelessness are generally not comparable because they are based upon different age ranges, definitions of homelessness, and search strategies. Additionally, shelter counts and other approaches commonly used to count homeless adults do not effectively identify youth, who are often transient, avoid adult shelters, and are disconnected from formal systems such as the child welfare, juvenile justice, or mental health systems. Unaccompanied homeless youth may attempt to avoid detection for a number of reasons, including mistrust of police and other authority figures, fear of being taken advantage of or being placed into foster care, wariness of the stigma of homelessness, or fear of getting in trouble for engaging in illicit activities as a means of survival or coping, such as trading sex for food or a place to stay, prostitution, or drug use.

Reliable data on the prevalence and characteristics of homeless youth in Maryland is lacking, although existing data suggest that youth homelessness is a growing problem in the state. Currently available data about unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland reveal the following:

- MSDE McKinney-Vento Data: The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) collects data about homeless students in satisfaction of reporting requirements under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Education Improvement Act. MSDE reported that local school systems in Maryland identified more than 14,691 homeless students during the 2011-12 school year, up from approximately 13,000 only two years earlier. Virtually all local school systems reported that a portion of these homeless students were unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. Baltimore County identified the largest number of unaccompanied homeless youth at 251, Anne Arundel County identified 149, Baltimore City identified 125, and Wicomico County identified 92. The data reflects all unaccompanied homeless students, not just those that fall within the age range discussed in this Report.

  The McKinney-Vento data pertains to all children and youth in school so they do not account for the significant number of youth who have dropped out, or those who have graduated or who are older than school age.

- Baltimore City Homeless and Unstably Housed Young People Data: In 2011, the Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health conducted a parallel count on the same day as the Baltimore City Point-in-Time Count. The parallel count identified 640 unaccompanied homeless youth in Baltimore (203 of which were 14-18 years old), a 33% increase from the 426 identified in 2009.[18]

- Prince George's County Point-in-Time Count Data: In its first point-in-time count of homeless youth in 2011, Prince George's County identified 185 unaccompanied homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 25, 28% of who were under 18. In its 2012 count, Prince George's County identified 149 homeless youth between the ages of 14 and 24, 22% of whom were under 18. Prince George's County used a survey tool to gather demographic information as part of its count methodology, in addition to conducting focus groups with youth. In 2012, youth identifying as LGBTQ accounted for 19% of respondents, confirming that, consistent

with national studies, LGBTQ youth are overrepresented among the homeless population in Maryland. Additionally, results indicated that 35% of youth identified housing as their greatest need, 33% identified employment, and 28% identified money/public benefits.

In recent years, a clear recognition has emerged that homeless youth are a distinct group with unique needs. Obtaining accurate, detailed information on the prevalence, characteristics, and needs of this population in Maryland is a critical first step in developing an appropriate continuum of care and infrastructure of supports that will prevent or end their homelessness. Additionally, better data on the characteristics of the homeless youth population and its sub-populations (e.g., LGBTQ youth, pregnant and parenting youth, youth with disabilities, and former systems-involved youth) will help Maryland agencies and service providers effectively target limited State resources, draw down federal funding, and measure changes in the size and composition of the population over time. DHR's collaboration with the United Way of Central Maryland, DHCD, and DHMH to convene the State's 16 Continuums of Care (CoC) in order to further develop the Homeless Management Information System and discuss data sharing between CoCs is an important step towards understanding the number of homeless youth in Maryland.

In addition to the importance of counting unaccompanied homeless youth, it is critical to identify these young people in order to connect them to services. Effective programs are proactive about finding homeless youth through multiple channels on the streets, in schools, through government agencies, and through innovative use of technology. Outreach is a critical tool for building relationships with homeless youth, particularly because they are often afraid to look for assistance or unaware of services available to them. Recognizing that some homeless youth may not be ready or willing to enter long-term housing or service programs, outreach staff and drop-in centers can address immediate needs while encouraging them to eventually utilize services and exit homelessness. In addition to supporting and engaging in outreach to unaccompanied homeless youth, Maryland should develop strategies to eliminate barriers to youth accessing services. These barriers include lack of access to State-issued identification cards and vital records, and fears related to mandatory reporting requirements and child welfare placement.

## OBJECTIVE 1: OBTAIN ACCURATE, DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE NUMBER, CHARACTERISTICS, AND NEEDS OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH IN MARYLAND

### Action 1.1: Review current data gathering protocols and assess the feasibility of using a common data standard to collect information about the housing status of all youth participating in government-funded programs (DHR, DHMH, DJS, DLLR, MSDE, DPSCS)

A number of Maryland agencies interact with youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 25, presenting a promising opportunity to track the housing status of this age group statewide. Some of these agencies already inquire about the housing status of the youth they serve. For instance, DJS, through its MCASP Risk Screen, makes housing and unaccompanied-youth-related inquiries as part of the field intake interview for applicable offenses and uses responses to drive individualized treatment service planning for adjudicated youth placed on probation or aftercare supervision. Additionally, DLLR collects data on youth enrolled in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs in which homelessness is an identified barrier; however, obtaining an accurate count is challenging because youth must self-identify as homeless and they do not always do so. Another limitation is that youth data in the DLLR tracking system for those not enrolled in WIA would not indicate housing status.

However, no common data standard or survey tool currently is used to gather this type of information across agencies. State agencies, including MSDE, DHR, DHMH, DJS, the Departments of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and DLLR, should establish a uniform set of questions to track housing status, collect this information on the populations they are mandated to serve to the extent permitted by law, and make publicly available aggregate data with no individual identifiers. Baltimore City and Prince George's County have used qualitative survey tools that may serve as models for this process.

### Action 1.2: Establish a demonstration project to improve the identification of unaccompanied homeless youth through biennial Point-in-Time homelessness counts required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (MD General Assembly)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires local communities receiving federal funds for homelessness programming to conduct a biennial Point-In-Time (PIT) count of their unsheltered homeless populations. In 2013, HUD required for the first time that communities report the number of homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 24, in addition to the number of unaccompanied homeless minors. In its *rame or to n Youth Homelessness*, published in February 2013, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) articulated a data strategy to strengthen and coordinate the capacity of federal, State, and local systems to act effectively and efficiently toward ending youth homelessness. The first step of USICH's data strategy is to develop better methods for counting youth in PIT counts.

To address this goal, a federal interagency youth homelessness work group made up of staff from HUD, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Education (ED), and USICH launched Youth Count!, a nine-site initiative to develop promising strategies for counting unaccompanied homeless youth in conjunction with local PIT counts. The Urban Institute has identified a number of promising practices from the Youth Count! initiative, including: involving youth in survey design and outreach; engaging youth service providers and LGBTQ partners; holding magnet events, using social media to do outreach and raise awareness; measuring housing instability rather than literal homelessness; developing and refining a uniform survey tool; engaging schools; and adding a post-count debrief to improve future counts. Maryland should develop a demonstration project to incorporate these promising practices and other creative strategies into PIT counts in the State. Improving these counts presents the best opportunity for capturing information on the numbers and characteristics of homeless youth.

### Action 1.3: Evaluate adding specific questions about housing status and homelessness to Maryland's version of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which is administered biennially to high school students Statewide (DHMH)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is administered by states to gather data on risk behaviors among high school students. Adding questions about housing stability to Maryland's YRBS could significantly improve the State's knowledge and understanding of unaccompanied youth homelessness, as has been the case in other states that have taken this measure. Massachusetts began tracking housing status through its YRBS in 2005 with the addition of a single question: *hat is your primary nighttime resi ence* In 2009, the City of Philadelphia began tracking housing status through its YRBS with the addition of three questions: *here o you typically sleep at night During the past ays i you live a ay from your parents because you ere ic e out ran a ay ere aban one or remove from your parents Have you ever consi ere yourself to be homeless* Massachusetts reports that data collected through the YRBS revealed that, despite significant efforts to identify homeless students, many had gone undetected by their schools.

In Philadelphia, the responses of more than 42,000 students in 2011 indicated that as many as 8% of students had experienced housing instability or homelessness and, when analyzed against the other risk behaviors captured in the survey, provided a broader and deeper understanding of the circumstances faced by these students.

## OBJECTIVE 2: EXPAND AND COORDINATE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH TO REUNITE THEM WITH CAREGIVERS OR CONNECT THEM WITH HOUSING AND SERVICES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

### Action 2.1: Utilize the Local Access Mechanisms (LAMs) to connect unaccompanied homeless youth to services in their communities (Local Management Boards, GOC)

Governments and community-based providers use "service navigators" to connect vulnerable individuals to services and resources that meet their unique needs in order to prevent or minimize negative outcomes. In almost all Maryland jurisdictions, LAMs operate through Local Management Boards to provide information, referral, screening, and assessment services to families of children with unaddressed behavioral, educational, developmental, and/or mental health needs. Some LAMs also offer "family navigators" and/or "system navigators" who connect families to service providers, develop individualized action plans, advocate on a family's behalf, and/or provide education and training. Given the significant barriers unaccompanied homeless youth face in accessing services that meet their unique needs, the LAMs should provide specialized service navigation and/or referral services for this population.

### Action 2.2: Provide technical support, capacity building opportunities, and matching funds for public and non-profit service providers to increase their chances of securing competitive federal funding for new programs serving unaccompanied homeless youth (MD General Assembly, Interagency Council on Homelessness)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) provides grant funding through the Basic Center Program (BCP) and Street Outreach Program (SOP) to public and private organizations around the country to help runaway and homeless youth get off the streets. BCP funding is a state competition with funding based upon a formula for populations under age 18. With four programs now operating in the State, Maryland has fully utilized BCP funds. In FY 2012, FYSB awarded SOP grants for a total of $16.3 million to 138 programs through a nationally competitive grant process. To the knowledge of the Task Force, numerous Maryland organizations have applied for SOP funding, but none have received awards. Funding opportunities may also be available via the Emergency Solutions Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and Supportive Housing Program funding. Maryland cannot afford to forego these significant sources of federal funding. The need to access SOP funding is particularly urgent given that street outreach services are critical to ending unaccompanied youth homelessness in the State.

### Action 2.3: Explore the feasibility of an interagency collaboration to develop strategies for using technology to connect unaccompanied homeless youth to resources and services (Interagency Council on Homelessness)

Research shows that homeless youth use web-based and mobile technologies to stay in contact with friends, family, service providers, and current or potential employers. This presents an important opportunity to connect with a traditionally hard-to-reach population through the innovative use of technology. Maryland State agencies should evaluate the extent to which they could market or tailor current resources to better serve homeless youth

and should assess the feasibility of using new modes of communication to reach this population. This strategy might include use of mobile phone applications, text messaging programs, social media, and web-based resource guides to connect youth with information, resources, and services. Youth should be involved at every stage of this process where possible.

### Action 2.4: Evaluate and develop training options for law enforcement officers to identify unaccompanied homeless youth and connect them with services (Interagency Council on Homelessness, DPSCS)

Police departments can develop protocol to guide officers' interactions with homeless youth. The interactions should be designed to keep homeless youth out of the juvenile and criminal justice systems when possible and to connect the youth to available services. Tools available to law enforcement could include: training on how to effectively identify and communicate with homeless youth; a pocket-guide to local resources (health services, food pantries, shelters, etc.); and/or a supply of basic hygiene kits or other essentials that can be readily distributed. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) should take the lead in developing such protocol Statewide and encouraging local law enforcement agencies to follow suit.

## OBJECTIVE 3: MINIMIZE THE EXTENT TO WHICH CONCERNS ABOUT MANDATORY REPORTING LAWS AND CHILD WELFARE PLACEMENT DETER UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH FROM ACCESSING SERVICES

### Action 3.1: Assess the extent to which concerns about mandatory reporting and child welfare placement deter unaccompanied homeless youth from accessing services and develop strategies to address this barrier (Interagency Council on Homelessness)

According to anecdotal accounts from homeless youth and service providers in Maryland, young people experiencing homelessness are often reluctant to identify themselves or seek help from service providers because they fear that their parents will get in trouble and/or they will be placed in foster care. Maryland's mandatory reporting laws require health practitioners, police, educators, and human service workers to report any suspected child abuse or neglect, which includes "the leaving of a child unattended or other failure to give proper care or attention." However, Maryland's Criminal Law specifies that "neglect does not include the failure to provide necessary assistance and resources…when the failure is due solely to a lack of financial resources or homelessness." Thus, under current law, the status of being an unaccompanied homeless minor may or may not give rise to mandatory reporting requirements. This may lead to confusion and inconsistency with regard to how and when unaccompanied homeless youth are reported across the State. Although the Task Force believes strongly in the need for clear and robust mandatory reporting requirements, there is a need for broad Statewide outreach to agencies and organizations that interact with the homeless youth population to clarify any confusion that may exist around mandatory requirements and how they impact homeless youth. Efforts to address this issue should include youth engagement and outreach strategies which help to establish a sense of trust in youth seeking assistance. DHR has a youth engagement model that includes strategies that could be beneficial in this effort.

## OBJECTIVE 4: ENSURE THAT ALL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH HAVE ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND STATE-ISSUED IDENTIFICATIONS CARDS

### Action 4.1: Reduce fees charged for new and replacement State-issued identification cards for unaccompanied homeless youth (MVA)

Among the many barriers to housing, employment, and public assistance confronting homeless youth is a lack of identification documents. In Maryland, individuals must present proof of identity in order to secure a job, enroll in community college, or apply for Public Housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, the State Rental Assistance Program, Temporary Cash Assistance, Food Supplement Program benefits, or Medical Assistance. Moreover, it is often necessary to produce one form of identification in order to obtain another; for instance, individuals may obtain a replacement Social Security card only upon showing a State-issued driver's license or identification card, passport, or similar document.[19] Between October 2012 and July 2013, more than half of the clients of the Youth Empowered Society (YES) Drop-In Center serving unaccompanied homeless youth in Baltimore reported a need for State-issued identification documents and an inability to pay the associated fees.[20]

The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) charges $15 for new or renewal identification cards and $20 for duplicate or corrected cards.[21] These charges present a significant barrier for unaccompanied homeless youth, given that most are extremely low-income or have no income at all. MVA already offers fee reductions for certain populations - identification cards are available for $1 to recently released inmates as well as new or corrected identification cards issued to youths approved by DJS.[22] Additionally, MVA and DHR recently released regulations to reduce fees to $1 for new and replacement identification cards for foster youth between the ages of 15 and 20 participating in DHR's Ready by 21 program or other programs approved by the agency. MVA should extend the same fee reduction to unaccompanied homeless youth.

### Action 4.2: Create consumer education materials and conduct outreach to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth are able to effectively and efficiently obtain State-issued identification and birth certificates (MVA, DHMH)

Regulations governing MVA's provision of identification cards and the Vital Statistics Administration's (VSA) provision of birth certificates allow for some flexibility in the required documentation. For instance, MVA regulations regarding necessary proof of age, name, identity, residence, and lawful status provide for a source document exception process that allows a homeless applicant to prove Maryland residency by submitting a letter from a homeless shelter or service provider.[23] Similarly, vital records regulations provide that, if an applicant for a birth certificate is unable to provide required identification documents, the applicant may submit a signed statement that she/he does not have the documents, along with some other documentation allowing the agency to corroborate the identity of the applicant.[24] While these mechanisms are potentially beneficial to homeless youth, most youth and service providers are unaware of them and report that they are unsure how best to seek assistance from the agency on a case-by-case basis. MVA and VSA should address this barrier by raising awareness and conducting outreach to homeless youth and service providers.

MVA currently engages in community-based outreach to increase public access to State-issued identification, including operating a mobile outreach van with the capability to issue identification cards and participating in homeless resource days. MVA reported to the Task Force that these outreach efforts currently do not specifically focus on youth or homeless youth, but the agency would like to develop strategies to better reach these populations. VSA is also amenable to engaging in outreach to homeless youth to educate them about obtaining birth

certificates. This outreach could include creating consumer education materials, clearly identifying a point of contact within the agency to handle inquiries regarding homeless youth, and updating agency websites to clearly indicate agency policies affecting homeless youth.

DHMH's Mental Hygiene Administration's (MHA) Homeless Identification Project assists individuals experiencing homelessness who have a mental illness or co-occurring substance use disorder with obtaining birth certificates and identification cards in order to facilitate the individuals' ability to access supports that will help them move from homelessness to stability. Unaccompanied homeless youth with a disability would be able to take advantage of the services provided by the Homeless Identification Project. MHA could create educational materials focusing on the unaccompanied homeless youth population to ensure that youth are aware of this service.

### Action 4.3: Ensure that youth leaving the foster care or juvenile justice systems have their birth certificate and State-issued identification (DHR, DJS)

DHR and DJS report that they assist youth exiting custodial care in accessing state-issued identification and vital records prior to discharge. DHR's recent collaboration with MVA to reduce State-issued identification fees for foster care youth is an enhancement to the agency's efforts to ensure that youth leave the foster care system with the tools they need to succeed.

DJS reports that it does not have a formal statewide policy with respect to assisting youth in obtaining identification and other important documents. However, DJS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MVA in July 2010 providing for interagency cooperation and procedures for assisting youth returning home from residential placements or following prolonged detention in obtaining their identification cards and change of address cards. The MOU provides for DJS's ability to provide the required signatures per MVA and State requirements for those youth under 18 in foster care or who otherwise do not have a parent or guardian to make the required signature. The MOU also provides for a nominal fee ($1) for identification and change of address cards for eligible youth but is limited to a total of four mutually agreed upon MVA sites.

DJS will work closely with youths' legal guardians to ensure all committed youth are prepared with identification cards and birth certificates upon release. When youth are not returning home to their legal guardians' custody/residence or if the guardians will not assist DJS in obtaining vital records, DJS case managers will obtain the documents prior to or shortly after the youth is discharged.

Both DHR and DJS should assess current policies and practices, determine how well local and regional departments are adhering to those policies and, in collaboration with the MVA and VSA, expand collaborative efforts and make improvements wherever possible.

# 02 HOUSING

# 02 HOUSING

## VISION: All unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland will have access to a robust and flexible continuum of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing options that appropriately respond to their diverse needs.

Ensuring that unaccompanied homeless youth have access to emergency shelter and a continuum of appropriate housing options is perhaps the most important step that Maryland can take to end youth homelessness. For unaccompanied homeless youth, finding a place to stay is a daily struggle. Many homeless youth stay in cars, abandoned buildings, or other places not meant for human habitation. Others "couch surf" or "house hop," staying with friends or strangers. Compared to their housed peers, these youth are at increased risk of resorting to delinquency or other high risk behaviors as a means of survival, such as trading sex for food or a place to stay; physical and mental health problems; early and unintended parenthood; and becoming victims of crime or exploitation. For LGBTQ homeless youth, these risk factors are more pronounced. In order to meet the needs of these youth, housing and service providers should study national models and organizations, including the Ali Forney Center and Green Chimneys Programs, both in New York City. Housing helps to stabilize youth and increases their ability to participate in support services which are essential for long-term stability and self-sufficiency.

The housing options currently available for unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland are woefully inadequate to meet the need. The basic housing types and existing resources are:

- Emergency housing & non-residential drop-in: This type of assistance is generally time-limited and is intended to address an immediate housing crisis. It could include short-term emergency shelters or non-residential drop-in centers, which offer immediate safety, food, medical treatment, and other basic need services. For youth who have recently left home, the goal is usually family reunification. For others, it is keeping them off the streets while engaging them in case management services to address issues that may affect their ability to obtain and maintain long-term housing.

  To the knowledge of the Task Force, there are four federally-funded emergency shelters for unaccompanied homeless minors in two jurisdictions in Maryland: Loving Arms, Inc. and Rose Street Youth Shelter in Baltimore City, which each have the capacity to serve approximately 8 youth. In Prince George's County, Promise Place, operated by Sasha Bruce Youthwork, has the capacity to serve approximately 20 youth, and Latin American Youth Center/Maryland Multicultural Youth Center's host homes, have the capacity to serve 4 youth. Transition-age youth often avoid adult shelters because of fear of harassment or victimization, yet there are no emergency shelters specifically for this group in the state. The YES Drop-In Center in Baltimore, which provides a safe space for youth ages 14-25 who are homeless or at-risk to meet basic needs and establish supportive relationships, is the only program of its kind in the State.

- Transitional housing: This type of housing assistance typically lasts between one and two years and is intended to help young people transition from foster care or a housing crisis to a stable, permanent housing situation. Services provided in transitional housing help youth develop the independent living skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in permanent housing. Options for this type of housing may include shared homes, host homes, congregate or group homes, and scattered-site or semi-supervised apartments.

  To the knowledge of the Task Force, there are transitional housing programs for homeless youth only in Baltimore City and Prince George's County. In Baltimore, AIRS City Steps operates the Geraldine Young Family Life Center (capacity to serve 12 parenting youth ages 18-24 for up to 24 months), Carriage House (capacity

to serve 7 single young men or women ages 18-21 for up to 21 months), and Youth Space. In Prince George's County, the Prince George's County Department of Social Services operates the Youth Development Program (capacity to serve 14 single young men and women ages 18-24 for up to 24 months) and St. Ann's operates Faith House (capacity to serve 8 parenting young women age 18 and older with 1 child age 8 or under for up to 24 months), Hope House (capacity to serve 10 pregnant and/or parenting young women age 18 and older with 1-3 children age 8 or under for up to 24 months), and the Residential Teen Mother Baby Program (capacity to serve 4 pregnant and/or parenting young women ages 13-21 with 1-2 children age 8 or under for up to 21 months).

- Permanent supportive housing: This type of assistance is not time-limited and is particularly important for young people who need long-term supportive services. To the knowledge of the Task Force, Maryland's only permanent supportive housing program for homeless youth is Restoration Gardens, a 43-unit building in the Park Heights neighborhood of Baltimore. Restoration Gardens provides efficiency apartments and is not able to accommodate parenting youth with children.

It is clear to the Task Force that youth-centered housing resources are necessary to end youth homelessness in the State, and that the resources described above are inadequate to meet the need. Maryland should invest in a youth housing continuum designed to address the individualized needs of homeless youth who present with a range of complex problems. Such an investment will produce significant returns. Lighthouse Youth Services in Cincinnati, Ohio provides several transitional housing options for homeless youth. The most expensive costs $85 per day for each youth housed in a group apartment with live-in staff, far less than the $216 per day it costs on average to house a youth in a residential juvenile justice facility - which is where at least some of these youth would likely be in the absence of the program. Programs in Maryland's youth housing continuum should have a low threshold for entry, employ a positive youth development approach, and provide developmentally-appropriate, culturally competent, and trauma-informed services. Youth should not be required to move from more-restrictive to less-restrictive housing, but rather should be able to enter the most appropriate program within the continuum, and to move between placements as needed. Additionally, the youth housing continuum should meet the specific needs of various sub-groups of homeless youth, including pregnant or parenting youth; youth with disabilities or behavioral health needs; LGBTQ youth; trafficked youth, undocumented youth; and rural youth.

## OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURE THAT ALL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH IN MARYLAND HAVE ACCESS TO EMERGENCRY SHELTER THAT IS SAFE, DEVELOPMENTALLY-APPROPRIATE, CULTURALLY COMPETENT, AND TRAUMA-INFORMED

### Action 1.1: Identify possible sources of local and State funding for emergency shelters and drop-in centers for runaway and homeless youth (MD General Assembly)

Emergency shelters are a critical first point of contact to get homeless youth off the streets, keep them safe, reunite them with family if possible, and engage them in services that promote long-term stability. As noted above, there are only four emergency shelters for unaccompanied homeless minors in Maryland, serving approximately a total of 40 youth, a small percentage of the need. These programs are funded through the Basic Center Program administered by the federal Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB). There is an unmet need for additional shelters for homeless youth under the age of 18 in Maryland, but federal funding is limited. There is also a need in Maryland for emergency shelter for transition-age youth, like Lark-Inn, a 40-bed shelter for youth ages 18-24 operated by Larkin Youth Services in San Francisco that is designed to meet the specific developmental

needs of young people transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Finally, there is a need for drop-in centers, or non-residential programs, where youth can get off the street, get food and clothing, receive mail, use the phone or computer, and access various other resources and services.

### Action 1.2: Assess the need for State licensure or certification of runaway and homeless youth shelters to move toward establishing minimum standards of excellence (GOC)

Maryland law requires that "residential child care programs" serving children and youth placed by DHR, DHMH, and DJS must be licensed by those agencies, but does not explicitly mandate licensure of shelter facilities and programs serving homeless youth who are not systems-involved. Given the particular vulnerability of this group, the Governor's Office for Children (GOC) should assess the need for a statutory licensure or certification requirement for runaway and homeless youth shelters in Maryland. Fifteen states impose a statutory licensure requirement specifically for runaway and homeless youth shelters or programs and at least twenty-five states regulate runaway and homeless youth shelters and programs via broader childcare licensure. These organizational licensure requirements typically require entities providing services to young people to meet certain health and safety, clinical practice and staff qualifications standards. GOC should also consider minimum standards of excellence for youth shelters that would not impede expansion of services or create barriers to development of new services, and that could be established and enforced through a certification requirement, such as Maryland Nonprofits' Standards for Excellence or Council on Accreditation standards.

### Action 1.3: Ensure that Maryland family shelters receiving federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding are in compliance with the HEARTH Act mandate to serve families regardless of the age of children (DHCD, MD General Assembly)

The federal Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009, which reauthorized and amended the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, mandates that family shelters receiving Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding shall not deny admission to any family based on the age of any child under the age 18. It is essential that Maryland family shelters comply with this mandate in order to prevent family separation and unaccompanied youth homelessness. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which administers ESG funds to local governments, should work with those local governments to ensure that shelter applicants are in compliance with the HEARTH Act. Additionally, the Maryland General Assembly should require Continuums of Care to report to the state legislature whether family shelters receiving ESG funding are in compliance with the HEARTH Act mandate.

## OBJECTIVE 2: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

### Action 2.1: Explore the feasibility of establishing a collaborative, multi-agency pilot project to create permanent supportive housing for unaccompanied homeless youth in three Maryland regions (MD General Assembly, DHCD, DHR, DHMH)

Building on the success of Restoration Gardens, which provides 43 units of permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 in Baltimore, the Maryland General Assembly should establish a work group that would explore the feasibility of creating a pilot project to develop additional housing for this population in three Maryland regions. The selection of the regions should take into consideration the specific needs and any available resources of the jurisdictions to be covered. The group should make recom-

mendations on planning, funding (both private and public), and implementation efforts. The work group involved in the creation of a pilot project should tap the combined talents and resources of philanthropies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. DHR's role would be limited to serving youth in its care, who would not be considered "unaccompanied". However, the agency's federal grant project *Thrive* and the AIRS demonstration project, both of which aim to assist youth involved with the child welfare system to transition successfully to adulthood, could provide valuable insight and serve as potential models as the workgroup explores the feasibility of creating additional housing for homeless youth in Maryland.

### Action 2.2: Increase appropriation to the Shelter and Transitional Housing Facilities Grant Program (DHCD, MD General Assembly)

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) administers the Shelter and Transitional Housing Facilities Grant Program (STHGP), which uses general obligation bonds to provide grants to 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations and local governments for new construction, acquisition, rehabilitation of housing, and purchase of capital equipment for the development of shelter or transitional housing. The stated purpose of the program is to reduce homelessness in the State. DHCD has indicated that, of its programs, the STHGP is perhaps the best suited to development of transitional and permanent supportive housing for homeless youth. The program is currently funded at $1.5 million.

### Action 2.3: Participate in training sessions for developers and property management companies on model homeless youth housing projects throughout the country (DHCD)

Maryland will not achieve an adequate supply of affordable housing for youth unless private and not-for-profit developers are willing to build housing for unaccompanied homeless youth, or to set aside units for these young people in larger projects. In order to educate developers and property managers about homeless youth, respond to concerns about serving them, and recruit developers to create housing for this population, DHCD should participate in training sessions for developers and property management companies on model homeless youth housing projects throughout the country in collaboration with community-based organizations, advocates, and affordable housing developer coalitions. Model housing projects featured could include: Restoration Gardens (Baltimore, MD), Seventh Landing (St. Paul, MN), Nicollet Square (Minneapolis, MN), Archdale Apartments (Minneapolis, MN), Coolidge Court Apartments (Oakland, CA), Edwin Gould Residence (New York, NY), Ellis Street Apartments (San Francisco, CA), Robin's Nest (Glassboro, NJ), The Virginia Youth Foyer (Virginia, MN), and Stepping Stone Community Residence SRO (New York, NY).

## OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF RENTAL SUBSIDIES RECEIVED BY UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

### Action 3.1: Identify a source of funds to create a state rental assistance program to provide tenant-based and project-based rental assistance grants, comparable to the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program, that would include a set-aside for homeless individuals (MD General Assembly, DHCD)

Maryland's housing programs typically do not provide sufficient rental subsidies to serve homeless youth and other extremely low income populations. Virtually the only way that state housing programs have ever been able to serve the lowest income is by using federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) subsidies. While this approach was reasonably effective in the past, other subsidies have become increasingly necessary as federal HCVP appropriations have decreased. Maryland should identify a source of funds to establish a State-level rent-

al assistance program that, like the HCVP program, is designed to provide a deep rental subsidy sufficient to make rental housing affordable for extremely low-income persons. New Jersey has such a program, the New Jersey State Rental Assistance Program, which provides tenant-based and project-based rental assistance grants for extremely low-income families and individuals and includes a homeless set-aside.

### Action 3.2: Evaluate current use of Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers for potential areas of improvement in providing subsidized housing and supportive services to youth leaving the foster care system (DHR, PHAs, DHCD)

The Family Unification Program (FUP) is a program under which Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) are provided to youth at least 18 years old and not more than 21 years old who left foster care at age 16 or older and who lack adequate housing. Local public housing authorities (PHAs) administer FUP in partnership with public child welfare agencies (PCWAs) who are responsible for referring youth to the PHA for determination of eligibility for rental assistance. Eligible youth receive rental assistance for 18 months, during which time the PCWA provides supportive services to the youth. FUP funding is allocated through a competitive process. Not all Maryland PHAs administer the program, either because they have not applied or because they have applied unsuccessfully. DHCD and all Maryland PHAs should make all possible efforts to take advantage of available resources during every funding cycle, and should work diligently to improve future applications if denied. Additionally, DHR, DHCD, and PHAs administering FUP in Maryland should review their strategies for coordination, referral processes, and operations to make improvements wherever possible.

One option for funding care management services in the supportive housing environment is through the health home state plan option, which Maryland has elected to exercise. DHMH should ensure that intensive care management linked to affordable housing is part of the state health home strategy and should target unaccompanied homeless youth to the greatest extent possible. DHMH should also consider other strategies for using Medicaid funding for housing-based supportive services.

### Action 3.3: Maximize referrals of qualifying homeless youth with disabilities to DHCD for project-based rental assistance through the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (DHMH/MDOD)

In February 2013, HUD announced the award of Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration (PRA Demo) funding to 13 states, including Maryland. DHCD in partnership with DHMH and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) applied for and received $10,917,383 of Section 811 PRA Demo funding to serve 150 individuals with disabilities. PRA Demo funds will be used to provide project-based rental assistance for persons referred by DHMH and MDOD who are non-elderly adults with disabilities with income at or below 30% of Area Median Income (AMI), and who receive Medicaid. Supportive services for persons in the PRA Demo will be provided by DHMH and MDOD. This is an important source of project-based rental assistance for unaccompanied homeless youth given that as many as 50% of homeless youth have disabilities. However, given that homeless youth are notoriously hard to reach, there is a real danger that homeless youth are underserved by this resource without targeted outreach and collaboration with service providers.

## OBJECTIVE 4: ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR SUPPORTIVE SERVICES IN HOUSING

### Action 4.1: Explore strategies to use Medicaid funding for housing-based supportive services for unaccompanied homeless youth (DHMH)

The Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will provide new insurance coverage to many homeless youth. Medicaid-financed care management in supportive housing for high-risk homeless Medicaid beneficiaries could yield a significant return on investment from decreased hospitalizations and emergency room use.

## OBJECTIVE 5: ENSURE THAT MAINSTREAM YOUTH-SERVING AGENCIES CONSISTENTLY ASSESS AND RESPOND TO HOUSING NEEDS OF YOUTH EXITING SYSTEMS OF CARE

### Action 5.1: Ensure that transition and discharge planning include placement in safe, stable, affordable housing (DHR, DJS, DHMH)

DHR, DJS, and DHMH provide residential services to youth and have various protocols for transitioning or discharging these youth from institutional placements. DHR strives to ensure that young adults age out of the child welfare system with the skills, education, and resources to become self-sufficient. Accordingly, DHR has implemented Ready By 21, a policy initiative designed to address the needs of transition-aged youth in out-of-home placement. DHR's Ready By 21 Manual provides that transition planning for youth in out-of-home placements shall begin when a youth is 14 years old and mandates that "no youth may be transitioned to homelessness."[25] During the convening of this Task Force, DHR entered into an 18-month Demonstration contract with AIRS to serve 30-35 transitioning foster youth referred from Baltimore City and Baltimore County Department of Social Services to find secure housing while overseeing an integrated transitional service plan that combines multiple agency resources to prepare the youth for a successful transition to adulthood. Participants will have a total of 12 months in the Demonstration (6 months while still in out-of-home care and 6 months post care). In addition to addressing housing needs, AIRS will assess each youth's education and employment needs to ensure all youth are connected to a plan that can maximize their income and skills. At the end of the 18-month Demonstration DHR will review the outcomes and explore funding a more sustainable plan that could serve an increasing number of youth transitioning out of care.

Additionally, a new federal grant, *Thrive* seeks to build the capacity of Maryland's child welfare system to prevent homelessness among the most at-risk youth with child welfare involvement. Led by The Institute for Innovation & Implementation at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, in partnership with DHR, the Talbot County Department of Social Services on behalf of the five local departments of social services on Maryland's rural Upper Shore, and the National Center on Housing and Child Welfare, *Thrive* will implement practices to improve four core outcomes: stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment, and social-emotional well-being.

*Thrive* builds upon Maryland's Ready By 21 Initiative to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to preventing and solving the issue of youth homelessness for youth with child welfare involvement and histories. Maryland will capitalize on these partnerships to plan for the implementation of an intervention model by building capacity via establishment of a learning community and technical assistance process, conducting a readiness assessment at the State and local levels, evaluating the effectiveness of existing services and sup-

ports, identifying screening and assessment tools, selecting appropriate evidence-based practices, and developing innovative policies and practices. As a result of these planning activities, Maryland will be well-positioned to implement a multifaceted intervention responsive to the individual needs and strengths of youth transitioning from the foster care system, one that is culturally sensitive to the needs of minority and LGBT youth.

The information and data gathered from both the AIRS Demonstration and *Thrive* 25 will provide valuable insight into the issue of youth homelessness among those with foster care experiences and informing interventions which could lead to preventing homelessness among youth and young adults exiting foster care throughout Maryland. Other child-serving agencies should look to the demonstration and grant for policies and practices that could be adopted in order to prepare youth for independent living and to avoid potentially discharging youth into homelessness.

# 03 EDUCATION

# 03 EDUCATION

## VISION: All unaccompanied homeless youth will have complete access to primary and secondary education, and the opportunity for school stability and success.

Unaccompanied homeless youth face numerous barriers to earning their high school diploma. They may lack the identity, residency, and academic records typically required to enroll in school and, by definition, are not with a parent or legal guardian who can assist with that process. Additionally, they may experience frequent school transfers as a consequence of repeated moves, resulting in disruptions to their learning. Money is also a factor; unaccompanied homeless youth usually cannot afford fees for participation in field trips and extracurricular activities that are a critical component of the academic experience. At the most fundamental level, these youth are often too preoccupied with their unmet basic needs, difficult family relationships, and safety to focus on school.

Federal and state law provides tools to support unaccompanied homeless youth in their education. The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq., along with the implementing regulations, COMAR 13A.05.09, requires local education authorities (LEAs, also referred to as "local school systems"), acting under the supervision of the state department of education (MSDE), to affirmatively identify and support homeless students, including unaccompanied homeless youth. McKinney-Vento entitles unaccompanied homeless youth, as well as other homeless students, to the following specific protections:

- Immediate enrollment: Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to enroll, attend classes, and participate fully even if they are missing documentation or do not have a parent or guardian to assist.
- School selection: Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to attend one of two public schools throughout the time they are homeless, and until the end of the school year in which they obtain permanent housing: (1) the school they last attended or attended before becoming homeless ("school of origin"), or (2) the school attended by other students living in the area (the "local school"). Thus, unaccompanied homeless youth need not change schools each time they move, unless doing so is in their best interest.
- Transportation: Unaccompanied homeless youth are entitled to transportation to their school of origin so long as they attend. If they attend their local school, they must receive transportation that is comparable to the transportation that other students receive.
- Comparable supportive services: LEAs must remove barriers to homeless students' participation in a wide range of educational programming and services, including school fees.
- Integrated learning: Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to attend school alongside their non-homeless peers and must not be segregated in separate schools.
- Dispute resolution: LEAs must establish a process for resolving disputes related to enrollment or the provision of services to unaccompanied homeless youth.
- Assistance from an LEA Homeless Education Liaison: LEA Homeless Education Liaisons are responsible for ensuring that LEA staff affirmatively identify unaccompanied homeless youth, and comply with the above requirements.

Despite these laws, unaccompanied homeless youth continue to confront barriers to their education in Maryland. A review of school system data and policy, along with discussions with individual homeless students, including unaccompanied homeless youth[26], and their advocates reveals that challenges exist to varying degrees in several of the State's jurisdictions. The challenges vary from the under-identification of unaccompanied homeless youth, to delays in enrollment and provision of transportation, to LEAs reporting a desire for greater oversight by and support from the State. Many of the challenges identified would be corrected by the implementation of the action steps recommended below.

## OBJECTIVE 1: IN COLLABORATION WITH ADVOCATES FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH, ESTABLISH STANDARDS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENTS ACT BY LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

### Action 1.1: Adopt and disseminate to the LEA community a written policy governing the education of homeless students, including unaccompanied homeless students, with provisions on identification, school choice, enrollment, services, and dispute resolution (LEAs)

### Action 1.2: Improve identification of unaccompanied homeless youth within schools (LEAs)

Because unaccompanied homeless youth are unlikely to volunteer their status explicitly, LEAs must take proactive measures so they can identify and serve this population. Among the national best practices that LEAs should implement are: inquiring about loss of housing or housing status at attempted enrollment, withdrawal, transfer; partnering and regularly communicating with local homeless-serving and youth-serving organizations, including any existing street outreach programs; developing and disseminating youth-friendly outreach materials through homeless-serving and youth-serving organizations, street outreach programs, and the internet/social media; and avoiding the use of the word "homeless" in order to avoid alienating youth who do not associate themselves with that label.

### Action 1.3: Promote school stability and choice among unaccompanied homeless youth (LEAs)

LEAs shall promote school stability and choice among unaccompanied homeless youth by: (a) discussing school choice options and McKinney-Vento rights with each unaccompanied homeless youth; (b) defining "school of origin" to include schools for which the school the homeless student last attended was a feeder; and, (c) at the end of the school year, informing youth of their right to remain in the same school the following year if they continue to be homeless.

### Action 1.4: Ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth can enroll within one day, without the need for multiple visits, even if they are missing documents or are without a parent or guardian (LEAs)

LEAs can comply with their duty to immediately enroll and ensure the full participation of unaccompanied homeless youth by developing mechanisms to place youth in appropriate classes based on a review of school records, consultation with prior school, and/or individualized assessment of youth's progress, abilities and needs, and by using forms permitting self-enrollment and caretaker enrollment. LEAs should also establish procedures for helping these youth obtain missing records after enrollment.[27]

Action 1.5: Arrange school transportation for unaccompanied homeless youth within one day of a request by student or caretaker, including through the use of interim transportation services until longer-term services are in place. This transportation should be comparable in timeliness and safety to transportation services provided to other students, and accounts for any unique homelessness-related barriers confronting individual students (LEAs)

Transportation challenges are one of the greatest barriers to regular attendance confronting unaccompanied homeless youth and other homeless students. In order to ensure that these students do not miss school because of lack of transportation, Maryland LEAs should implement (or continue to implement in some cases) strategies successfully used by school districts around the country for arranging transportation promptly. These include re-routing school buses, including buses used to transport students receiving special education services or students attending magnet schools or other out-of-zone schools; reimbursing students or their adult caretakers for gas used for school transportation; using school vehicles, such as those used in driver's education classes; and working with local churches and community organizations to provide transportation. LEAs may also be able to effectively transport unaccompanied homeless youth by providing them with public transit passes, provided that the public transit is sufficiently safe and reliable to allow students to consistently get to school on time.

Action 1.6: Provide unaccompanied homeless youth with services and supports for school success (LEAs)

LEAs shall provide unaccompanied homeless youth with services and supports for school success by: (a) establishing or continuing the use of standardized forms and procedures for assessing the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth upon identification and providing services to meet those needs; (b) establishing procedures for ensuring that lack of parent/legal guardian signature or consent does not prevent unaccompanied homeless youth under 18 from participating in extracurricular activities; (c) adopting a non-punitive approach to school absences or tardiness, where those issues relate directly to a student's homelessness; and, (d) arranging quarterly meetings between the LEA homeless education liaison, or his or her designee, and each unaccompanied homeless youth to review youth's performance in the area of attendance, academics, and discipline, and develop interventions to support struggling students.

Among the services which LEAs should provide to unaccompanied homeless youth are free school meals; fee waivers to facilitate participation in a wide range of school activities; assistance with school uniforms; assistance with obtaining fee waivers for college entrance exams; referrals for healthcare and social services available within the school system and in the larger community; and the assignment of a parent surrogate for unaccompanied homeless youth under 18 requiring special education services. LEAs should also strategize about what other resources they can use to support unaccompanied homeless youth – for example, many could make in-school showers, laundry machines, or extra lockers available to youth who do not have access to those facilities.

Action 1.7: Provide adequate staffing and training to meet the needs of homeless students, including unaccompanied homeless youth (LEAs)

LEAs shall provide adequate staffing and training to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth by: (a) appointing a homeless liaison with the time and ability to adhere to all statutory/regulatory duties; (b) for large LEAs, assigning a point person on homelessness for each school or group of schools; and, (c) annually training the following staff on the identification, enrollment, and provision of supports to homeless students: enrollment staff, principals, school social workers, school-based homeless education coordinators, transportation administrators, school counselors, and pupil personnel workers.

Action 1.8: Prohibit enrolling unaccompanied homeless youth or other homeless students into shelter-based schools, or schools targeted at students awaiting foster care placement, based on their status alone rather than individualized consideration of their best interests (LEAs)

Action 1.9: Establish and disseminate a written dispute resolution process which complies with statutory/regulatory requirements, and explicitly covers disputes over homeless status, and ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth receive an explanation of that process (LEAs)

Action 1.10: Collect and analyze data on unaccompanied homeless youth in order to assess the needs and measure the success of this population, evaluate the effectiveness of LEA interventions, and comply with State and federal reporting requirements (LEAs)

LEAs shall collect and maintain the following data and information in order to assess the needs and performance of unaccompanied homeless youth within their school system: (a) number of unaccompanied homeless youth (b) living situations (c) attendance rate; (d) school mobility rate; (e) reported residential mobility rates; (f) graduation/grade promotion rate; (g) scores on state standardized tests; (h) average number of days between unaccompanied homeless youth attempted enrollment and attendance; (i) average number of days between unaccompanied homeless youth request for and availability of transportation; (j) percent of unaccompanied homeless youth receiving free meals; (k) percent of unaccompanied homeless youth receiving fee waivers; (l) percent of unaccompanied homeless youth participating in afterschool/extracurricular activities; and, (m) percent of unaccompanied homeless youth receiving special education. In many cases, LEAs are already collecting this information in some form, but they may not be organizing it in a way that allows for analysis of the unaccompanied homeless youth population in particular.

Additionally, LEAs shall collect and maintain narrative information needed to evaluate school system efforts to serve unaccompanied homeless youth, including: (a) description of staff with McKinney-Vento responsibilities; (b) number and nature of outreach activities conducted, with copies of sample outreach materials; (c) number and nature of trainings conducted; (d) collaborations and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) developed with partner organizations and agencies; (e) description of amount and uses of Title I set-aside for homeless students; and, (f) copy of school system policy on McKinney-Vento implementation. Annual evaluation of this data and information will help inform LEA practices for identifying, enrolling, and supporting unaccompanied homeless youth.

## OBJECTIVE 2: CONTINUE TO MONITOR LEAS' COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE STANDARDS FOR MCKINNEY-VENTO IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH REGULAR TECHNICAL SUPPORT, OVERSIGHT, AND EVALUATION

Action 2.1: Permanently fill Statewide McKinney-Vento Coordinator position, and ensure that Coordinator has sufficient time and capacity to oversee implementation of McKinney-Vento and related law (MSDE)

Each state receiving federal McKinney-Vento funds, including Maryland, must appoint a statewide McKinney-Vento coordinator to oversee implementation of the McKinney-Vento requirements in each of its LEAs. Maryland's McKinney-Vento Coordinator retired at the end of 2012, leaving the position unfilled, except on an interim basis, since then. Filling the position on a permanent basis is critical to ensure that Maryland can meet its legal responsibilities and ensure that each LEA is effectively identifying and serving unaccompanied homeless youth

in its community.

Action 2.2: Develop Statewide guidance and training materials for LEAs on McKinney-Vento implementation (MSDE)

Action 2.3: Facilitate development of MOUs between LEAs to ensure fair division of costs for inter-district transportation of unaccompanied homeless youth and other homeless students (MSDE)

COMAR requires that LEAs agree upon methods for dividing the cost of transporting homeless students between districts or, if no agreement is reached, to split the costs evenly. MSDE has agreed to facilitate the development of inter-district transportation strategies by providing sample MOUs, and disseminating information on effective cost-sharing mechanisms.

Action 2.4: Structure annual monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that LEAs are implementing best practice standards in their identification of, enrollment of, and provision of supports to unaccompanied homeless youth consistent with McKinney-Vento (MSDE)

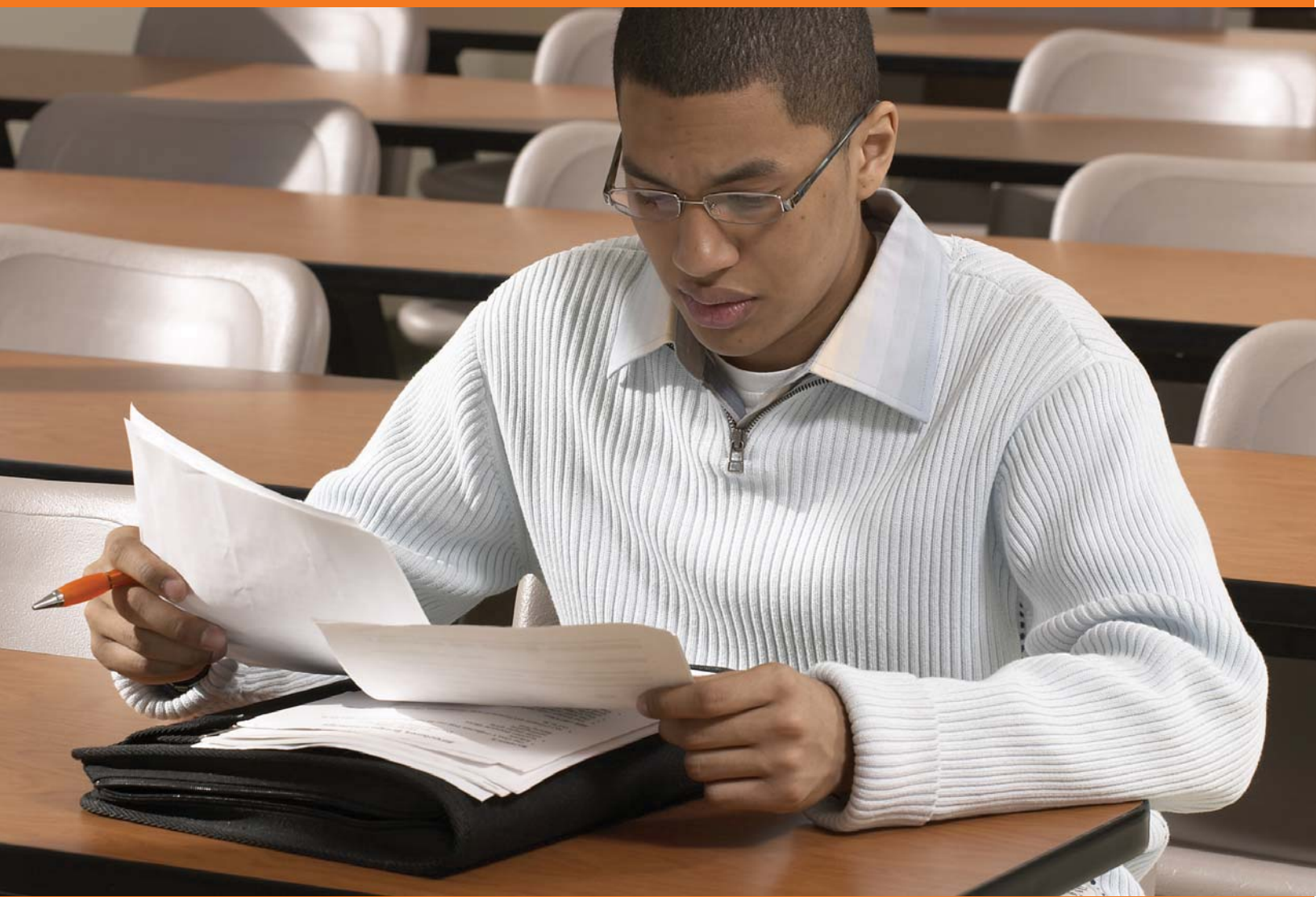
Action 2.5: Establish comparable procedures and standards for monitoring LEAs receiving McKinney-Vento sub-grants, and LEAs without sub-grants (MSDE)

Action 2.6: Incorporate McKinney-Vento monitoring into the Title I monitoring process, requiring LEAs to comply with McKinney-Vento to be eligible for either Title I or McKinney-Vento sub-grants (MSDE)

Action 2.7: Identify LEAs reporting very low numbers of unaccompanied homeless youth, or homeless students generally, for intensive monitoring and support (MSDE)

LEAs reporting very few unaccompanied homeless youth or homeless students generally (e.g. five or fewer) are likely under-identifying this population. For this reason, MSDE should identify LEAs with very low unaccompanied homeless youth/homeless student counts for additional assistance and oversight on the issue of McKinney-Vento implementation.

# 04 HIGHER EDUCATION



# 04 HIGHER EDUCATION

## VISION: Unaccompanied homeless youth will have the opportunity to access and succeed in higher education without financial barriers.

Unaccompanied homeless youth face significant barriers pursuing higher education because they lack stable housing, financial resources, and academic supports. Financial barriers to higher education are perhaps the most immediate and obvious. At the most fundamental level, few unaccompanied homeless youth can afford tuition, books, room and board and the related costs of college without substantial assistance. While public and private financial aid can help to reduce that cost burden, unaccompanied homeless youth frequently have difficulty applying for such aid because – as a result of strained or non-existent family relationships – they are not in a position to provide information about their parents' income. The federal College Cost Reduction and Access Act remedies this problem in large part, as described below, but it remains relatively unknown among unaccompanied homeless youth and college financial aid administrators themselves.

Not only do these youth face barriers in accessing higher education, they confront numerous challenges once they begin their college career. Many who live on campus have nowhere to go during school vacations and summer breaks. Also, unlike their peers, unaccompanied homeless youth often lack the social and academic support networks that provide the encouragement and mentoring necessary for academic and life-long success. As a result, many unaccompanied homeless youth begin, but do not complete, their degree or certificate programs. Foster and former foster youth have been shown to be at a particular disadvantage regarding housing and higher education access. In one of the largest studies to assess long-term outcomes for former foster youth, 31% of the youth reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability after aging out of the child welfare system.[28] Additionally, the same study found that "although 40 percent of these young adults had completed at least one year of college, only 8 percent had a postsecondary degree from either a 2- or a 4- year school."[29]

### OBJECTIVE 1: MITIGATE THE FINANCIAL BARRIERS PREVENTING UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH FROM PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

**Action 1.1: Assess the feasibility of extending the existing tuition waiver for former foster youth to all unaccompanied homeless youth, as verified under the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, and develop strategies for maximizing financial aid opportunities for this population** (MD General Assembly, MHEC, USM)

Under current law, Maryland public colleges and State-certified vocational programs must waive tuition charges for students who meet the eligibility criteria as specified in Section 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Annotated Code.[30] Unaccompanied homeless youth who were not in foster care face many of the same educational and economic challenges as those who were, including low incomes, high rates of unemployment, and limited family support; indeed, unaccompanied homeless youth may be worse off than at least those former foster youth who now have stable housing. For this reason, it is logical to extend the tuition waiver to Maryland's unaccompanied homeless youth within the appropriate age range. Financial aid offices at the State's public universities currently work with unaccompanied homeless youth to maximize financial aid opportunities; tuition may sometimes be fully covered through a series of federal and State grants. Additional funding to the State financial aid programs may alleviate the economic challenges faced by unaccompanied homeless youth. Local education agency homeless education liaisons or operators of shelters funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program can verify the residential status of such youth before application of the tuition waiver or financial aid opportunities, just as they do when these same youth seek to complete the FAFSA as independent students.

Action 1.2: Develop procedures for informing unaccompanied homeless youth of their eligibility for AP test, SAT/ACT and college application fee waivers (MSDE, MHEC)

School personnel can apply for waivers of fees associated with college entrance exams and applications on behalf of students who are homeless or otherwise poor. MSDE has already issued informal instruction on the types of fees that can be waived and the procedures for applying for such waivers, so a natural next step is to ensure broad dissemination of such information to homeless education liaisons, school counselors and other educators, and establish a goal of applying for and securing waivers on behalf of all students who are eligible.

Action 1.3: Regularly train financial aid administrators and registrar offices on the independent status of unaccompanied homeless youth under the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (MHEC)

Action 1.4: Conduct outreach to inform unaccompanied homeless youth and transitioning/former foster youth of their ability to file FAFSA as independents and their right to appeal the financial aid administrator's determination of their dependency status (MSDE, DHR)

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act establishes that unaccompanied homeless youth need not provide parental information when completing the FAFSA and can instead apply as independent students; however, many youth are not aware they qualify for independent status and/or that they have to re-establish their independent status each year. College financial aid administrators are also frequently unaware of this guarantee or with the standard procedures for determining a youth's dependency status under these special circumstances. Thus, to ensure full implementation of the law, agencies should develop training and outreach materials for use with the populations of youth that they serve.

Action 1.5: Ensure higher education institutions prioritize unaccompanied homeless youth for work-study, campus grants, scholarships, fee waivers and other forms of financial assistance (MHEC)

## OBJECTIVE 2: ENSURE ACCESS TO SAFE, STABLE AND AFFORDABLE YEAR-ROUND HOUSING FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

Action 2.1: Ensure higher education institutions prioritize on-campus housing and ensure year-round, on- or off-campus housing opportunities for unaccompanied homeless youth and former foster youth (MHEC)

California offers a useful model of this practice; its law requires community colleges, state universities and University of California campuses to prioritize campus housing for former foster youth. Specifically, all "campuses that maintain student housing facilities open for occupation during school years, or on a year-round bases, to give first priority to current and former foster youth for residence in the housing facilities that are open for uninterrupted year-round occupation, and next give priority…for housing that is open for occupation during the most days in the calendar year."[31] While this example is specific to systems-involved youth, a similar approach to prioritizing housing access when resources allow can significantly support unaccompanied youth in achieving their higher education goals.

In exploring year round on or off-campus housing solutions, it must be noted that Maryland does not provide capital or operational funding for dormitories; by law these must be self-supporting auxiliary enterprises paid for by student fees, and room and board charges. Public institutions, however, have assisted students who find them-

selves temporarily homeless when space has been available. The institutions have also created crisis funds that can be used for individuals unable to pay their housing bill.

Action 2.2: Encourage higher education institutions to recruit host families for the holidays and summers (MHEC)

Action 2.3: Ensure higher education institutions waive parental consent/signatures/co-signers for unaccompanied homeless youth applying for campus housing

## OBJECTIVE 3: HELP UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH DEVELOP STRONG SUPPORT NETWORKS THAT ENSURE ACADEMIC AND LIFE-LONG SUCCESS

Action 3.1: Encourage higher education institutions to connect unaccompanied homeless youth with existing support and mentoring programs on campus (MHEC)

Action 3.2: Encourage higher education institutions to appoint liaisons for homeless students and publish a directory of liaison contacts that is updated yearly (MHEC)

In California, each community college campus has a Foster Youth Success Initiative liaison that assists foster youth access financial aid, scholarships, student services and other resources. Most state universities and University of California campuses also have similar liaisons and programs that support foster youth and other independent students. For example, at the University of California Santa Cruz, the Smith Society collaborates with the campus's financial aid office to identify, at the point of application and enrollment, students who are independent or who are or were in foster care. Once accepted in the program, the students benefit from small yearly scholarships, faculty mentors and community building events. A program advisor works closely with all students to ensure they have housing during school breaks by collaborating with the campus housing office to make housing arrangements during school holidays when necessary. This program could be readily replicated and expanded to unaccompanied homeless youth attending college in Maryland.

# 05 ECONOMIC STABILITY

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## VISION: All unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland will have ade uate economic stability to obtain stable, permanent housing and meet other basic needs.

Unaccompanied homeless youth must have income in order to obtain housing and other necessities, particularly given decreasing federal investment in rental housing subsidies and other social safety net programs over time. Homeless youth are eager to work and to be self-sufficient. Prince George's County's most recent study of youth homelessness indicated that homeless youth rank access to employment and income supports among their most pressing needs (35% identified housing as their greatest need, 33% identified employment, and 28% identified money/public benefits). However, homeless youth face significant barriers to economic stability.

Homeless youth often have limited education and employment experience, which makes finding and maintaining employment difficult, particularly given that the number of jobs for transition-age youth has decreased dramatically since the recent recession. A lack of a stable address, clothing, and social capital presents further challenges. While public benefits programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (known in Maryland as the Food Supplement Program (FSP)), Temporary Disability Assistance (TDAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), and Social Security Income (SSI) offer unaccompanied homeless youth critical support in meeting their basic needs for food, income, and health care, homeless youth face significant barriers to accessing and maintaining these supports. Lack of financial literacy, no credit history, poor credit, and susceptibility to identity theft further negatively affect the economic stability of homeless youth.

Maryland should ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth are able to obtain housing and meet their other basic needs by rapidly linking them with employment and/or public benefits, connecting them with opportunities to increase their incomes through educational and vocational programs, and ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills to budget their financial resources, protect their credit history, and guard against identity theft. Without this support, homeless youth are more likely as adults to experience chronic homelessness and myriad other problems at a high cost to the State. Thus, investing in the economic stability of homeless youth is sound fiscal policy.

### OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURE THAT UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH AND YOUTH E IT-ING FOSTER CARE ARE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY ACCESS AND MAINTAIN PUBLIC BENEFITS

Action 1.1: Assess the training needs of local departments of social services regarding the application of public benefits program rules to unaccompanied homeless youth and develop training, policy guidance, and consumer education materials as appropriate (DHR)

DHR provides an array of public benefits that can help unaccompanied homeless youth meet their basic needs. However, many youth are unaware that they may be eligible for public benefits. DHR will assess the training needs of local departments of social services regarding the application of public benefits program rules to unaccompanied homeless youth and develop training or policy guidance as appropriate.

### Action 1.2: Encourage community-based organizations seeking to join Maryland's Food Supplement Program State Outreach Plan to explicitly target unaccompanied homeless youth (DHR)

The Food Supplement Program (FSP), known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and formerly called the Food Stamp Program, is the first line of defense against hunger for homeless youth. Food Stamps can be used to purchase eligible food items, such as bread, meat, produce, and dairy products, providing an important nutritional benefit and freeing up other resources for housing or other necessities. The participation rate for unaccompanied homeless youth is likely low given that they are a particularly underserved and hard-to-reach group. Community-based organizations in Maryland can partner with DHR to receive federal reimbursement to cover up to 50% of their costs for FSP application assistance and outreach activities. Organizations can do this by applying to join Maryland's Food Supplement Program State Outreach Plan (the "State Plan"). If a submission is approved by DHR, it is included in Maryland's State Plan submitted to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for review and approval. DHR should encourage targeted FSP outreach to unaccompanied homeless youth.

### Action 1.3: Assess and improve access to public benefits for youth exiting child welfare, juvenile justice, and other institutional placements (DHR, DJS, DHMH)

State agencies can help to ensure the stability of youth exiting custodial systems of care by educating them about eligibility for public benefits and assisting them with applications prior to discharge. DJS and DHR have recently begun collaborating to ensure that youth under DJS' jurisdiction receive public benefits. A cohort of DJS caseworkers are currently being trained on Service Access Information Link (SAIL), Maryland's electronic application system, to assist youth with applying for public benefits prior to their discharge from care. DHR and DJS should closely monitor outcomes of this collaboration to ensure its success. DHR ensures that youth transitioning out of foster care receive assistance applying for public benefits, including SSI, as soon as they are eligible to do so. DHMH should assess whether youth leaving its institutional placements are informed of public benefits for which they may be eligible and given assistance with applications.

## OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE JOB TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

### Action 2.1: Assist youth who are homeless in accessing job opportunities by increasing collaboration among Workforce Investment Act-funded programs, DLLR, and homeless services providers (DLLR)

The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides increased flexibility for state and local officials to establish broad-based labor market systems using federal job training funds for adults, dislocated workers and youth. The WIA Youth Activities program provides comprehensive workforce services to eligible youth, ages 14-21, in local communities. WIA grantees provide assistance to youth in achieving academic and employment success, training opportunities, internships and work experience, mentoring opportunities, support services, and incentives for recognition and achievement. DLLR has statistical data related to employment of the youth it serves.

The Job Corps program provides grants to states and communities to develop comprehensive residential education and job training program for youth in high-risk situations, ages 16-24. Job Corps programs provide youth with the academic, vocational and social skills training they need to gain independence and get quality, long-term jobs or further their education.

The YouthBuild program provides grants to public and nonprofit organizations to assist youth in high-risk situations ages of 16-24 to learn housing construction skills and to complete their high school education. Homeless youth are a target sub-group for WIA Youth Activities programs and services are carried out by 12 Workforce Investment Boards throughout the State, but it is not clear to the Task Force whether they are adequately served by these programs in each jurisdiction.

## OBJECTIVE 3: ENSURE THAT ALL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO BUDGET THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES, PROTECT THEIR CREDIT HISTORY, AND GUARD AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT

### Action 3.1: In collaboration with financial education organizations, such as the Maryland CASH Campaign, develop a strategy for supporting unaccompanied homeless youth in achieving financial stability and independence (MSDE, DHR, DJS, DLLR)

DHR has worked collaboratively with the MD CASH Campaign and the Credit Builders Alliance to develop a comprehensive financial stability strategy for youth in foster care through its Ready By 21 program. DHR has also been working directly with the nation's three credit reporting agencies to develop protocols to secure credit reports on behalf of youth in care to enable the agency to identify youth who have been victims of identity theft and connect them to supports to repair any damage that has been done. These measures will increase the likelihood that Maryland foster youth will achieve economic stability after discharge and will accordingly reduce the likelihood that they will experience homelessness.

As previously mentioned, DLLR has statistical data related to employment of the youth it serves, and many of the youth programs have financial literacy components. DLLR could work with local providers to compile more information about the efficacy of these program components. Other child-serving agencies could look to DHR and DLLR's activities as models for establishing their own policies and protocols in this area.

Additionally, a broader inter-agency strategy to support unaccompanied homeless youth in achieving financial stability and independence is needed. Such a strategy might include: (a) requesting the existing Maryland Financial Education and Capability Commission to address the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth; (b) expanding access to affordable and high quality youth-focused financial education opportunities; (c) conducting outreach to providers serving unaccompanied homeless youth regarding financial education opportunities and basic financial concepts; (d) helping unaccompanied youth access mainstream financial services and develop assets in an age-appropriate manner, possibly with a matched savings program to develop assets relevant to a youth's goals and needs; (e) requiring robust financial education as part of the transition planning process for systems-involved youth; and (f) recommending the alignment of community-based and private provider curriculum with state standards.

# 06 HEALTH

# 06 HEALTH

## VISION: All unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland will have low-barrier access to comprehensive health care.

Particularly given their high rates of physical and mental illness, unaccompanied homeless youth need complete access to a wide range of healthcare services in order to survive and thrive. Legal, informational, and resource barriers stand in the way of such access at present, but recent and upcoming changes in the law and existing programming present an opportunity for improvement. Pursuant to a bill enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 2012, unaccompanied homeless minors can now consent to their own healthcare without risk that their treating clinicians will suffer adverse legal consequences related to the absence of parental consent.[32] This change in the law represents an important first step in connecting unaccompanied minors with care, but significant barriers remain. In particular, unaccompanied homeless minors cannot easily apply for Medical Assistance (Medicaid) or the Children's Health Program (MCHP) without the involvement of a parent or legal guardian. The result is that many unaccompanied homeless minors go uninsured, making providers less inclined to treat them, particularly for specialty services, because of the inability to bill for that care. Another set of barriers that keeps unaccompanied homeless youth from accessing healthcare arises out of a lack of information on basic rights and opportunities, particularly with respect to enrolling in health insurance, access to medical care and records, and changes related to passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

### OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURE THAT UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH UNDER AGE 1 CAN APPLY FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR PARTICIPATION BY A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

Action 1.1: Enact legislation to enable unaccompanied homeless minors to apply for Medicaid benefits on their own, *i.e.*, without the signature of a parent, legal guardian, or authorized representative, if they choose (MD General Assembly)

Thirty-four states allow unaccompanied homeless youth to apply for Medicaid and/or subsidized children's health insurance on their own in certain circumstances. Maine, for example, treats minors living alone as a single-member household for purposes of Medicaid eligibility and permits such minors to apply on their own without parental signatures or information about parental income.[33] Maryland should adopt this model, embraced in some form by the vast majority of states, by enacting legislation establishing that unaccompanied homeless minors qualify as single-member adult households for purposes of applying for Medical Assistance.

Action 1.2: Clarify how an individual or organization can become an authorized representative under new federal regulations and create forms for designating such a representative (DHMH)

Existing federal and state regulations suggest an alternative, albeit more complex, mechanism by which unaccompanied homeless youth under 18 may be able to apply for Medical Assistance on their own. Specifically, COMAR establishes that such youth can apply through an individual, including someone other than a parent or legal guardian, qualified to act as their authorized representative.[34] Beginning January 1, 2014, new federal regulations will also enable organizations to serve as authorized representatives provided that they meet certain requirements.[35] What remains unclear, however, is how exactly the authorized representative procedures work. Questions include: *hat sorts of in ivi uals an organi ations can act as authori e representatives to apply for e ical Assistance on behalf of unaccompanie homeless youth Ho long oes the process for becoming an authori e representative ta e hat are the short-term an long-term obligations of an in ivi ual or organi a-*

*tion that acts as an authori e representative in these circumstances Can an in ivi ual or organi ation become a minor's authori e representative solely for purposes of a e ical Assistance application ithout the nee to maintain any formal relationship ith the minor beyon the point of approval* If providers and youth are to exercise the authorized representative option to secure Medical Assistance, they will need further guidance on how to go about doing so.

## OBJECTIVE 2: CONDUCT OUTREACH AND EDUCATION TO ENSURE THAT UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH ARE AWARE OF THEIR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESS TO HEALTCHARE

### Action 2.1: Create consumer and provider education materials that explain the rights of unaccompanied homeless minors with regard to applying for Medicaid benefits and changing one's primary care provider under Medicaid (DHMH)

After implementing the recommendations set forth in Actions 1.1 and 1.2 of this section, DHMH should create consumer and provider education materials that clearly explain related rights. The benefits of ensuring that youth are able to access health insurance and change providers on their own will only be realized to the extent that stakeholders are aware these rights exist.

### Action 2.2: Create provider education materials explaining the rights of unaccompanied minors with regard to accessing their medical records and confidentiality of those records (DHMH, Office of the Attorney General Health Education and Advocacy Unit)

Many unaccompanied homeless youth, along with their clinicians, are unaware that they can access their own medical records or change their primary care provider without parent involvement.[36] This barrier to health care access could easily be remedied through public education of youth and providers.

### Action 2.3: Conduct youth-targeted outreach to identify and enroll in Medical Assistance unaccompanied homeless youth who are newly eligible for coverage under changes resulting from the Affordable Care Act (DHMH/Maryland Health Benefit Exchange)

Many former foster youth who are under age 26 and were in foster care at age 18 and may not know that they will be newly eligible for Medical Assistance as of January 1, 2014 pursuant to the Affordable Care Act. In order to remedy the broad lack of awareness around these issues, Maryland's healthcare agencies should develop informational materials and conduct youth-targeted outreach, including as part of the awareness campaign already planned in connection with implementation of the federal Affordable Care Act.[37]

## OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF YOUTH-TARGETED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, INCLUDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELING

### Action 3.1: Encourage Maryland PATH program grant recipients and applicants to develop strategies to engage and serve unaccompanied homeless youth (DHMH)

Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is responsible for distributing to homeless-serving organizations and agencies federally-funded Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) grants,

which can be "used to provide a menu of allowable services, including street outreach, case management and services which are not supported by mainstream mental health programs."[38] In competing for PATH funding, applicants must demonstrate that their services will be provided in a culturally competent manner that accounts for the unique needs of their clients' related to age, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. Given its focus on cultural competency and non-traditional services, the PATH program is well-suited towards supporting the creation of mental health interventions for unaccompanied homeless youth. While not all PATH sites provide outreach, DHMH could encourage the sites that do to expand outreach efforts to reach a greater number of the unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.

### Action 3.2: Develop strategies to increase the availability of youth-specific mainstream mental health and substance abuse services, and to engage unaccompanied homeless youth in these services (DHMH)

Studies have shown that homeless youth are likely to take advantage of mental health interventions only if they are culturally sensitive, flexible as to location and timing, foster independence and autonomy, and are not associated with "permanently homeless" individuals, i.e. "grown-ups."[39] For this reason, states and localities have experimented with programs that target youth specifically. In Manchester, New Hampshire, for example, the Public Health Department partners with a local branch of Health Care for the Homeless to provide mental health and other healthcare services to homeless youth through street outreach and in teen-only settings. The Health Care for the Homeless team also collaborates with the local school district Homeless Liaison in order to better reach homeless youth, and it trains outside providers about the particular needs of this population in an effort to expand the provision of culturally-competent care. Among the prospective projects of the team is the creation of an Alcoholics Anonymous group exclusively for young people. Because of its age-specific focus, the Health Care for the Homeless team has succeeded as a "point of entry toward recovery" for homeless young people in the area.[40] Maryland should foster similar collaborations between DHMH and Healthcare for the Homeless or other organizations.

# 07 LEADERSHIP

# 07 LEADERSHIP

## VISION: Through the ongoing strategic leadership of State agencies and their partners, no youth will be alone and without a home in Maryland.

This Report is not the last step but the first in improving the identification and provision of housing and supportive services to unaccompanied homeless youth and, eventually, ensuring that no youth goes homeless and without parental support. To achieve this goal, Maryland's public agencies, non-government organizations, and youth themselves must partner on an ongoing basis to implement and expand upon the Report's recommendations.

## OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH STRUCTURES TO ENABLE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND YOUTH TO COLLABORATIVELY DEVELOP POLICIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH AND PREVENT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

### Action 1.1: Continue the term of the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth for a time-limited period to facilitate the discussion and implementation of the Task Force's recommendations (MD General Assembly)

The term of the Task Force ends on June 30, 2014. However, the Task Force anticipates that it will require additional time to oversee the implementation of its recommendations, particularly because there is no other inter-agency body currently in operation that is in a position to adopt that role. It thus urges the General Assembly to enact a bill allowing it to continue its role until ongoing oversight of implementation can be assigned to one of the existing councils described below. In its renewed form, the Task Force should comprise not only its current members but representatives of government agencies that this Report has identified as having a role, including the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the Maryland Transit Administration. Representatives from the Maryland Independent College and University Association and the University System of Maryland should also be included.

### Action 1.2: Reconvene, and consider combining, the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness to work towards ending homelessness across the state, including among youth (GOC, DHR, MSDE, DJS, DHMH, DHCD, and non-government partners)

Recognizing that addressing and ending youth homelessness requires long-term organization and leadership, several states and/or localities have established inter-agency councils or offices devoted to reaching this goal. For example, Colorado has established an Office of Homeless Youth Services which "collaborates with leaders from State and local government, private non-profit organizations, homeless and formerly homeless youth, and other key stakeholders to address state and local needs surrounding youth homelessness.[41] The Office works in close collaboration with the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Youth Corrections and a wide range of non-government groups as part of an Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth. In 2012, the Office and Advisory Committee counted among their many accomplishments the expanded distribution of Family Unification Program vouchers to youth in several cities, the opening of a youth shelter, the development of trainings on youth access to benefits, the organization of an educational event for National Runaway and Homeless Youth Awareness Month, and the hiring of a State Coordinator for the Education of Children and Youth in Foster Care. Colorado's experience illustrates how ongoing inter-agency leadership on youth homelessness can facilitate the achievement of concrete successes.

In Maryland, the existing (but inactive) Interagency Council on Homelessness and Advisory Board on Homelessness are well-positioned to take on a critical leadership role, whether operating separately or as one combined force. Although both the Council and the Board are tasked with creating policy around homelessness generally, they can and should make it a priority to study and develop Statewide solutions around the more particular challenges associated with youth homelessness, including through ongoing implementation of this Task Force's recommendations. To effectively carry out this function, the Council and/or the Board should include representatives from the homeless and youth provider communities throughout the state, and to solicit the input of currently and formerly homeless youth themselves. They should also devote attention to challenges identified by homeless youth and their providers that have received only an introductory analysis in this Report: access to transportation, access to employment, combatting human trafficking, and the particular needs of a wide-range of subpopulations of unaccompanied homeless youth.

# END NOTES

# END NOTES


1. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Adolescent Health, *Homeless Young People in Baltimore: A Parallel Count Accompanying the 2011 Homeless Census* (Sept. 14, 2011).

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDICES

## APPENDI A: KEY RESOURCES

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# APPENDIX B: DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESS YOUTH

Federal Definitions

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5601):

HOMELESS YOUTH – the term "homeless," used with respect to a youth, means and individual –

(A) Who is –

(i) less than 21 years of age, or, in the case of a youth seeking shelter in a center under part A, less than 18 years of age or is less than a higher maximum age or is less than a higher maximum age if the State where the center is located has an applicable State or local law (including regulation) that permits such higher maximum age in compliance with licensure requirements for child- and youth-serving facilities; and

(ii) for the purposes of part B, not less than 16 years of age and either

(I) less than 22 years of age; or

(II) not less than 22 years of age, as the expiration of the maximum period of stay permitted under section 322(a)(2) if such individual commences such stay before reaching 22 years of age;

(B) for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative; and

(C) who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act)

The term 'homeless children and youths' –

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes –

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or trains, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described by clauses (i) through (iii).The term "unaccompanied youth" includes a youth not in the custody of a parent or legal guardian.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Housing/Shelter Definition *(as Amended by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009)*

(a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this Act, the term "homeless", "homeless individual", and "homeless person" means—

(1) an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;

(2) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(3) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);

(4) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;

(5) an individual or family who—

(A) will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by—

(i) a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;

(ii) the individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or

(iii) credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause;

(B) has no subsequent residence identified; and

(C) lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing

Maryland Definitions: Like federal law, Maryland law does not set forth a single, specific definition for homeless youth, but rather separate definitions that may apply in different contexts and can operate together.

Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, Juvenile Causes Subtitle

Child – Any person under 18 years of age [Juvenile Causes Subtitle]. Md. COURTS AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS Code Ann. § 3-801 (2001). (Maryland does not have a separate statutory definition of "youth," unlike states like Mississippi or Montana.)

Human Services Article, Transitional Services Subtitle

Homeless Person: An individual who (a) is in need of housing or emergency shelter and proper nutrition; (b) cannot be placed immediately in another available housing, nutrition, and service program; (c) is a resident of the State when the individual makes an application for housing. Md. Human Services, § 6-417(c) (2007).

Education Regulations

COMAR 13A.05.09.02(4)

(a) "Homeless student" means a child or youth who lacks a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime place of residence.

(b) "Homeless student" includes:

(i) Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations, are living in emergency or transitional shelters, also referred to as transitional housing, are abandoned in hospitals, or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for individuals;

(iii) Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;

(iv) Migratory children, as defined in §6399 of Title 20, who qualify as homeless for the purposes of the McKinney-Vento Act and this chapter because the children are living in circumstances as described in §B(4)(b)(i)—(iii) of this regulation; and

(v) A child awaiting foster care placement.

COMAR 13A.05.09.02(9).

"Unaccompanied homeless youth" means a homeless youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

# Chapter 545

**(House Bill 823)**

AN ACT concerning

**Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**

FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses; establishing the duties of the Task Force; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

Preamble

WHEREAS, Each year, over 1.6 million youth throughout the nation, and an increasing number of youth in Maryland, find themselves without stable housing and outside the care of a parent or guardian; and

WHEREAS, Many of these youth have become homeless and unaccompanied due to being rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, physical or sexual abuse, or severe conflict in the home, or because they have aged out of the foster care system without the skills and resources to support themselves; and

WHEREAS, Unaccompanied homeless youth are a largely invisible population, most of whom are "couch surfing" with friends and extended family, living on the streets, or squatting in vacant buildings; and

WHEREAS, Unaccompanied homeless youth are disproportionately likely to turn to delinquency, become victims of crime, commit suicide, suffer from physical and mental health impairments, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and drop out of school in order to survive on the street; and

WHEREAS, There is a general lack of knowledge about the public and private sector programs and resources available to assist unaccompanied homeless youth, ~~including a lack~~ such as the availability of shelter and permanent housing; case management; medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment; education and

job training; food and clothing; financial counseling; legal advice and representation; and other supportive services; and

WHEREAS, ~~The foster care system is~~ Current systems are not adequately meeting the needs of many unaccompanied homeless youth, particularly those who do not come to the attention of ~~child welfare~~ child–serving agencies, those who are ~~too old to enter foster care~~ not eligible for existing programs and services, those who have lived independently for so long that they are unlikely to form successful relationships with ~~foster or adoptive parents~~ parental figures, and those who have had particularly negative experiences while in ~~foster~~ congregate care; and

WHEREAS, These youth are urgently in need of safe, secure, affordable, and stable housing as well as supportive services that will prevent them from becoming permanently homeless and, instead, set them on a path towards self–sufficiency; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(a) In this section, "unaccompanied homeless youth" means an individual who:

(1) is between the ages of 14 and 25 years;

(2) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and

(3) is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

(b) There is a Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

~~(b)~~ (c) The Task Force consists of the following members:

(1) one member of the Senate ~~Budget and Taxation~~ Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(2) one member of the House Appropriations Committee, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates;

(3) the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, or the Secretary's designee;

(4) the Secretary of Human Resources, or the Secretary's designee;

(5) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's designee;

(6) the Secretary of Juvenile Services, or the Secretary's designee; ~~and~~

(7) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the State Superintendent's designee; and

~~(7)~~ (8) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) one representative from the Governor's Office for Children;

(ii) two representatives from the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative, one of whom is a service provider and one of whom is a youth or young adult who has experienced homelessness;

(iii) two representatives from the Prince George's County Homeless Youth Work Group, one of whom is a service provider and one of whom is a youth or young adult who has experienced homelessness; and

(iv) one representative from the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition.

~~(c) The Task Force shall elect a chair from among its members.~~

(d) The representative from the Governor's Office for Children shall serve as Chair of the Task Force.

~~(d)~~ (e) The ~~Department of Health and Mental Hygiene~~ Governor's Office for Children shall provide staff for the Task Force.

~~(e)~~ (f) A member of the Task Force:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

~~(f)~~ (g) The Task Force shall:

(1) compile existing information on and identify ~~and study~~ the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth ~~between 13 and 25 years of age~~, and ~~evaluate~~ identify the public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs;

(2) identify gaps in public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth;

~~(2)~~ (3) collect and ~~evaluate~~ compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State, including the causes of homelessness in this population and the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each jurisdiction of the State;

~~(3)~~ (4) make recommendations on:

(i) legislation and policy initiatives to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and

(ii) funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and

~~(4)~~ (5) make recommendations on any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the Task Force.

~~(g)~~ (h) On or before ~~September~~ November 1, 2013, the Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2013. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2014, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

**Approved by the Governor, May 16, 2013.**

# THE TEN ESSENTIALS
## What Your Community Needs To Do To End Youth Homelessness

The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness has developed the following checklist as a guide to help communities identify the minimum requirements for an effective permanent solution to prevent and end youth homelessness.

The essentials are based on the National Alliance to End Homelessness's Ten Essentials for Ending Homelessness in Your Community and the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, which draws from over twenty years of research and experience with communities around the country. For the purposes of this Toolkit, we have slightly modified the essentials to respond to the unique housing and service needs of homeless youth.

No essential is more important than another. All require participation from every sector of the community.

### PLAN

Your community has a set of strategies focused on ending youth homelessness. A wide range of players (government programs, elected officials, homeless providers, etc.) has made funding and implementation commitments to these strategies.

### DATA

Your community has a homelessness management information system that can be analyzed to assess how long youth are homeless, what their needs are, what the causes of homelessness are, how people interact with mainstream systems of care, the effectiveness of interventions, and the number of homeless youth.

### EMERGENCY PREVENTION

Your community has in place an emergency homelessness prevention program that includes crisis counseling, family reunification services, rent assistance, and landlord intervention.

### SYSTEMS PREVENTION

I. Mainstream programs (child welfare, juvenile corrections, mental health, etc.) that provide care and services to youth consistently assess and respond to their housing needs.

II. There is placement in stable housing for all people being released from public institutions.

## OUTREACH

Your community has an outreach and engagement system designed to reduce barriers and encourage homeless youth so that they enter appropriate housing linked with appropriate services.

## YOUTH HOUSING CONTINUUM

The youth shelter and transitional housing system in your community is organized to reduce or minimize the length of time youth remain homeless, and the number of times they become homeless. Outcome measures will be key to this effort.

Your community has skilled housing search and housing placement services available for homeless youth and young adults who cannot be reunified with their families.

## SERVICES

When youth are housed, they have rapid access to funded services, and mainstream programs provide the bulk of these services.
A) Health, Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder
B) Parenting classes, Life Skills, etc.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

To better serve youth, agencies and providers should engage youth in meaningful ways, shifting their role as a recipient of service to that of a leader and decision-maker in program development, delivery, and evaluation, organizational management, and advocacy.

## PERMANENT HOUSING

I. Your community has a sufficient supply of permanent supportive housing to meet the needs of all chronically homeless youth.
II. Your community is implementing a plan to fully address the permanent housing needs of extremely low-income people.

## INCOME

When it is necessary in order to obtain housing, your community assists homeless youth to secure enough income to afford rent, by rapidly linking them with employment and/or benefits. It also connects them to opportunities for increasing their incomes through educational and vocational programs.

# NN4Y's Comprehensive Framework to End Youth Homelessness

*July 2013*

Providing developmentally appropriate and readily accessible services is critical to addressing episodic or longer-term youth homelessness and is an essential component of any housing intervention. In light of the federal frameworks and collaborative strategies that have been published this year by federal agencies and U.S. Congress,[1] NN4Y is releasing this *Comprehensive Framework to End Youth Homelessness*. These four stages of intervention are not meant to depict a linear consumption of services, but instead seek to lay out the services, housing models, and goals that are necessary to have a fully functioning safety net for runaway and homeless youth, as well as those at risk. The first page details the services that should be available to runaway and homeless youth and their families at primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions. The second page shows the different housing models that all youth should have access to, since appropriate services cannot be provided if the youth and family are not first housed and stabilized. Finally, this framework states the goals, which can only be achieved when appropriate services and housing resources are available for the youth and family in-crisis. When these stages of interventions are scaled to capacity in a community, there is an effective safety net for these youth and their families.

## Stages of Intervention

| Prevention | Early Intervention | Longer-term Solutions | Aftercare |
|---|---|---|---|

## Services

***Family Intervention and Reunification**: evidence-based and strength-focused parenting support, counseling, and intervention services including all persons considered part of the youth's family*

***Mental Health:** individual and group counseling, behavioral and suicide prevention*

***Case Management**: assessment, planning and goal setting, care coordination, advocacy, and referrals (including to legal representation)*

***Health Care**: physical health and substance abuse prevention and treatment*

***Schools**: McKinney-Vento liaison, case management, teachers, interventions (e.g., Gay/Straight Alliances), access to health care, and sexual health education*

***Street Outreach:** meeting youth on the streets, clinic transport, food, information and health items, and connections to services*

***In Home Care:** counseling, activity groups, substance abuse prevention*

***National Safe Place***

***National Runaway Safeline:** 1-800-RUNAWAY*

***Emergency Shelter Programs***

***Respite Care:** provides youth and caregivers with a break when families are on the verge of unraveling*

***Emergency Shelter:** beds, food, clothing, intervention services, showers, lockers, laundry, counseling, referrals, goal setting*

***Child Welfare:** services and interventions to stabilize families, even if the findings don't rise to the necessary level of abuse or neglect to be "screened in"*

***Media:** public awareness and prevention messages*

***Increase Employability:** skills building, employment training, internships, career planning, and job readiness*

***Transitional Living Programs**: longer-term housing for older youth coupled with supportive services*

***Maternal Group Homes**: longer-term housing for pregnant and parenting youth coupled with supportive services including child development, family budgeting, and health and nutrition*

***Life Skills:** self-care, money management, goal-setting, problem-solving, and social, communication and parenting skills*

***Re-engage with Education:** GED, high school, technical programs, and post-secondary*

[1] *USICH Framework to End Youth Homelessness* (February 2013), *Pathways for Youth: Draft Strategic Plan for Federal Collaboration* (February 2013), *Advancing the Self-Sufficiency and Well-Being of At-Risk Youth: A Conceptual Framework* (March 2013), and *Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs* (Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2013).

# NN4Y's Comprehensive Framework to End Youth Homelessness

*July 2013*

| Prevention | Early Intervention | Longer-term Solutions | Aftercare |
|---|---|---|---|

## Housing Models

**Prevention**

***Home with Family**: the youth remains living with their parent/caregiver(s) while the family and youth receive appropriate services*

**Early Intervention**

***Emergency Shelter Programs:** including Basic Center Programs for minors*

***Host-Family Home:** homeless youth live with a family that provides safe and stable housing for the youth. This model has been effectively utilized in rural areas*

**Longer-term Solutions**

***Transitional Living Apartment:** safe and stable housing for homeless youth*

***Group Home**: community-based and adult-supervised transitional living; includes maternal group home for pregnant and/or parenting youth*

***Host-Family Home***

***Permanent Supportive Housing:** HUD-funded housing for the small percentage of youth with severe needs*

**Aftercare**

***Own Apartment/Roommates**: youth receive partial assistance with rent and basic life needs while pursuing education and vocational training*

***Home with Family:** youth and their family continue to receive services and remain connected to the appropriate care needed to achieve the goals listed below*

## Goals

***Safety**: engage the youth and family into services and meet their basic needs*

***Prevention:** keep the young person out of the juvenile justice system, and prevent the youth from being victimized, exploited, or trafficked*

***Stability:** reunify with family if possible, establish permanent connections, and support the ability to lead a sustainable and healthy life*

***Healing:** through trauma-informed care, counseling, and supportive relationships the young person will have the opportunity to heal from the trauma they experienced*

***Reduce Risk Factors:** establish community connections, increase resources, reduce conflict, and mitigate the effects of poverty*

***Increase Protective Factors:** strength-based interpersonal skills building, self-care, and positive mentoring relationships*

***Tailored Services:** meet the needs of the youth and family where they are at when accessing services and provide evidence-based services for street-involved, LGBTQ, pregnant and/or parenting, and trafficked youth*

***Prevent youth from running away***

***Prevent youth from being kicked out of their home***

***Prevent youth from running away***

***Prevent youth from being kicked out of their home***