



H.O.M.E.

Maine's Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness



**We never chose to be homeless,
but now we have focus.
To change the way this looks,
for anyone that comes after us.
We stand, we fight, and we conquer.
Youth and Young Adult Homelessness.
Resources,
to end the fight for all struggling.
Strength,
to end the fight for all struggling.
The community,
to end the fight for all struggling.
Youth and Young adult homelessness.
We have what it takes,
to end,
Youth and Young adult homelessness.**

-KELSEA, MAINE STATEWIDE YOUTH ACTION BOARD

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“Who better than youth with lived houseless experience to help create a bridge for other homeless youth to find stable and secure housing? If you’ve never been homeless, as a youth or young adult, how do you know what works to make it brief, rare, and one time?!”

-KELSEA, MAINE STATEWIDE YOUTH ACTION BOARD

“The YHDP process has given me an opportunity to share my experiences in an impactful way and allows me to connect with my community to create a better future for Maine.”

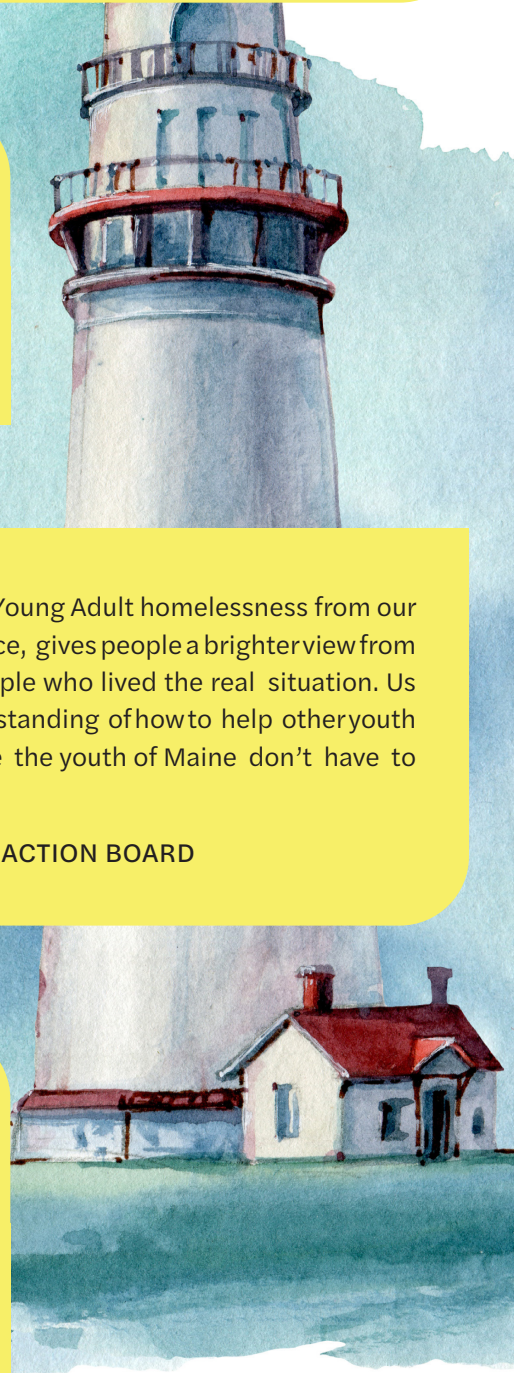
-ANONYMOUS, MAINE STATEWIDE YOUTH ACTION BOARD

“Working with people to end Youth and Young Adult homelessness from our perspective of having personal experience, gives people a brighter view from a different side. They get to see real people who lived the real situation. Us youth can help lead and develop an understanding of how to help other youth and young adults. We want to make sure the youth of Maine don’t have to go through what we did.”

-REBEKAH, MAINE STATEWIDE YOUTH ACTION BOARD

“The YHDP is a project that brings people together all over the State of Maine to End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness. The Youth Action Board is made up of a group of people who have experienced homelessness. We meet weekly and discuss what we can do to open the eyes of the people, so we can ensure safety for young people in Maine. This is our priority.”

-CHELSEY, MAINE STATEWIDE YOUTH ACTION BOARD



Introduction

Maine has engaged in a statewide effort to prevent and end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness for the past several years. We have experimented with new interventions, participated in 100-day challenges, and invited national experts to train and guide stakeholders from homelessness and other YYA-serving organizations. But this effort is different.

Hope and Opportunity for ME (H.O.ME) is the result of a year-long coordinated community planning process. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected the State of Maine as a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) community in August 2019, which jump-started the effort. YHDP selection included \$3.3 Million for project funding and technical assistance support from the federal government; and it required that a wide range of Maine stakeholders, including young people with lived experience of homelessness, develop and implement a Coordinate Community Plan (CCP) to prevent and end YYA homelessness. HUD gave our community eight months to complete the CCP (extended due to COVID-19) and a total of three years for its implementation.

Building on our previous work, YHDP has brought together a broader group of partners than ever before. They represent the homelessness, youth development, child welfare, education, employment, justice, and health sectors. They are public servants and leaders in the private not for profit world. They travel and call in from every county in the state, from Aroostook to York and Washington to Oxford. It has also included YYA in positions of leadership ready to contribute their expertise and make decisions. They have been part of every meeting and can be seen throughout this document. This plan is the result of their hard work in countless all-day meetings, webinars, phone calls, and offline independent working sessions.

The primary purpose of this document is to lay out our strategy for preventing and ending YYA homelessness in Maine. It includes our Vision for a Maine without YYA homelessness, six goals including the needs that inform them, the objectives that focus them, and the action steps that will help us achieve them. Our governance and continuous improvement sections describe how we made decisions developing the CCP and how we will organize ourselves to implement the CCP.

This will be hard; and it is necessary that we succeed. We won't get everything right, but we will improve over time, leverage the vast expertise and experience of our partners, and collectively commit our resources to seeing this through. H.O.ME. is therefore the roadmap that we will use to implement a comprehensive new YYA homelessness strategy and see our vision come true.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we would like to acknowledge the youth and young adults who have generously shared their expertise and insights during the development of Maine’s Coordinated Community Plan: H.O.M.E. is the culmination of an extensive, months long, planning process that involved a diverse group of stakeholders working together to create the vision for how Maine will respond to end and prevent homelessness among youth and young adults. We owe a great deal of gratitude to these individuals who generously gave their time, expertise, and experience to the development of Maine’s plan, the creation of our Request for Proposal, and scoring of the applications that were submitted.

Matt Aronson	Beverly Hubbard	Kris Pitts
Chris Bicknell	Chelsey Lavertu	Alice Preble
Lauren Bustard	Todd Landry	Bridge Semler
Ellen Fitzpatrick	Joseph Locke	Bear Shea
Jacinda Goodwin	Ashley Mann-McLellan	Scott Tibbitts
William Higgins	Sonja Morse	Kyle Tilsley
Rich Hooks Wayman	Craig Phillips	Kelsea Vincent

A Vision for Maine

Maine partners envision a world in which the experience of homelessness for YYA in Maine is Rare; but when it occurs it is Brief and One Time. All services YYA receive are trauma informed and accessible to all populations of YYA who experience homelessness.

To achieve this vision, H.O.M.E. will focus on providing: [stable housing](#); [employment & education](#); [permanent connections to caring adults](#); and [social & emotional wellbeing](#). It will also ensure that basic needs, including transportation, are met and engage both traditional providers and other community partners to better identify YYA needs and support them no matter where they reside.

H.O.M.E. recognizes that society places certain populations of young people at a higher risk of homelessness and that some of those populations experience homelessness differently or more severely than their peer groups. These populations include but are not limited to the following:

- **Young people who have experienced trauma**
- **Young people in rural communities**
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) young people**
- **Youth under 18 (“Minors”)**
- **Young people with disabilities**
- **Young people experiencing substance use disorders**
- **Transition age youth served by group, congregate, and residential programs**
- **Refugee, Asylee & Immigrant young people**
- **Young people impacted by poverty**
- **Young People of Color**
- **Young people impacted by human trafficking and exploitation**
- **Tribal young people (Indigenous)**
- **Young people impacted by violence**
- **Unaccompanied students enrolled in public schools**
- **Young people served by State Agencies (“systems involved”) responsible for Foster Care, Juvenile Justice, Adult Corrections, and Behavioral Health**

Additionally, H.O.M.E. recognizes that preventing and ending YYA homelessness will require commitment, resources, and collaboration from a broad array of community partners. In addition to our current YYA homelessness providers, advocates, coalitions, and public agencies, those partners must include adult homeless system providers, schools, colleges and universities, non-profit organizations and public agencies without dedicated homelessness efforts, private landlords, members of the business community, faith communities, and philanthropy. Only together will we ensure that YYA homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time.

System Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

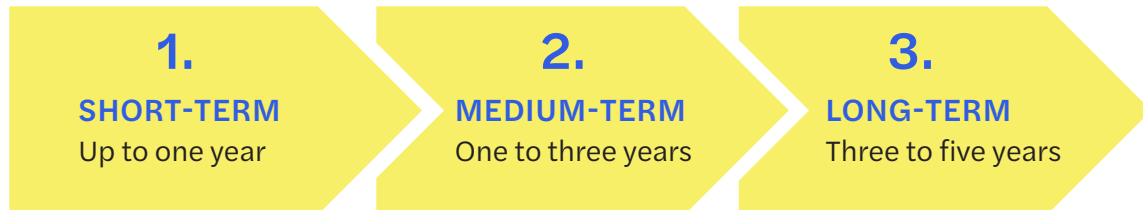
Maine will achieve its vision by focusing on the six following goals:

GOAL #1	Identify All Unaccompanied YYA Experiencing Homelessness
GOAL #2	Prevent and Divert Homelessness Whenever Possible by Providing Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Crisis Housing Services to YYA Who Need and Want
GOAL #3	Use Coordinated Entry Process to Link YYA Experiencing Homelessness to Housing and Services Solutions Tailored to Their Needs
GOAL #4	Assist YYA to Swiftly Move to Permanent or Non-Time-Limited Housing Options with Appropriate Services and Supports
GOAL #5	Permanent Connections and Supports that Promote Self-Sufficiency and Social-Emotional Well-Being, including Educational and Employment Needs
GOAL #6	Create a sustainable system to continue ending and preventing YYA homelessness in Maine.

In this section, we outline the needs and evidence that support each goal, and the action steps necessary to meet them. Each action step is grounded in YYA partnership and must be YYA-led and prioritize YYA choice. Our system and project-level responses must be based on principles of positive youth development and trauma informed care, and our efforts informed by the experiences of our most vulnerable.

After each Action Step we have identified a “Responsible Party/Point of Accountability” and a “Timeframe” to guide us. The “Responsible Party/Point of Accountability” is not at party who’d purpose it is to complete each goal, rather the party we have identified as most likely to lead the charge.

Our timeframes are broken into three categories which represent target dates for completion of the step:



Goal #1: Identify All Unaccompanied YYA Experiencing Homelessness

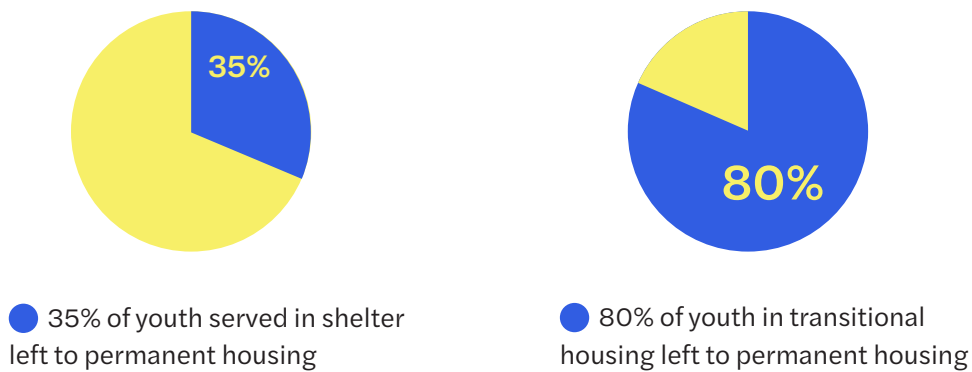
Maine needs to better identify the many YYA who may be experiencing some form of homelessness during the year. That includes better identifying YYA living in unsafe situations and those moving in and out of homelessness along non-linear pathways and living in a variety of places and situations.

Our 2019 PIT count 129 YYA, our formal homelessness system engaged 579 YYA in FY 2019, our school system 351 unaccompanied “homeless students,” and yet by one well-respected national estimate up to 23,200 YYA in Maine may be experiencing at least some form of homelessness over the course of a year. Our formal homelessness counts are designed to count only a specific subset of young people that often exclude YYA living in violent or otherwise unsafe situations, couch-surfing, doubled up, or experiencing intermittent and seasonal homelessness. Our PIT has made improvements, incorporating an “other category” to capture non-HUD required experiences and learning from national youth counting efforts. However, other states collect more detailed information that might help us better understand YYA homelessness, and our current YYA Addendum is not completed annually. Outside of the PIT count, our efforts are mostly based on self-reporting or presenting to a system that is not designed for YYA.

Maine needs better early identification and intervention strategies for YYA with multiple risk factors. We need to identify minors experiencing housing instability, including those who are attending school and those interacting with state systems.

85% of students experiencing homelessness report Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES); 46% report having 3 or more ACES compared to 23% of all high schoolers in Maine. Students experiencing homelessness on their own appear to not be moving around once they’ve been formally identified as an “unaccompanied homeless youth.” The four-year graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness in Maine in SY 2017-18 was 57%, while the Maine statewide rate was 86.7%.

Few minors are identified by the homelessness system and yet identified YYA are as young as 14 and 68% of YYA surveyed during the PIT say that this is not their first homelessness experience, even if they are being identified for the first time. According to the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey 537 middle school and 1804 High School students reported housing instability over the past 30 days. Housing instability is defined by the survey as sleeping anywhere except “in my parent’s or guardian’s home” or “school housing.” 83% of the 351 unaccompanied “homeless students” during SY 17/18 were “doubled up.” For the 109 under 18 year olds who engaged with homelessness services in 2018, the average length of stay was 57 days. 103 of them entered emergency shelter for an average of 33 days and only 35% of those who left exited to a permanent housing destination. 11 youth entered TH for an average of 259 days and 80% of those who left exited to permanent housing.



Maine needs to better identify YYA parents experiencing and at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The 2019 PIT identified 16 YYA parents (and 19 children) out of 129 total YYA, including 14 single-parent households and one two-parent household. HMIS data from FY 2019 includes 93 YYA parents out of 853 YYA. YYA parents represent 40% of the population of YYA experiencing homelessness in national estimates, equivalent to 9,300 YYA parents experiencing homelessness in Maine and around 10 percent of all Maine’s young adults, about 10,000 residents ages 18 through 24, are parents. This disparity between Maine and the national average may be accounted for by the limited number of designated beds for pregnant and parenting YYA in Maine. Young parents had a median family income of \$23,000 per year, according to the report. In 2017, nearly 80% of substance use treatment admissions for pregnant women in Maine were related to opioids and in 2018 there were 904 reports to Child Protective Services regarding infants born exposed to substances. The combination of poverty, substance use and lack of affordable housing for young families puts them at much greater risk for homelessness, 200% according to national estimates.

Maine needs more comprehensive identification efforts in rural areas that respond to how different homelessness looks in rural areas than it does in urban communities.

Nationally, YYA experience homelessness in rural areas as commonly as they do in urban areas. Rural YYA are more likely to couch-surf, cite family conflict as reasons for homelessness, be in school, be in contact with family, and desire to stay where they are. In Maine, up to one-third of YYA experiencing homelessness in urban areas may come from rural areas, and LGBTQ YYA report that they migrate to larger and more liberal areas to find acceptance. Over 70% of urban YYA and over 30% of rural YYA had foster care experience. 27%, 34%, and 21% of Urban YYA, and 19%, 11%, and 4% of rural YYA spent time in jail, a mental health facility, or substance use program, respectively. Rural YYA may be younger and earlier in their homelessness experience and there we may be missing their homelessness experiences until they turn up in urban areas.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Work with community stakeholders to establish strategies to identify YYA considered “homeless” under any federal definition.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Regularly survey stakeholders on creative ways to capture data on all identified YYA	YHDP Coordinator	Short-Term
Refine and implement the Youth PIT Count	PIT Lead, YAB	Short-Term
Engage schools in a series of conversations, particularly in rural areas, to improve their capacity (and the capacity of their liaisons) as identification hubs - to connect service system and regional school systems.	YHDP Coordinator	Short-Term
Ask DHHS, DOE and DOC to adopt data collection protocols on the number of YYA who are entering state systems of care from homelessness or facing homelessness upon discharge from services.	DHHS, DOC, DOE	Long-Term
Develop partnerships with Head Start providers to identify YYA parents experiencing or at risk of homelessness.	MaineHousing, DOE	Long-Term
Leverage new Maine statute (LD 866 – An Act to Support College Completion by Homeless Youth in Maine) to collect data on homelessness among college students.	YHDP Coordinator	Short-Term

Consult with immigrant and refugee communities, and providers working with these communities, to develop strategies to identify YYA experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the New Mainer community.	Preble Street	Short-Term
Hold public forums or awareness events to leverage community support for the issue (i.e. hosts, volunteers, in-kind resources)	Maine Statewide Homeless Council, Preble Street – dedicated training space	Short-Term

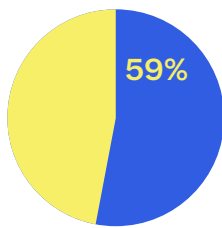
OBJECTIVE 1.2: Ensure use of HMIS across service providers to enhance accurate tracking and assessment of YYA in need (including special population groups).

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Provide data quality training and technical assistance to new and existing YYA projects to increase the validity of our by name lists to identify young people in HMIS	MaineHousing HMIS Team	Short-Term
Create consistent definitions and data elements to capture homelessness status across key systems of care (juvenile justice, education, child welfare, etc.).	YHDP Planning body	Short-Term
Adopt a unified database for census, demographics, needs, service referrals and outcomes that would import data to HMIS and show additional findings to communities and policy makers.	Data Innovation Project, YHDP Coordinator and HMIS team	Medium-Term

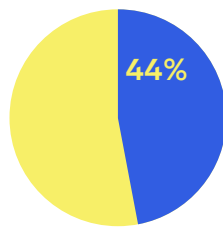
Goal #2: Prevent and Divert Homelessness Whenever Possible by Providing YYA Who Need and Want Low-Barrier Crisis Housing Services with Immediate Access

Maine needs a standard diversion protocol combined with flexible, as needed, financial support. The support must include basic resources necessary for employment such as cell phones and interview clothes and account for YYA who are couch-surfing, living in an unsafe space, or otherwise not engaging with an access point. Staff must be trained to divert YYA quickly from an emergency shelter back to family, the community, or independent housing. These solutions need to account for rural YYA and minors.

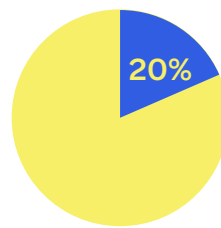
Maine does not have a standard protocol for outreach, homelessness system access points, and other front doors to engage YYA in prevention and diversion conversations with YYA. Similarly, there are few flexible resources for staff at those locations. 59% of YYA experiencing homelessness report having stayed with someone they did not feel safe with to remain housed. 44% report staying with someone they didn't know or trust. 20% stayed with a sexual partner they would not have if they had other housing options. 25% stayed on a couch or floor for longer than 1 week. National evidence describes YYA homelessness as non-linear, where YYA move fluidly between places that formally qualify them as "homeless" and those that do not. Local evidence suggests that this is especially true for rural YYA, and that experiences that YYA bring to access points in rural locations are different from those that they bring to urban locations. Finally, national evidence suggests that each night experiencing homelessness increases future risk of homelessness by 2%, and 32% of YYA identified during the 2018 PIT report experiencing homelessness for the first time.



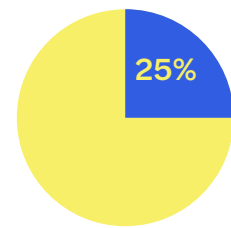
● 59% of YYA experiencing homelessness report having stayed with someone they did not feel safe with to remain housed



● 44% report staying with someone they didn't know or trust



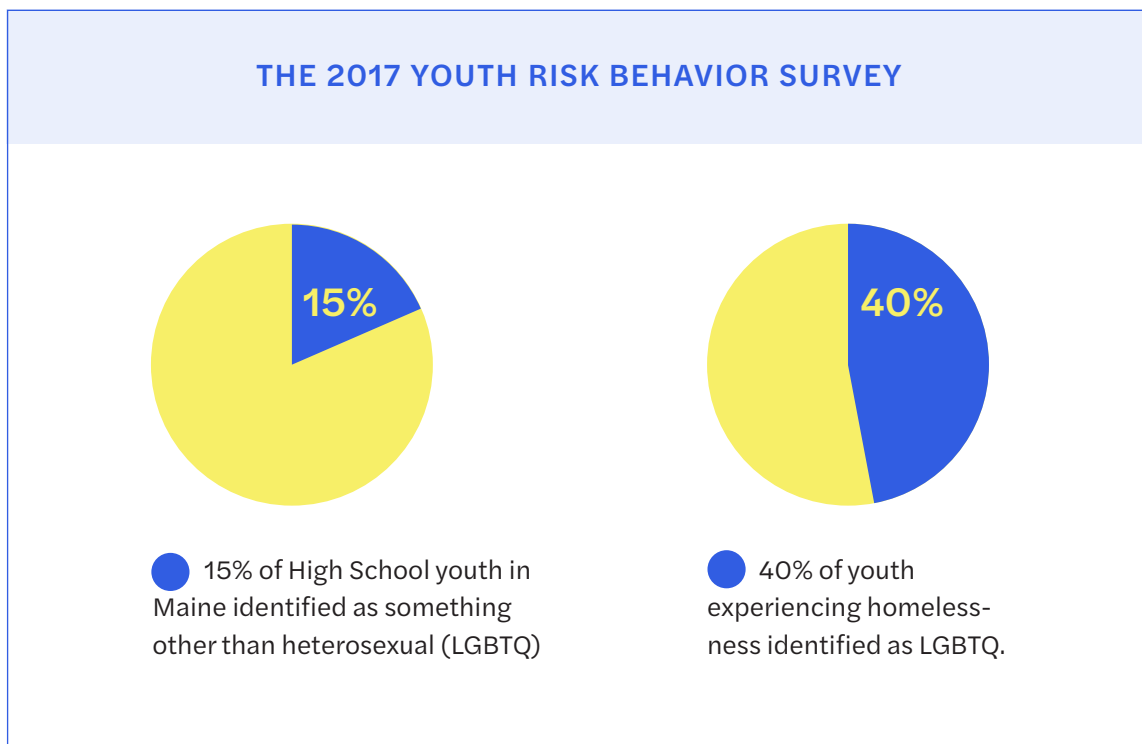
● 20% stayed with a sexual partner they would not have if they had other housing options



● 25% stayed on a couch or floor for longer than 1 week

YVA in Maine need access to family mediation and crisis intervention support so that they can stay at home when they want to remain there and when it is safe to do so. Minors also need additional strategies for support to either supplement family engagement or offer an alternative solution.

Nearly all YVA studied in Maine report histories of childhood instability. Many reported parental substance use, abuse, or neglect, particularly among rural YVA. Over one third of people identified experiencing homelessness in the 2019 PIT were in households with children, which may increase the likelihood of homelessness experiences as a YVA. While many YVA report that they chose to leave their last stable housing situation, over half reported in the 2018 PIT (60%) and 2019 PIT (51%) that they were forced to leave. Those YVA who chose to leave reported that it was primarily due to issues with families and roommates. Of those who were forced to leave, some reported being kicked out by their families and others being evicted for lease violations (most often from letting friends stay with them who were not on the lease). LGBTQ identifying YVA may need family mediation and nationally experience higher rates of homelessness due to family rejection, violence, and conflict than their peers.



Maine needs improved transition planning, supports, and significant longer-term follow-up for systems involved YYA. A comprehensive strategy must increase voluntary service participation with improved offerings. It must also remove or ameliorate the collateral consequences related to past systems involvement, including background screening for housing, services, education, employment, and social benefits.

According to a 2015 study in Maine, 72% of urban YYA and 32% of rural YYA had been involved with systems of care. Of the YYA who accepted voluntary Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) services in 2018 at 18 years old, 45% were no longer receiving services by their 19th birthday. 20 YYA were released from corrections directly to shelters in 2018. In Maine 56% of YYA with child welfare involvement have 3 or more foster care placements compared to 51% nationally. YYA identified the criminalization of homeless behaviors and the collateral consequences standing in the way of employment and housing. Over 2,000 children are currently in the custody of Maine's DHHS with the vast majority of children under the age of 10. For YYA over the age of 16 it is more difficult to find foster care placements. In 2017, 874 youth were committed to juvenile justice, 682 in formal detention facilities, and 68% of all juvenile justice placements were for non-person offenses. YYA identified aging out of systems as a contributing factor for their homelessness. Nationally there is a correlation between YYA with a history of child welfare involvement having a higher incidence of experiencing homelessness in adolescence or early adulthood. As YYA age out of care they experience a resource cliff as they transition between youth and adult service sectors which contributes to incidents of homelessness.

Maine must advocate for systems changes upstream from YYA homelessness. Maine needs more affordable housing in every county that matches the average renter's ability to pay, improved eviction prevention strategies, poverty reduction efforts for families and YYA, and poverty reduction solutions intentionally targeting systemic racial inequality.

Fair Market Rents range from \$616-\$1,008 for a one-bedroom, and \$811-\$1,327 for a two-bedroom apartment. The average Maine renter earns less than \$12/hour and can only afford \$615 (\$8.80/hr and \$457 in Aroostook County). Renters earning the average income cannot afford an apartment in any Maine County with average rents equal to 31.2% of median income. Maine has the second highest child poverty rate in New England (behind RI) with several counties above 20% and only Cumberland and York below 10%. 46.2% of students in Maine are eligible for subsidized school lunch and the highest county rate is 71.2%. The poverty rate is 48% for 18-24 year olds and 51% (16,785) for unrelated 15 to 24 year olds. 11.1% of Mainers experience poverty and over 400,000 live below 200% of the poverty rate. Black and Latinx residents are two times as likely to experience poverty or unemployment, earn less on average with the same level of education, and have lower rates of home and business ownership. Black students are more than two times as likely to be suspended, residents of color are nearly two times as likely to be unable to see a doctor because of the cost, and Black residents are six times more likely to be incarcerated. The Black poverty rate is 22%, 19% for Latinx, and 21% for mixed race people.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Support diversion from homelessness & family reunification when appropriate.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Establish protocols to ensure that state systems of care for youth engage in pre-discharge planning that does not result in discharging youth to homelessness	Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Contract Coordinator; Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel	Medium-Term
Confirm whether protocols exist for the identification and referral for services between DHHS (Child Welfare and Behavioral Health) and YYA homelessness providers when minors with histories of abuse or neglect are identified experiencing homelessness. Work on developing/ implementing protocols where they are needed	DHHS	Short-Term
Support family stabilization and reunification, when safe and appropriate, through coordinated entry processes.	New Beginnings, YHDP funded agencies	Short-Term
Offer training in evidenced-based family reunification approaches and services to providers serving YYA experiencing homelessness. Potentially identify national resources to offer best practice trainings.	DHHS, External Entities	Short-Term
Fund mobile diversion teams that are geographically nimble and trained in diversion and family reunification strategies.	YHDP Planning body	Short-Term

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Increase access to low barrier crisis housing options, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, or other forms of emergency assistance for YYA who are unsheltered, fleeing an unsafe situation, or experiencing a housing crisis

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Leverage faith-based communities, hospitals, and other facilities that may have empty beds to use as temporary crisis beds.	Community Program Coordinator at Maine General	Medium-Term

Fund transitional housing to increase crisis beds for YYA.	RFP Committee	Short-Term
Create kiosks equipped with supplies to meet basic needs, as well as cell phone charging mechanisms and Wi-Fi for young people to meet basic needs. Ensure that they help connect YYA to people and organizations, including the mobile diversion teams and navigators.	Technical Assistance - YAB	Medium-Term (for Pilot)
Support existing host home models or increase host home capacity to provide low barrier, low cost, crisis housing while also supporting the development of permanent connections and building community awareness and allyship.	RFP Committee	Short-Term

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Fund more upstream prevention and tenancy preservation programs that target YYA.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Coordinate with systems of care to align, target, and possibly grow their resources related to upstream homelessness prevention work.	YHDP Coordinator, MaineHousing	Medium-Term
Ensure expanded upstream prevention can be mobile or geographically nimble so YYA can stay in their communities of origin.	YHDP Coordinator, MaineHousing	Medium-Term
Identify voucher termination policies that place YYA at risk of returning to homelessness and work with program administrators (or Public Housing Authorities (PHAs)) to modify those policies.	MaineHousing, New Beginnings, Preble Street	Short-Term

Goal #3: Use the Coordinated Entry (CE) Process to Link YYA Experiencing Homelessness to Housing and Services Solutions Tailored to Their Needs

Maine needs to fully implement a YYA-specific coordinated entry system adopted by all YYA-providers, regardless of funding stream. It must be efficient, reducing the time from intake to housing, and offer access to basic needs resources that quickly help YYA end their immediate crisis.

CE for YYA is not fully developed. YYA do not have access to a standard and equitable process for accessing, being assessed and prioritized for, and referred to system resources. YYA experience significant variation in access to resources based on their location and high variability in intake procedures. Without standardized practices, system leaders do not know enough about inflow or outflow to predict long term housing needs. Stakeholders identified the slow process from intake to getting a voucher as a significant barrier and the need for access to a variety of options, including low barrier housing. YYA also need access to basic resources when they present with a housing crisis, like phones and coverage.

Maine needs to improve support for individuals as they navigate access to homelessness and related resources. The support should be personalized according to their needs, provide them with relevant and timely information, and stay with them until they access housing.

YYA describe difficulty navigating systems needed to access resources. Many YYA entering the system in urban areas come from rural communities and may be more unfamiliar with the resources available to them. Given that, and their more limited experience than older adults, stakeholders identified the need for supportive adults and information to help YYA navigate the housing system.

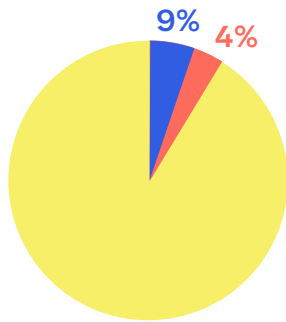
Maine needs to build awareness of when YYA can identify as experiencing homelessness and present to access points for support. It needs access points that more YYA will be able to comfortably approach, including at schools and social service organizations, as well as crisis front doors.

Stakeholders frequently discuss the challenge of working with programs that use multiple homelessness definitions and different eligibility criteria. 23% reported 'other' during the 2018 PIT which includes living with friends and family in apartments, houses or dorms, a barn, couch-surfing and at a food pantry, etc. Planning partners identified a low general awareness of homelessness in Maine, and that the different kinds of homelessness experienced by YYA when compared to adult homelessness may decrease the likelihood that YYA will seek services. The school system identified 351 unaccompanied "homeless students" in SY17/18 that may not overlap with other homelessness system counts, and stakeholders indicate that other adults may be aware of YYA homelessness experiences outside of the formal homelessness system. As previously discussed, many YYA outside of the urban core may be far away from existing front doors and need a more flexible access point, fixed, mobile, or virtual, to present for resources.

Maine must ensure that standardized access to resources is equitable for all YYA and account for barriers to homelessness resources uniquely faced by specifically Black, Latinx, LGBTQ, and immigrant communities.

Black YYA are overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness in Maine by a factor of 2.5 to 4 and non-White YYA make up 23% of YYA experiencing homelessness. Black and Latinx YYA are also less likely to move into permanent supportive housing than their white peers. 0% of Black YYA and only 2% of Latinx who access homelessness services exit to PSH. 29% of YYA experiencing homelessness identified as LGB and 7% as T or gender non-conforming, twice the rate of the general population of YYA. Maine stakeholders consistently identify additional challenges faced by non-white and LGBTQ YYA in accessing resources. Similarly, national research finds that LGBTQ YYAs are at higher risk for leaving home as a direct result of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that they experience homelessness more severely due to community bias and behaviors.

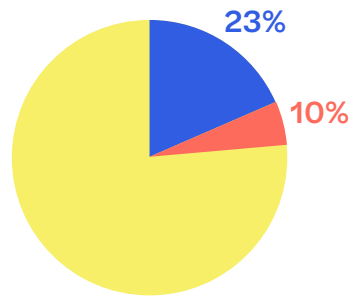
COMPARISON BETWEEN GENERAL CENSUS DATA AND DATA FOR HOMELESS YOUTH



● 9% of all 10 to 24 year olds identify as non-white

● 4% identify as Black or African American (Census, 2018)

CENSUS, 2018



● 23% of YYA experiencing homelessness in our PIT dataset identify as non-white

● 10% of whom identify as Black or African American

PIT, 2019



Maine's 2019 HMIS data show an even higher proportion, with 13% of YYA who engage with homeless services identifying as Black or African American.



EXITS TO PERMANENT HOUSING FOR BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH AND LATINX YOUTH



0% OF BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN YYA

exited emergency shelter and TH programs to permanent supportive housing (PSH) last year.

LATINX YYA REPRESENT 6% OF YYA

identified during the 2019 PIT and

4% IN HMIS BUT ONLY 2% OF EXITS TO PSH

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Engage multiple providers in CE and ensure multiple service access points.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Identify and engage local partners, including YHDP funded providers, to expand access points and CE referral partners across the state	New Beginnings, MaineHousing CE Coordinator	Short-Term
Connect with local school districts, community colleges and universities, including tribal institutes of education, to identify potential access points or CE referral partners.	YHDP Coordinator, CE Coordinator	Medium-Term
Confirm whether protocols exist at all state agencies including DHHS, DOE, and DOC to refer YYA with an identified housing crisis to CE. Work on developing/implementing protocols where they are needed.	YHDP Coordinator, CE Coordinator	Short-Term
Fund navigation teams to engage YYA at the beginning or early in their experience to guide them through the process and make connections to housing options and supportive services.	YHDP Planning body	Short-Term

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Develop & implement assessment and referral processes specific to youth and young adults and the individualized circumstances with which they present.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME- FRAME
Confirm whether protocols exists at all state agencies including DHHS, DOE and DOC to refer YYA with an identified history of homelessness to CE. Work on developing/implementing protocols where they are needed	YHDP Coordinator and CE Coordinator	Short-Term
Establish relationships with Department of Safety and Healthcare providers to educate about YYA homelessness and CE process. Help develop protocols for referrals to CE.	YAB Specialist, MaineHousing CE coordinator, YAB	Medium-Term
Establish self-serve ways such as an on-line portal for YYA to learn about and sign up for housing resources.	YHDP Coordinator	Medium-Term
<p>Implement a new assessment and referral process for YYA that provides YYA with an authentic choice by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prioritizing YYA-choice about the types of housing programs and agencies they want to engage with ▪ Identifying protocols for supporting YYA when the homelessness system lacks capacity to serve them. 	New Beginnings, MaineHousing CE Coordinator, Preble Street	Short-Term

OBJECTIVE 3.3: Provide training and oversight of coordinated entry processes

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME- FRAME
<p>Implement a new training protocol across each group of participating agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access point staff to provide intake and specifically to support YYA ▪ Primary referral partners (YYA homelessness providers) to work with CE, participate in case conferencing, receive YYA through the CE process, and to provide information and feedback ▪ Other referral partners (as they come on board) 	YHDP Coordinator	Short-Term
Develop evaluation systems that demonstrate the effectiveness of the CE process in promoting successful outcomes for YYA, including metrics for racial and LGBTQ equity.	MaineHousing CE Coordinator	Medium-Term

Goal #4: Assist YYA to Swiftly Move to Permanent or Non-Time-Limited Housing Options with Appropriate Services and Supports

Maine needs to account for the unique needs of Non-White and LGBTQ YYA, including members of immigrant communities, when developing all programs and solutions.

As previously described, Black and Latinx YYA are both overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness and less likely to move into permanent supportive housing than their white peers. The same is true for LGBTQ YYA. Maine stakeholders consistently identify the additional challenges faced by people of color and members of the LGBTQ community in accessing safe, appropriate, and affirming housing and connected services.

Maine needs a housing array that is well-adapted for its rural and urban communities. It needs flexible housing resources for rural areas that leverage community-based housing opportunities and more independent housing options and services to address higher needs and older YYA populations in urban centers.

Stakeholders consistently describe the challenges of meeting the housing needs of urban YYA, who have limited access to and choice among unit types located near supportive services, and rural YYA, who generally have limited access to housing, let alone those near services. In Maine 68% YYA interacting with the homelessness system in 2019 had previous experiences with the system, 32% interacted with the system for the first time, and at least 17 qualified as experiencing chronic homelessness. 12% of YYA in HMIS are parenting and over 100 were minors in 2018. For the diverse group of YYA who made up the 786 YYA in HMIS during FY 2019, Maine currently has the following YYA-specific beds and units: 57 shelter beds; 81 TH units; and 16 PSH units. Four additional YYA-specific PSH units will come online in 2020.

Maine needs a landlord engagement, education, and retention strategy for YYA.

Stakeholders highlighted a lack of receptive landlords as a barrier to accessing housing for YYA in all communities across Maine. This makes it difficult to leverage rental assistance mechanisms designed to be used in the private rental housing market and offer YYA a flexible range of housing options.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Increase access to existing permanent housing options.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME- FRAME
Map existing housing resources, among both homelessness and non-homelessness dedicated housing that YYA can currently access.	MaineHousing	Short- Term

Create an inventory of unused facilities (including properties) that could be paired with services to expand supportive housing options (tiny homes, trailer parks, community-owned buildings, etc.)	Maine COC, Maine Statewide Homeless Council	Short-Term
Leverage existing housing vouchers or funding (Family Reunification Program Vouchers) to pair with YHDP supportive services to create more supported housing options.	MaineHousing	Short-Term
Explore use of shared housing and roommate models.	MaineHousing	Short-Term

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Increase the number of permanent housing options.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Implement YHDP-funded TH-RRH units that offers in-program housing flexibility by expanding crisis housing for those who want or need it (see Action Step 2.2.2) and providing rapid exits to permanent housing	YHDP funded agencies	Short-Term
Implement additional TH-RRH units that offers in-program housing flexibility by expanding crisis housing for those who want or need it (see Action Step 2.2.2) and providing rapid exits to permanent housing	The Commission	Medium-Term
Implement YHDP-funded RRH units specifically designed for YYA including greater flexibility in eligibility requirements and time limits and tailored supports using a housing first for YYA approach.	YHDP Funded agencies	Short-term
Implement additional RRH units specifically designed for YYA including greater flexibility in eligibility requirements and time limits and tailored supports using a housing first for YYA approach.	The Commission	Medium Term
Implement YHDP-funded PSH units for the highest need YYA in Maine using a housing first for YYA approach	YHDP funded agencies	Short-term
Implement additional PSH units for the highest need YYA in Maine using a housing first for YYA approach	The Commission	Medium-Term

Identify all federal, state and local funding streams that might be targeted to create new opportunities for YYA experiencing homelessness	YHDP Coordinator	Short-term
Advocate for new and innovative housing options with an emphasis on low-barrier models with supportive services attached.	Center for Entrepreneurial Studies	Medium-Term

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Increase landlord and property management options for housing YYA

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Engage landlords and property management companies to lower barriers and screening criteria for potential tenants.	MaineHousing, YHDP funded agencies	Short-Term
Establish the use of damage/mitigation funds, which provide an incentive for landlords to house YYA, to other housing authorities and programs around the state	MaineHousing	Medium-Term
Work with housing providers to assess and reduce the amount of time inspection processes take for housing vouchers.	MaineHousing	Medium-Term

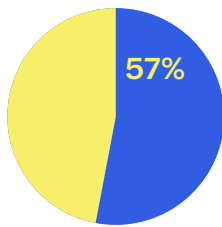
Goal #5: Permanent Connections and Supports that Promote Self-Sufficiency and Social-Emotional Well-Being, including Educational and Employment Needs

Maine needs to provide more flexible services capable of meeting the needs of YYA where they are housed, access to flexible and affordable transportation options to best meet the needs of YYA who live outside of more resource dense urban centers, and strategies for community-based health everywhere.

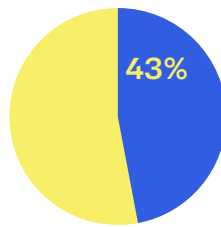
Maine is large and rural. Transportation is expensive, non-existent, or difficult, in rural communities, especially during long cold winters. YYA overwhelmingly identified transportation as the most critical support needed by young people, including students, experiencing homelessness. Accessible, reliable transportation is also important for the 65% of YYA experiencing homelessness who report having a disability.

Maine needs to increase the opportunity for YYA to build lasting non-clinical positive relationships with peers and older adults. We need more community and peer mentors and a focus on strategies that foster permanent connections to adults who care in their community.

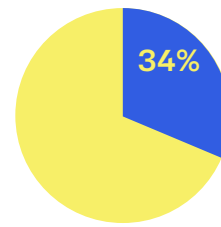
Stakeholders identified a lack of community and peer mentors to support YYA, particularly in a school setting. The 2017 Maine Integrated Youth Health High School Survey results indicated that: 18% of students feel that they do not have at least one teacher that cares about them; 19% of students reported that parents were not asking them how they were doing in school; and only 57% of youth reported that they felt like they mattered to their communities (this decreased to 43% of gay/lesbian youth and 34% of bisexual youth).



● **57% of youth**
reported that they felt like they mattered to their communities



● **43% of LGBTQ+ youth**
reported that they felt like they mattered to their communities



● **34% of bisexual youth**
reported that they felt like they mattered to their communities

Maine needs to target more supports for pregnant and parenting YYA. That should include access to low barrier reproductive health resources connected to housing programs and at middle and high schools, and programs that offer a broad range of long-term health services. That should also include resources that are designed to support both the young parent and their child.

Parenting YYA experiencing homelessness in Maine are 2.5 times more likely to report a chronic health condition. In 2017, nearly 80% of substance use treatment admissions for pregnant women in Maine were related to opioids and in 2018 there were 904 reports to Child Protective Services regarding infants born exposed to substances. A 2018 Annie E. Casey Report found that children of young adult parents in Maine are more likely than anywhere else in the nation to live in poverty. 85% of Maine children of young parents between the ages of 18 and 24 live in low-income families. Maine is one of only 3 states in which more than 80% of children of young parents live in poverty. National evidence suggests that parenting places unmarried young parents at a 200% higher risk of reporting homelessness. Raising a child while experiencing homelessness not only places an increased burden on the parent as a caregiver who is also navigating systems, school, work, and the effort to satisfy basic needs. It may also place their child at greater risk for trauma and future experiences of homelessness.

Maine needs to increase access to low barrier behavioral health resources for YYA both under 18 and 18 to 24. That includes increased access to substance use treatment dedicated to YYA, including residential programs, and increased capacity in the mental health system for YYA. The system must also consider low-barrier mental health resources that support personal growth and the development of healthy relationships.

65% of YYA experiencing homelessness reported having a disability, 22% a substance use addiction, 22% a mental health diagnosis, 12% a chronic health issue, 8% a developmental disability, and 1% a physical disability. Unaccompanied YYA were six times more likely to report substance use disorder. In 2018, 50% of YYA reported a previous stay in a health facility and 80% reported receiving mental health services, but only 39% report having access to mental health services. Roughly 70% of YYA experiencing homelessness report experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a relative or another person they had stayed with and YYA focus group participants identified this as a contributing factor to their homelessness. Students identified a need for behavioral health services to be provided at school where 85% of students experiencing homelessness report Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES); 46% reporting 3 or more ACES compared to 23% of all high schoolers. Stakeholders also identified a need for community health education and a focus on self-esteem, personal growth, and navigating complex familial and partner relationships.

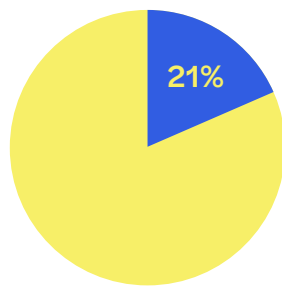


Maine needs to increase access to educational resources that allow YYA to succeed in high school and post-secondary education. We need to better support students at the intersection of special education and homelessness, dramatically increase the graduation rate of students experiencing homelessness, and increase collaboration between school liaisons and college points of contact.

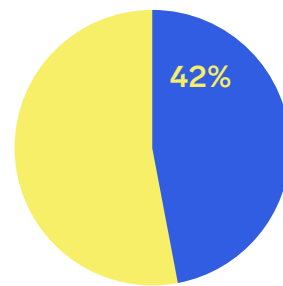
The four-year graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness in Maine in SY 2017-18 was 57%, while the Maine statewide rate was 86.7%. 44% of YYA experiencing homelessness report attending school regularly and 10% irregularly. The lack of a high school diploma or GED equivalent is associated with a 346% higher risk of homelessness on average in the U.S. Nationally, students experiencing homelessness have higher rates of developmental delays and grade retention, and lower rates of academic success.

Maine needs to improve employment outcomes for YYA experiencing homelessness. We need to increase their opportunity for sustainable employment by helping them find, apply for, and maintain a job, and to improve YYA workforce development opportunities that will provide them with skills that will expand their options and allow them to thrive.

21% of YYA experiencing homelessness reported full time employment and 42% reported part-time employment. 45% relied on money from family and friends, 18% worked under the table, 12% sold weed or other drugs, 4% hustled, 4% panhandled, and 3% reported sex work. 6% reported “not having an income, doing odd jobs/chores/temp work, doing some type of employment or job program, selling goods, dumpster diving/or collecting bottles, etc.” Nationally, incomes below \$24,000 are associated with a 162% higher risk of homelessness. Local YYA stakeholders report income as a barrier to housing, finding employment as challenging, needing more jobs, and mixed workforce program experiences.



● **21%** of YYA experiencing homelessness reported full time employment



● **42%** of YYA experiencing homelessness reported part-time employment

Maine needs increased access to specialized services to support YYA in their recovery from exploitation, trafficking, and domestic violence.

In a 2012 study, 24% of teens experiencing homelessness reported being offered drugs for sex with a stranger, and 26% reported being asked to have sex with a stranger for payment. A national study estimates 15% of YYAs experiencing homelessness had been trafficked for sex and 32% involved in the sex trade. 70% of YYA experiencing homelessness in Maine report experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a relative or someone they stayed with. YYA report that abuse from family members or not being taken care of by family contributed to their homelessness. Many experienced abuse and trauma and some indicated a need for a trauma-informed and person-centered system.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Support YYA in establishing permanent connections.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Provide transportation (gas cards, ride shares, leveraging existing transportation) that allows YYA access to influential peers, mentors, jobs/education opportunities and support systems.	MaineCare and DOT, private donations	Medium-term
Leverage a model such as Open Table, to create cohorts of supportive adults for YYA to tap into in their communities.	MaineHousing, Shaw House	Medium-Term
Provide training to YYA-serving agencies on evidence-based models for successfully connecting YYA experiencing homelessness with caring adults and peers.	New Beginnings	Medium-term
Provide additional resources, i.e. phone, wifi connectivity, to youth/young adults so they can stay connected with influential peers, mentors and support systems.	Agencies who receive YHDP funding for Navigation and Diversion services	Short-term
Create legislation to develop a flexible fund using State dollars which can be used to cover expenses associated with immediate solutions to prevent YYA homelessness.	Maine Children’s Alliance, Maine State Legislature	Medium-term
Create an on-line portal for young people to sign up for volunteer, board membership and other positive youth development opportunities.	Volunteer Maine, YHDP coordinator	Short-term



OBJECTIVE 5.2: Support YYA in achieving self-sufficiency.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Leverage state agencies' and community colleges' connections to recruit local businesses to provide low-barrier volunteer opportunities, paid internships, apprenticeships, and job opportunities for YYA.	Center for Entrepreneurial Studies	Short-term
Require YHDP-funded projects to create connections for youth/young adults to education and employment opportunities and services.	RFP Committee, YHDP Coordinator	Short-term
Leverage partnerships with Maine Community Action Agencies' 2Gen programming to target parenting youth.	MaineHousing, CAP Agencies	Short-term
Increase funding to schools so liaisons or other school staff can provide more help assisting young people experiencing homelessness with education and career planning.	Department of Education	Short-term
Increase access and linkages to adult education centers who are already providing young people with training on navigating life skills such as financial competency.	YHDP funded agencies	Short-term

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Support YYA in establishing and maintaining social-emotional wellbeing.

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Identify and provide connections to existing trauma-informed behavioral health, Substance Use Disorder, and domestic violence service providers.	All YYA providers; YHDP Coordinator	Short-term
Ensure YHDP-funded projects include evaluation strategies that measure progress toward permanent connections, stable housing, education and socio-emotional well-being.	RFP Committee, YHDP Coordinator	Short-term
Develop Medicaid-funded tenancy support services. Create data partnership with MaineCare to identify young people who can be paired with these services.	Office of MaineCare	Medium-term

Goal #6: Create a sustainable system to continue ending and preventing YYA homelessness in Maine.

Maine needs to increase its capacity at the state and regional levels to implement a coordinated, transparent, effective, and YYA-specific response to prevent and end YYA homelessness. This includes sustained buy-in from a variety of state and local government officials and agencies and formal partnerships with a variety of private stakeholders.

Partners consistently call for a more coordinated, well-resourced, and transparent youth homelessness system. Until recently, the system has lacked a neutral, non-partisan, voice with the experience and expertise to lead such an effort. Conflicts of interest, real and perceived have been difficult to avoid, and state-wide efforts have proven beyond the capacity of individual stakeholders who also have to lead organizations or juggle several other jobs. The system does not have a point person or designated office or agency to coordinate YYA homelessness efforts across the many different public and private sectors that we need to address this issue. For example, OCFS plays a major role in allocating YYA homelessness resources, but MaineHousing leads the YHDP effort and our homelessness Continuum of Care responsible for ending homelessness in the state. We also have a Homeless Youth Provider Group that convenes our most important direct service providers and discusses statewide policy, several private funders that support initiatives independently, and parallel agencies like the departments of education, labor, and corrections, that engage YYA experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Maine needs consistent YYA participation in state and county system decision-making and YYA-driven action from all regions. We need to better incorporate their expertise in how systems work, their experience with current system resources, and their energy and urgency in working to prevent and end YYA homelessness.

YYA participation is relatively new to Maine's efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness. Our partners recognize that young people with lived experience have expertise and experience that older adults do not have access to and that they will be the ones impacted most directly by changes in policy and practice. The Youth Action Board has made a tremendous contribution to our planning process, but it does not yet have sustained funding commitments to support its current operation and growth. Stakeholders have also called for representation by young people from outside of urban centers. Conversations can be Portland, Lewiston, and Bangor centric and driven by their priorities. The YAB is currently a Lewiston-led initiative (for practical and understandable reasons) and facilitators are trying to figure out how to best regularly integrate young people from every county in such a large state.

Maine needs the support of the public to comprehensively address YYA homelessness. We need broad public awareness of both the stigma and realities of YYA-homelessness across populations.

Despite all the evidence we have acquired and presented in this plan, our listening session revealed a perception that YYA homelessness is hidden in Maine and also that stigma is real. One youth participant at a listening session in Bangor indicated that one stigma assigned to YYA experiencing homelessness was that “they did something wrong.” It was also mentioned that people think homeless young people are running away from home, when it is really because their home is unsafe. One member of our YAB said, “People are always shocked when I talk about my personal experiences. They just pretend they do not see it.” In Maine we have experienced significant success with Veteran’s experiencing homelessness. By raising awareness, working collaboratively and devoting resources (VASH, etc.) we have brought our homeless veteran population close to functional zero.

“People are always shocked when I talk about my personal experiences. They just pretend they do not see it.”

MEMBER OF OUR YAB

Maine needs to increase its capacity for data-driven decision-making. We need a consolidated and regularly updated system to track and report on our core homelessness outcomes, including a regularly updated housing model to predict future housing needs. We also need to better understand key nuances including the connection between childhood experiences of family homelessness and YYA homelessness, trafficking and exploitation, YYA migration patterns, and YYA homelessness root causes.

The planning process has revealed significant gaps in our understanding of the prevalence and characteristics of YYA homelessness which are critical to informing our response. For example, we have limited data on the impact of family homelessness on the likelihood that children will eventually experience homelessness as young adults. We also have limited data on exploitation and trafficking, and do not know enough about the inflow or outflow of YYA in the homelessness system, which prevents us from forecasting future housing needs and planning for future investments.

Maine needs to improve the outcomes of existing housing programs, including shelter and housing designed for older adults, and increase staff capacity to provide Positive Youth Development (PYD), Trauma Informed Care (TIC), and harm reduction-based supports. Additionally, homelessness services providers in rural communities need training in exploitation and domestic violence, first responders need training to support YYA still involved in exploitation and living in unsafe homes, and all providers need racial equity and sexual orientation and gender identity training.

The average length of stay in Maine's homelessness system for 18 to 24 year olds in 2018 was 74 days, and 57 days for youth under 18. Almost all YYA 18-24 first entered emergency shelter for an average of 45 days and YYA under 18 for 33 days. Only 15% of YYA 18-24 and 35% of YYA under 18 exited shelter to permanent housing. TH success rates are 61% for YYA 18-24 (avg 315 days) and 80% for YYA under 18 (avg 259 days). Only 67% of the 18-24 year olds who left rapid rehousing exited to a permanent housing destination. YYA have called for greater access to services grounded in Positive Youth Development principles, Trauma Informed Care, and Harm Reduction provided with empathy and compassion. Some have also indicated a need for a more person-centered system. Positive youth development, trauma informed care, and harm reduction have been established as cornerstones as any effort to prevent and end YYA homelessness, and there are indications that we can make improvements at both the system and program levels. As previously mentioned, Maine stakeholders consistently identify the additional challenges faced by Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ YYA in housing and supports that affirm their identities, make them feel safe, and serve them successfully.



OBJECTIVE 6.1: Expand system capacity to plan, coordinate, collaborate, and implement

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Build the infrastructure for YAB 2.0: actively recruit YYA from across the state and representative of the diversity of the YYA population experiencing homelessness; develop a structure that allows as many YYA to participate as possible and allows for some YYA to dive deeply into state and local issues; fully integrate the YAB into the continuous quality improvement processes (reviewing data, conducting focus groups of program participants, etc.); continue to integrate into the CoC and future YYA homelessness commission.	YHDP Coordinator, YAB; New Beginnings; YAB Specialist	Short-term
Implement the statewide ,coordinated, well-resourced, and transparent YYA homelessness system described below in our Continuous Improvement Strategy	The Commission	Medium-Term
Develop a mechanism to recruit and retain a variety of stakeholders representing the diversity in our state (rural, urban, LGBTQ+, Black, Latinx, Tribal, and new Mainers) on the YYA Homelessness Commission, its committees, and other state and regional groups implementing our CCP	YHDP Coordinator, YAB, New Beginnings, YAB Specialist	Short-term
<p>Create and implement a fundraising strategy which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building new partnerships with public and private entities and ▪ Ongoing evaluation of outcomes for YHDP funded projects 	MaineHousing, Runaway and Homeless Youth funded agencies, YHDP QCI team	Medium-term

OBJECTIVE 6.2: Expand system capacity to collect, analyze, and track data

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Identify the sources of data related to YYA experiencing homelessness across systems and identify how the data can be merged	MaineHousing	Short-term
Explore and execute the necessary Releases of Info (ROI) and data sharing agreements to enable sharing of data while preserving privacy.	YHDP Coordinator, DOE, DOC, DHHS, YHDP TA, Education TA	Short-term
Implement universal data points and elements collected across systems for consistent evaluation purposes	MaineHousing	Short-term
Develop a consolidated and regularly updated system to track and report on our core homelessness outcomes, including a regularly updated housing model to predict future housing needs, including a public facing dashboard.	YHDP CQI team, YYA Data and Evaluation group	Short-term
Conduct agency-led internal needs assessments on housing instability and homelessness for YYA exiting corrections, child welfare, and state systems of behavioral health.	MaineHousing, DOC, DHHS	Medium-term
Seek Memorandums of Understanding between all state and federally-funded agencies and State Offices to share data on all YYA served in the state.	MaineHousing	Short-term

OBJECTIVE 6.3: Expand system capacity to prevent or quickly end homelessness episodes

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY	TIME-FRAME
Work to embed mainstream system collaboration with the Maine Children’s Cabinet, Maine State Agencies, the Governor’s Office and the Statewide Homeless Council to increase capacity in the state to prevent and end YYA homelessness.	YHDP Planning body	Short-term
Expand or create language and translation capacity for agencies to better serve “New Mainers”, provide training on legal and other barriers faced by “New Mainer” YYA experiencing homelessness and creating linkages from the homelessness system to existing “New Mainer” resources.	MaineHousing	Short-Term
Provide racial bias and racial equity training to all organizations that interact with young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Training should include tools and mechanisms for agencies to immediately address racism.	Maine COC, MaineHousing	Short-term
Outreach to agencies with experience serving over-represented populations experiencing homelessness, such as minorities and tribal communities, to apply for available YYA homelessness funding.	YHDP Coordinator	Short-term
Develop and provide a standardized, statewide curriculum in trauma-informed care and positive youth development to all YHDP funded partners, as well as other YYA and adult providers.	YHDP Coordinator, New Beginnings, Shaw House, Preble Street	Short-term
Require all YHDP funded agencies’ board of directors to be trained in the core outcomes and principles established in this document.	YAB, New Beginnings, RFP Committee	Short-term
Require YHDP and COC funded YYA-serving providers and encourage Maine systems of care (DHHS-OCFS, DOC, DOE) and other youth service providers to offer multiple seats to young people with lived experience of homelessness to provide expertise into program and system-level planning processes (including the Board of Directors).	YAB, YHDP Planning, RFP committee	Short-term

Implementing Our Plan

This section describes how we have organized as a community to create and then implement our CCP. It includes a strategy for how we will improve the plan over time and a description of the projects that we will fund using our YHDP grant.

PLANNING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance structure for H.O.ME. was designed to promote inclusion and transparency and to facilitate partner engagement in project activities. It establishes a formal decision-making process according to the following guidelines:

- **Decision-making will** occur within the CCP Planning Group, in real time at least twice a month depending on workload, and by email when necessary with a clear time period to weigh in. It will be inclusive and incorporate the voices of all including those that are not able to be present; and it will work towards consensus, but 80% agreement will move a decision forward.
- **Additionally**, silence equals agreement. Absent members are responsible for following up for information and decision making; and disagreement means that each member is responsible for leading, facilitating, or sharing their concerns or objections through verbal or written communication.

MAINE YHDP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Stakeholders adopted the following structure for H.O.ME. development and implementation:

CCP PLANNING GROUP.

The Planning Group provides YHDP direction and oversight. It is the primary decision-making group, providing expertise during the planning process, and develops components of the CCP for the Writers Team. All Input and information from other groups is presented to the Planning Group for approval before moving forward with inclusion in the CCP. The group meets at a minimum of once a month. Membership started with the YHDP application team and members of the Homeless Youth Provider Group. It has since added 16 additional members to ensure a representative cross-section of stakeholders, including 4 YAB members.

CCP WRITERS TEAM.

The Writers Team is responsible for writing the CCP under the guidance of the CCP Planning Group. They synthesize data and expertise provided by the other Groups into a cohesive plan, facilitate several comment periods and will manage the final editing of the CCP. This group is not a decision-making body. It is comprised of representatives from MaineHousing and New Beginnings, along with consultants hired expressly to assist in this process. They meet regularly throughout the duration of YHDP planning.

THE YOUTH ACTION BOARD.

The YAB provides essential expertise to the development of the CCP. It is a decision-making group. The YAB has at least 6 general members, with at least 2/3 having lived experience. YAB members participate regularly in the YHDP planning processes, attend weekly conference calls with the HUD TA team and Writers Team, and are official members of the CCP Planning Group. The YAB is an official subcommittee of the MCoC, has an official vote on the MCoC and a voice on statewide policy and funding decisions regarding a broad range of topics related to homelessness and housing issues beyond YYA homelessness.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS.

These are ad hoc groups and community convenings designed to bring local knowledge and specific expertise into the CCP development process. These are not decision-making groups. Community convenings are held in the more rural regions of the state to bring together local stakeholders and gather their insight and data. Targeted groups such as hospitals, law enforcement, and funders, among others, are brought together as needed to gain a deeper understanding of their areas of expertise. Community Advisory Groups will play an important role in H.O.ME. implementation and improvement.

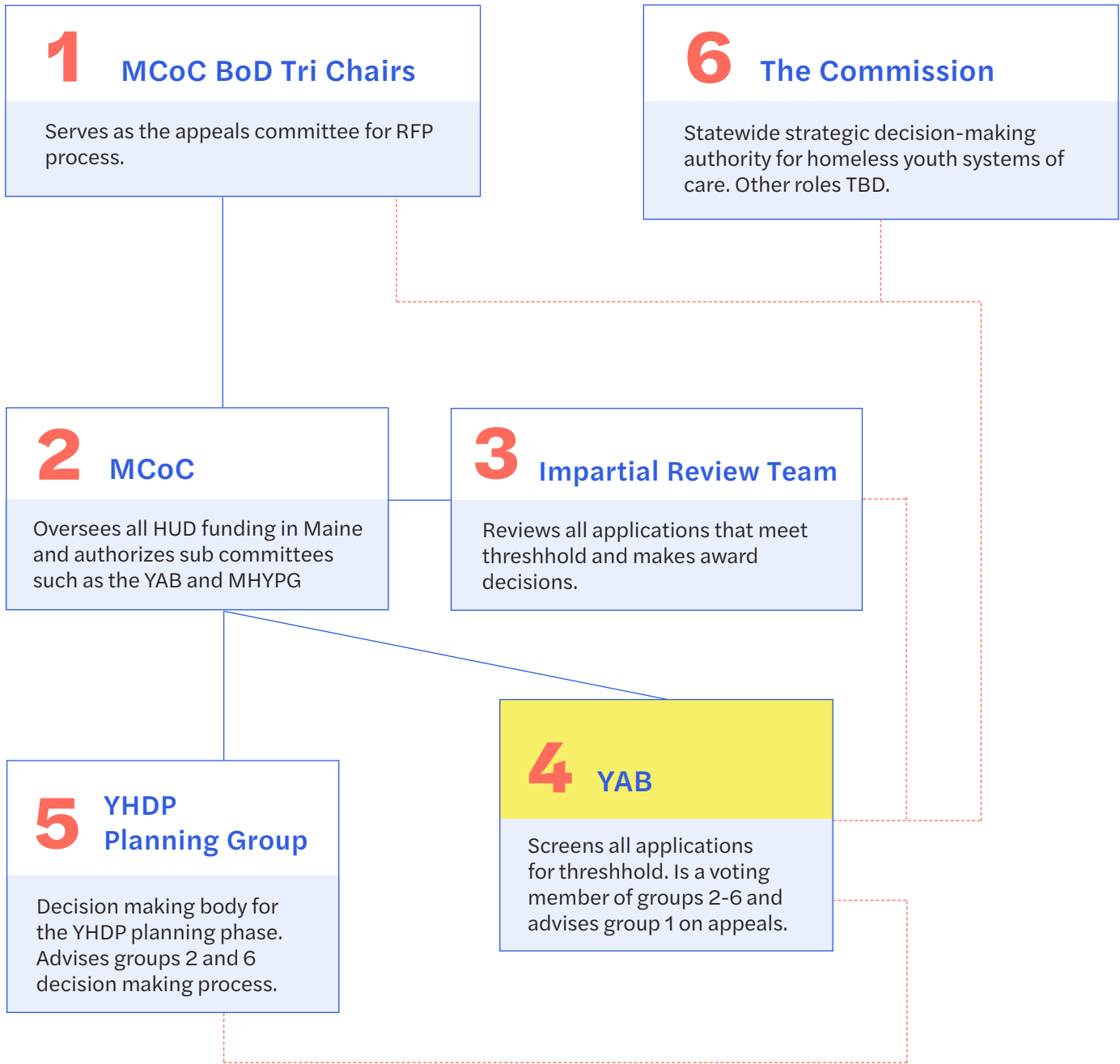
YHDP FUNDED PROJECTS

The RFP Process

The Maine Planning Committee recognizes that \$3.35 million in HUD funding will accelerate our efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness in Maine. We also recognize that our HUD funding is insufficient and that our plan will require significant local and state support. It is designed to best support certain types of projects—rental assistance, supportive services, coordinated entry, and system planning—and must be allocated quickly. With that in mind, the Planning Committee agreed to use a modified decision-making process to allocate YHDP funding quickly, prevent conflicts of interest for those members who anticipated applying for those funds, and solicit proposals that most efficiently leveraged our HUD grant:

1. **Project Design and Prioritization** was conducted according to the decision-making rules above. The entire Planning Committee participated in project design and prioritization. The Planning Committee members were walked through a session where they prioritized the projects to fund using the YHDP allocation. The process was aided by the use of both our housing model and a cost calculator that estimated the per unit cost of each proposed project and calculated the optimal amount of each (e.g., number of units) to reach our total YHDP award.
2. **The RFP Team** included a small group of people whose agencies did not apply for YHDP funding. Their task was to create and approve the final RFP. The RFP team was also responsible for creating a scoring tool for applications.
3. **Application and Proposal Selection** included a mandatory training and bidders' conference and allowed applicants approximately 6 weeks to write their applications. The RFP Scoring Team was trained to review and score applications. All members of the RFP Scoring Team, which included 1 YAB member, reviewed and made comments on each application. The RFP scoring Team used a group consensus model and utilized the 80/100 rule to arrive at final scores for each applicant and made recommendations for the final slate of award recipients plus any conditional requirements.

The Maine Continuum of Care Board of Directors will serve as the appeals committee for the RFP process. The Maine Continuum of Care oversees all HUD funding in Maine and The Commission serves as a statewide decision making authority for the homeless youth systems in Maine. Both advise the YHDP Planning Group.



Below is a summary of the YHDP funded projects. It is important to note that RFP includes YYA collaboration explicitly in its expectations for proposal development, implementation, and organizational decision-making.

YHDP PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROGRAM TYPE	REGIONAL MOBILE DIVERSION AND NAVIGATION TEAMS (SSO)
Brief Description	<p>The Diversion and Navigation Team would be a multi-disciplinary team that consist of mentors, peers and navigator staff to provide outreach services to connect with youth sleeping outside or in shelters, and assist young people in navigating key self-sufficiency resources (housing, connection to Coordinated Entry, benefits, education, employment) while modeling supportive, healthy relationships with each young person participating. The mobile team provides housing navigation, case management, legal services, family mediation and clinical support to young people who are unstably housed.</p> <p>Special Consideration- Hub Areas: The Diversion and Navigation Team would be directly linked to each emergency shelter to serve as an immediate point of contact for any young person in shelter to begin navigation services.</p>
Target Population	12-24 y/o currently homeless with minimal options for support
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1, 2, and 4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Crisis Services, Preventing/Diverting Homelessness
Timeframe	1-3 months;
Funding Source	YHDP
Approximate 2 year Budget	\$1,000,000

PROGRAM TYPE	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING + RAPID RE-HOUSING JOINT PROGRAM (TH-RRH)
Brief Description	<p>The Transitional Housing (TH) w/Rapid Re-housing (RRH) strategy combines TH, a service-intensive program focused on assisting young people with life skills, with RRH to provide both financial and supportive service assistance to move to independent living arrangements (roommates, private market, etc.). Youth can skip right to RRH if they choose, but have the option of starting in TH (if they are younger, coming out of foster care, or want more structure).</p>
Target Population	18-24 year olds, currently homeless with minimal options for support
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1, 2 and 4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Housing and Supports
Timeframe	<p>TH portion – Up to 24 months of assistance RRH Portion – Up to 24 months of assistance (or longer with an approved alternative requirement)</p>
Funding Source	YHDP
Approximate 2 year Budget	\$1,734,362

PROGRAM TYPE	FUNDING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO PAIR WITH HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS (HCV) (RRH)
Brief Description	Create opportunities in Maine to pair existing vouchers or subsidized units with long term rental assistance with supportive services funded in the youth plan to create more supported housing options. Examples may include under-utilized vouchers, specialized vouchers, or homeless set aside units from housing authorities or HUD Multifamily developers. This strategy would seek to fund supportive services to assist youth to complete the application and housing search processes for these subsidies, as well as provide supportive services to promote positive tenancies.
Target Population	18-24 y/o currently homeless with minimal options for support
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1, 2 and 4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Housing and Supports
Timeframe	Up to 24 months of assistance (or longer with an approved alternative requirement – e.g., 36 months)
Funding Source	YHDP
Approximate 2 year Budget	\$320,000

PROGRAM TYPE	HOST HOMES (SSO)
Brief Description	The host homes strategy would leverage safe spaces in community members' homes for minors to stay when they have nowhere else to go.
Target Population	12-24 years old who are homeless with minimal support options
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1, 2 and 4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Crisis Service or Housing and Supports
Timeframe	Non-time limited
Funding Source	YHDP
Approximate 2 year Budget	\$200,000

Approximately 3% of YHDP funding (\$100,315) is set aside to cover planning activities that enhance ongoing planning efforts, implementation, and evaluation of the YHDP projects as well as ensure compliance with HUD YHDP requirements.

NON YHDP FUNDED PROJECTS:

PROGRAM TYPE	MOBILE RESPITE BEDS
Brief Description	The mobile respite bed strategy would be a short, time-limited safe space for young people to stay when they are in an unsafe situation or law enforcement has been contacted about a dispute or other critical needs a family has. Key behavioral health and other crisis services will be leveraged from other systems of care.
Target Population	12-24 y/o unstably housed with minimal options for support
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1-4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Preventing/Diverting Homelessness
Timeframe	Very quick, limited timeframe: 0-2 weeks

PROGRAM TYPE	KIOSKS
Brief Description	Youth can have a place after hours to charge their cellular devices to stay in touch with supportive adults, peers, employers, schools, etc., utilize safe restroom facilities, grab a snack and hydrate, access wi-fi and basic need supplies (blankets, hats, socks, water bottles, etc.).
Target Population	12-24 y/o currently homeless with minimal options for support and affiliated with a drop-in center
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1,2 and 4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Crisis Services
Timeframe	Non-time limited- case specific: In service deserts: operate 24/7; In areas where services are prevalent, operate outside of business hours 5p-7a

PROGRAM TYPE	PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH)
Brief Description	Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is a model that combines low-barrier affordable housing with intensive, frequent wraparound supportive services to help young people lead stable lives. PSH typically targets people who are homeless, experience multiple barriers to housing, have high vulnerability and are unable to maintain housing stability without supportive services.
Target Population	18-24 y/o currently homeless with minimal options for support
HUD Homeless Definition	Categories 1, 2 and 4 of the HUD homeless definition
System Component	Housing Supports
Timeframe	Non-time limited, but agencies applying would be given preference if they had access to continued rental assistance for young people who have graduated the need for intensive supportive services provided by the PSH project.

OTHER RESOURCES NEEDED:

- Transportation resources (car programs, driver's education, license fees, gas assistance, car shares)
- On-line portal for youth experiencing homelessness to identify themselves to funded mobile regional teams
- Develop Open Table structure to leverage volunteers to promote permanent connections.

The Planning Committee recognizes that our YHDP funding will not be enough to fund our entire effort to prevent and end youth homelessness in Maine. With that in mind, we will work with state, local, public and private funding partners to find the resources we need.



CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

We will establish a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process and framework to track our progress in achieving the system goals and objectives we identified for each of our five goals.

STAKEHOLDERS, GROUPS, AND ROLES

- **The YYA Homelessness Project Coordinator (The Coordinator)** will be in charge of the day to day implementation of our coordinated community response. They will lead the statewide Maine effort, coordinate among partners, build community relationships, track implementation progress, and present updates and critical decisions to the Commission. They will work closely with the YAB and other commission members to ensure continuous improvement and movement toward the goals and vision described in this plan.
- **The Maine YYA Homelessness Commission (The Commission)** will support the implementation of H.O.M.E. and is responsible for its outcomes. The Commission will support the YYA Homelessness Project Coordinator and make decisions according to the framework developed during the planning process. They will review outcome data and feedback from community partners to identify trends, evaluate plan performance, and both propose and approve changes to this plan. Membership will include members of the YHDP Planning Team and participants from the YAB, CoC, YYA providers, child welfare, justice, workforce development, education, and other community partners. The Commission will strive to include as many representatives from relevant sectors as possible and maintain a racial, ethnic, sexual orientation and gender identity balance that reflects the community to the greatest extent possible. The Commission must have at least three YYA with lived experience at all times.
- **The CoC** will take an active role in the coordinated community response. It will be included in all decisions, nominate a representative to the Commission, and commit to honoring decisions made by the Commission that compel the CoC to take action. The CoC will play a leading role in providing data, leading the YYA improvements to the PIT, and managing YYA projects funded through the YHDP or the CoC program. They will formalize the structures, processes, and relationships described in the plan in their charter and organizational documentation. They will also coordinate the work of the plan across all CoC committees relevant to their particular focus area (e.g., coordinated entry, PIT, HMIS).
- **MaineHousing, the CoC and YHDP lead agency** will support the YYA Homelessness Project Coordinator by providing them with resources, logistical support, and significant staff expertise in all things related to HUD, housing, and homelessness. MaineHousing will use its position to help remove barriers to the work and coordinate among its vast network of partnerships and relationships.
- **The YAB** will review key materials and decisions presented to the Commission. They will nominate at least three representatives for Commission membership as full voting members

who represent the will of YAB. The YAB will provide feedback on the plan and its action steps, and propose changes, and will be included in decision-making as part of the Commission. The YAB will prioritize recruiting and raising up the voices of a diverse group of people who represent a variety of communities from around Maine including, but not limited to, Latinx and Black YYA, Immigrant and Refugee YYA, Tribal YYA, LGBTQ YYA, YYA living with behavioral health challenges, YYA with systems experience, parenting YYA, and minors.

- **The YYA Data and Evaluation Group** will collect and analyze project-level data, assess system-level YYA trends, and regularly gather feedback from both project and system staff. It will include members from the CoC Data Committee, MaineHousing HMIS group, the YAB, and other members from the Commission or their representatives.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is critical to our improvement strategy. The Coordinator will ensure clear and accessible feedback channels for program participants. They will provide regular progress updates to community stakeholders via email and post them, meeting minutes, and other relevant materials online. The Coordinator, together with MaineHousing will keep the Commission and their members informed of any commitments, progress, and outcomes. The Coordinator and Commission commit to open and public opportunities for feedback from a broad array of stakeholders, including YYA and people from all regions of Maine, and commit to reaching out to community members who do not frequently provide feedback.

The Commission may create special subcommittees to review recommended plan revisions to include Commission members and other relevant subject matter experts. They may also provide training or technical assistance through local expertise, local consultants, or HUD provided support to organizations implementing plan actions that need refinement or adjustment.

FORMAL STATE AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

We recognize that with the large size and diversity of Maine, the success of our coordinated community response depends on both broad and deep collaboration among state and regional entities. With that in mind, the Commission will work closely with the Maine Legislature and the Governor's office to formalize under the oversight and authority of the state. We will include the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Corrections, and Labor, and other relevant state agencies on the commission to join providers, associations, YAB members and others in statewide decision-making; and we will ask for their commitment to use their resources in close concert with this plan's action steps. Similarly, we will work to define, fund, and then support long-term regional collaborations that can sustain the work and adapt to the realities of local communities. For example, we will explore the appointment of regional lead agencies and partner committees to ensure that there is regional accountability and coordination. Regions will work together to address YYA homelessness, collect and analyze regional data, share trends and best practices, and support state-level decision-making. They will also have the capacity to support advocacy related to the plan components.

**FURTHER, WE COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING REGARDING
CONTINUOUS EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT:**

- Prioritizing YAB insights and recommendations in H.O.ME.'s implementation, evaluation, and improvement;
- Setting and then visiting benchmarks annually, using current data, a housing model, and data analysis incorporating the values of this document;
- Including quantitative data analysis in ongoing evaluation efforts;
- Regularly collecting and analyzing qualitative data from YYA, providers, and other stakeholders, from rural and urban areas, to evaluate progress and the need for refinement and change;
- Co-hosting at least two focus groups each year with the YAB to obtain and incorporate feedback from YYA currently engaging with system resources;
- Working with local and national TA to assess progress and to learn from other YHDP communities;
- Examining whether our prescribed actions are 1) being implemented according to our timelines, steps, resources, and responsible parties, and 2) achieving impact toward our vision for preventing and ending YYA homelessness;
- Continuously tracking our progress in achieving each our six goals and objectives both internally and through a public-facing dashboard to share progress with stakeholders;
- Creating a training plan for YHDP project recipients based on annual and semi-annual feedback and performance, and, if possible, engaging a trainer to teach and coach them as they create their internal plans related to CQI;
- Convening an annual meeting of the Commission to review data and analysis from the previous year and set the direction for the next year; and
- Producing a formal annual report for the community that consolidates our work and findings from the previous year and provides updated objectives, action steps, and expectations for the year ahead as an appendix to the coordinated community plan.

Signature Page

On behalf of the CCP planning committee, we approve "Hope and Opportunity for Me" as our Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness.



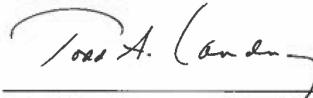
Daniel Brennan, Maine State Housing Authority



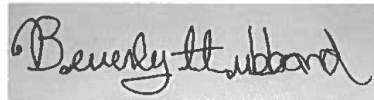
Cullen Ryan, Maine Continuum of Care Board Chair



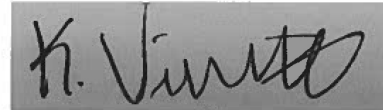
Chris Bicknell, New Beginnings



Dr. Todd Landry, Office of Child and Family Services



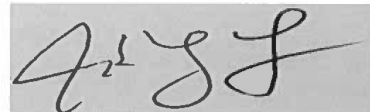
Beverly Hubbard, Maine Statewide Youth Action Board



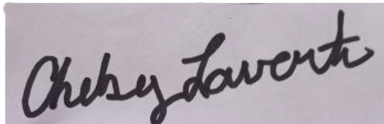
Kelsea Vincent, Maine Statewide Youth Action Board



Bridge Semler, Youth Action Board Specialist



Joseph Locke, Youth Homeless Project Coordinator



Chelsey Lavertu – Maine Statewide Youth Action Board

**Hobos feeling hopeless cursed with being
homeless, houseless**

Couchsurfing, feeling undeserving,

Asking for change in so many ways

Tired of stigma and shame

Praying it won't rain

And capitalism's to blame

Spare me disparities

Riches, rarity and gold prosperity

Rights ripped, campsites stripped

Some people are seen as subhuman

A problem that needs a solution

-ANONYMOUS, MAINE STATEWIDE YOUTH ACTION BOARD

