



CALL TO ACTION: END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS BY THE END OF 2020

A Way Home America believes the next presidential administration can end youth homelessness if the following pragmatic steps are followed:

- 1. Make a commitment to prevent and end youth homelessness**
 - a. Commit and invest now to end homelessness among youth and young adults by the end of 2020
 - b. Embrace innovation and continually improve our understanding of youth homelessness and how to end it
- 2. Prevent homelessness among youth and young adults**
 - a. Ensure adequate support for families—preventing the crisis of homelessness whenever possible
 - b. Ensure youth who have child welfare or juvenile justice involvement are not at risk of homelessness
- 3. Help youth and young adults who become homeless find safe and stable housing quickly and transition to independence**
 - a. Increase emergency responses which prevent and quickly end homelessness—a total of \$1.637 billion annually
 - b. Support the transition to independence through connections to family, wellbeing, education and employment

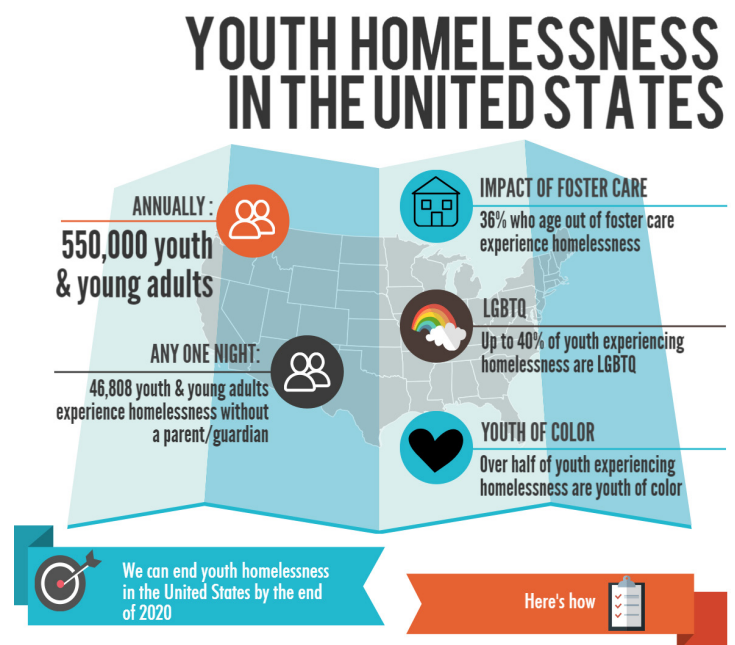
A great opportunity exists now to end youth homelessness: federal agencies are working in close coordination and are partnering with local communities to advance solutions, philanthropy is investing strategically, providers are responding with innovative solutions, new research efforts are more precisely identifying the scope and responses needed and national advocates have unprecedented alignment on the solutions included here.

THE PROBLEM

Across our country, too many young people are struggling with homelessness. During a single night in 2015, at least 46,808 young people experienced homelessness alone, without a parent or guardian. 9,901 of these young people are parents to children of their own. Of the remaining 36,907, 87% are between the ages of 18 and 24 and 13% are under age 18. [2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Housing and Urban Development]

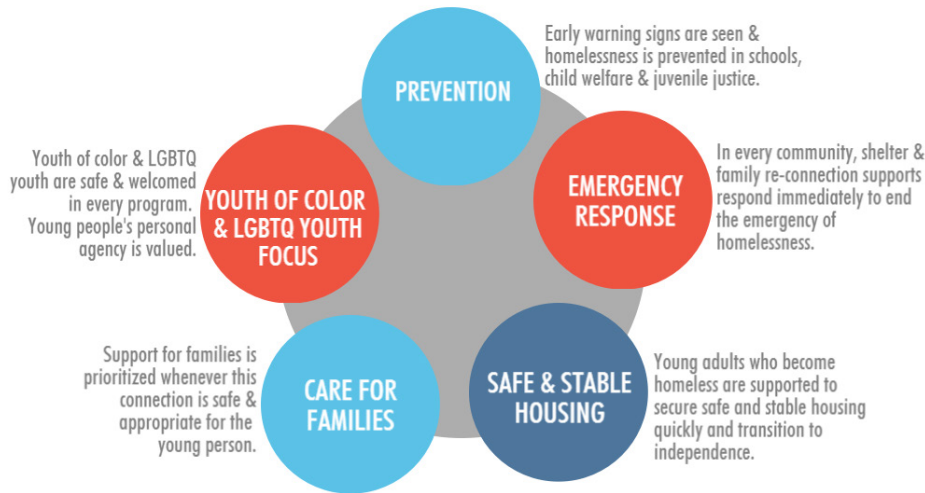
Despite facing incredible obstacles, these young people have strengths and hopes for their own future.

Every young person in America should be able to live up to their potential. Families and youth at risk should be identified early and the crisis of homelessness prevented. If a young person does experience homelessness, we must act right away to end it.



WHO WE ARE: A NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE'VE ENDED YOUTH HOMELESSNESS?



A Way Home America is a national initiative to build the movement to prevent and end homelessness among young people. We are advocates, researchers, young people, local and state public sector organizations, homeless youth providers and philanthropists uniting behind a common goal:

In 2020, prevent and end homelessness among all youth and young adults. Ensure that homelessness among youth and young adults is rare, and if it occurs, experiences of homelessness are brief and one-time.

SOLUTION: STEPS TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS BY THE END OF 2020

Make a commitment to prevent and end youth homelessness

We know it can be done. A number of states and cities have announced they have ended homelessness among veterans, a result achieved through coordinated responses at all levels and increased federal investment and support. This success sets a precedent for ending homelessness among specific populations.

Committing to ending youth homelessness by the end of 2020 communicates that the next president intends to build stronger partnerships, foster better policy and increase investment in strategies to achieve this vision.

Commit and invest now to end homelessness among youth and young adults by the end of 2020

- » Reauthorize and fund the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) as the facilitator of Federal government coordination, public-private and local and state partnerships.
- » Realize the vision of Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness—demonstrating that we are a nation where every young person lives in a safe and stable home.

We also know we have more to learn, and that we must focus in particular on youth of color and LGBTQ youth. Due to historical and institutional racism and other structural inequities, young people in crisis are disproportionately people of color. In addition, up to 40% of young people experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ, many of whom encounter rejection from their families or community.

DEFINITIONS

"youth homelessness" encompasses homelessness among all unaccompanied youth and young adults 12 – 24

"youth" refers to under 18-year-olds

"young adult" refers to 18 – 24-year-olds

"unaccompanied" refers to a youth not under the care of a parent or legal guardian

"parenting youth" are people under age 25 with children of their own

Embrace innovation and continue to improve our understanding of youth homelessness and how to end it

- » Work toward more complete national data, including information forthcoming from the Voices of Youth Count Initiative, to understand the nature of youth homelessness, what interventions work for whom and how to measure progress toward our 2020 goal.
- » Include a commitment to address both racial and LGBTQ inequities in all federal data, plans and funding announcements to prevent and end homelessness.
- » Examine youth homelessness data through the lens of racial and LGBTQ equity in order to understand the extent of homelessness among LGBTQ youth and youth of color and their access to housing and services—ensuring in all cases that LGBTQ youth and youth of color have access on par with their peers and that there are culturally competent solutions that quickly prevent and end homelessness for LGBTQ youth and youth of color.
- » Use data to explore the specific circumstances and needs of particular populations such as immigrant youth, rural youth, youth with disabilities, pregnant and parenting youth and young people who have experienced abuse, neglect and/or trafficking.
- » Promote rapid testing and innovation in federal programs addressing youth homelessness—ensuring we continue to improve our approaches and achieve stronger outcomes. Build on the learnings of the three 100-Day Challenge communities.

Prevent homelessness among youth and young adults

Public systems like foster care and juvenile justice provide care for and/or interact with youth and families in crisis. Schools are a part of young people's lives often far before a crisis occurs. These systems can look for early warning signs, support families and prevent experiences of homelessness before they start.

Ensure adequate support for families—preventing the crisis of homelessness whenever possible

- » Administration to direct funding within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for a large scale demonstration project with the aim of discovering comprehensive approaches to prevent homelessness by supporting families and young people, given that family conflict is the number one reason young people cite for experiencing homelessness. This demonstration should be a partnership across multiple federal departments, building off the successful LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative model.
- » Department of Education to develop recommendations on promising school-based approaches to identify at-risk youth and prevent episodes of homelessness.
- » Administration to establish a mandatory spending program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that would provide \$11 billion over 10 years to assist families experiencing homelessness.

While families headed by unaccompanied youth and young adults are not the explicit focus of this document, addressing family homelessness helps to end homelessness among youth and young adults. When we end family homelessness we end homelessness for young parents—almost 10,000 of whom were counted on a single night in January of 2016—and ensure that older youth are able to remain with their families through a housing crisis.

Ensure youth who are exiting foster care or who have child welfare involvement are not at risk of homelessness

- » Administration for Children & Families (ACF) within HHS to develop recommendations in coordination with other federal agencies to further a collaborative public system response to prevent or shorten experiences of homelessness among unaccompanied youth. Include highlighting promising practices across state child welfare agencies, partnerships with community based organizations and exploring new investments and resources.
- » ACF to implement learnings from the Youth at Risk of Homelessness grant initiative by ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to replicate promising practices.
- » Increase funding for Family Unification Program (FUP) Housing Choice Vouchers to \$75 million annually/10,000 vouchers annually specifically for youth and young adults. This annual appropriation will provide housing stability for young people who were in foster care any time from age 16 on and who are at risk of homelessness after they turn 18. This recommendation strengthens our current response to serve dependent adolescents.
- » Increase the effectiveness of FUP by extending the time limit for FUP vouchers from 18 months to a maximum of five years and pair FUP vouchers with supportive services to facilitate a youth's successful transition to adulthood.

Ensure youth exiting juvenile justice custody or supervision are not at risk of homelessness

- » Department of Justice (DOJ) to work with relevant federal agencies and direct federal, state and local agencies to ensure that youth involved with the juvenile justice system receive adequate transition and re-entry planning before exiting custody or supervision.
- » DOJ to direct federal, state and local agencies to ensure that young people who have had juvenile justice involvement are not excluded from participation in housing and employment programs on account of their records.
- » HUD to issue follow up guidance regarding the Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records as it pertains to youth and young adults to ensure that juvenile justice-involved youth whose families are in public housing are not forced into homelessness.

Help youth and young adults who become homeless **find safe and stable housing quickly** and transition to independence

We understand that to effectively prevent and end homelessness among young people we need a systemic response. The below funding proposal is a first step to immediately address the need based on what we know today.

The second step is to build and strengthen coordinated national systems that prevent and end homelessness among youth and young adults. Learnings from efforts such as the HUD demonstration grants, the Youth at Risk of Homelessness grant initiative and the Voices of Youth Count initiative will inform our work.

We know that we must act now to protect young people who are homeless and in unsafe situations, as we work toward our 2020 goal. **We anticipate refinements to this budget request and targeted policy improvements based on our learnings.**

Increase emergency responses which quickly end episodes of homelessness—a total of \$1.637 billion annually

» Within HHS: Provide safe housing and family support for youth and young adults by funding the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) at \$600 million

Request \$600 million in funding for RHYA, a total which is derived from the estimated number of homeless youth from the 2015 point in time count, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth counted by public schools in the 2013-2014 school year and the average cost of services from the three different RHYA community-based grants.

» Within HUD: Provide safe housing for young adults by increasing funding for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs for young adults to \$642 million

Request \$642 million in funding for HUD homeless assistance programs serving young adults annually, a total which represents sufficient funding to fully address the need that exists for young adults 18 -24.

HUD to ensure that Continuums of Care address the needs of young adults experiencing homelessness in proportion to their size of the homeless population via a spectrum of safe and stable supportive housing options, taking into account the level of their housing need and commensurate with available resources.

» Within Department of Education: Identify and support youth who experience homelessness while in school by funding the McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children & Youth Assistance Act at \$250 million

The funding amount recommended will provide funds for each State Education Agency to allocate such that 100% of Local Education Agencies will receive funding to identify, transport and provide supports to children and youth experiencing homelessness.

» Within DOJ: Care for youth with juvenile justice involvement by funding the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) at \$145 million

Request \$80 million for the JJDP Title II State Formula Grants Program, and \$65 million for the JJDP Title V Delinquency Prevention Program with no earmarks. Adequately fund community-based alternatives for youth who have run away from home, are engaging in survival crimes, or otherwise face the potential for being criminalized as a result of their lack of secure and stable housing.

Support the transition to independence through connections to family, wellbeing, education and employment

» Increase the number of young people who are able to secure safe and stable housing with a family member or other supportive adult

HHS to release guidance on best practices related to family finding and strength-based family interventions and ensure sufficient resources are allocated to identified promising practices.

» Improve access to early mental health interventions

Substance Abuse Mental and Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to focus on young people experiencing homelessness within the required 5% State Community Mental Health Services Block Grant set-aside. These funds support individuals as they are experiencing their first signs of serious mental illness, which often occurs at the same age when youth might find themselves homeless.

SAMHSA to promote the development of a comprehensive and cross-systems approach to address the behavioral health needs of young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system and/or the criminal justice system.

Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services to issue guidance encouraging states to use Medicaid to cover care coordination, case management services, and system navigation to improve health outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness.

» **Improve access to and completion of higher education**

Department of Education to release guidance on best practices to help homeless youth and young adults enroll in and complete post-secondary education, including how to designate Single Points of Contact on college campuses, ensure access to existing campus housing, develop housing options during academic breaks and improve access to work study programs.

» **Improve access to employment**

Department of Labor (DOL) to issue a Training and Employment Notice to develop a year-round subsidized employment programs specifically targeted to young people experiencing homelessness. DOL to include promising models and examples that support the employment needs of young people: transportation to and from work, access to state identification, payment above minimum wage for orientation, training and apprenticeships and direct connection to long-term employers with temporary supports to ensure job retention.

DOL to issue a Training and Employment Notice outlining promising strategies for supporting basic literacy and adult basic education concurrently with earned income strategies such as subsidized employment to support young people experiencing homelessness who have basic literacy and education needs.

RESULT

Youth who have experienced foster care or juvenile justice transition to successful independence.

Fewer young people experience homelessness.

Of those young people who are homeless, none are homeless for long periods.

Experiences of homelessness do not reoccur because young people have support and transition to independence.

NOW IS THE TIME TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

“ To end youth homelessness, we need fresh, functional ideas and solutions. ”

— Phoebe VanCleeve, speaking about how to end youth homelessness and her own lived experience, 2016 White House Policy Briefing on Youth Homelessness

The new administration has a remarkable opportunity to change the future for every young person in America—including those who are struggling with homelessness.

A Way Home America looks forward to working with the administration to ensure every young person in America has a path to live up to their potential. Through the effective use of data to improve our responses, the above solutions and a strong commitment, the new administration can end homelessness among youth and young adults by the end of 2020.