Evaluation of the HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

Early Implementation Report

PD&R

Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

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Executive Summary

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded funds to 10 Continuums of Care (CoCs) in round one of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) to enable them to develop and implement coordinated community approaches to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Through this demonstration, the funded CoCs work with youth homeless service organizations, youth advisory boards (YABs), child welfare agencies, and other community partners to create comprehensive community plans to end youth homelessness. These plans include efforts to identify and reach out to youth in need of housing, provide resources to youth at risk of homelessness to prevent their need to live on the streets or in a shelter, and offer a variety of housing options for those who need it, including rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and host homes. A team of technical assistance providers has assisted the communities in developing their service and housing approaches, as well as in refining and strengthening their data capacity.

HUD has contracted with Westat, an independent research organization, to conduct a 4-year evaluation of the 10 CoCs funded in round one. The evaluation will capture how the demonstration affects the development and implementation of comprehensive systems-level approaches across diverse contexts in addressing youth homelessness. It will examine the role of these approaches in affecting the size and composition of the population of youth experiencing and at risk of homelessness as well as their effects on youth's service and housing outcomes.

Round One Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care
Anchorage
Austin/Travis County
Cincinnati/Hamilton County
Connecticut Balance of State
Kentucky Balance of State
NW Michigan
Ohio Balance of State
San Francisco
Santa Cruz
Seattle/King County

This early implementation report provides a cross-site assessment of the YHDP CoCs' planning effort, summarizing the 10 YHDP CoCs' baseline status of services, housing, and system development, assessed through document review and site visits. The report provides comparable baseline data for three peer non-YHDP funded CoCs, each selected to be similar to one or more YHDP communities and to serve as a basis for examining differences over time between YHDP-funded and non-funded CoCs. Through analysis of Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data, we describe the number and composition of youth experiencing homelessness across all sites, the HUD-funded services they received, and their housing outcomes prior to the implementation of the coordinated community plans. These findings will serve as a baseline, permitting the evaluation to examine changes in the 2 years following demonstration initiation in the size and composition of the population served and their outcomes. Finally, a survey of all CoCs provides a baseline understanding of how the services, housing, and systems in the YHDP CoCs fit within the national context. The evaluation team will re-administer this survey in 2 years to assess how changes in the YHDP CoCs compare to occurring in CoCs across the country.

Context of Continuums of Care

The context of the YHDP CoCs is important to consider because it can influence the design, implementation, and outcomes of the sites' demonstration initiatives.

The selected CoCs represent single cities, large urban counties, multicounty areas, and balance of state (BOS) CoCs, which comprise numerous counties throughout the state. As such, they represent a diverse set of communities, including both densely populated urban areas experiencing tight housing markets, low unemployment, and large numbers of youth experiencing homelessness to geographically rural areas that are economically depressed with small populations and lower rates of youth homelessness spread over large areas. Despite these differences, many of the CoCs are experiencing similar difficulties. The lack of available housing that is both affordable and accessible is a challenge in almost all sites, despite a range in the level of rents and vacancy rates. Finding employment for youth is challenging in both the economically depressed sites as well as wealthier sites.

Development of Coordinated Community Response

YHDP sites engaged in a 1-year planning period between January 2017 and January 2018, during which community partners collaborated across agencies and organizations to develop community-specific plans. These addressed youth homelessness with housing, prevention, and other innovative service models for youth in the target demonstration areas. The demonstration represents the first time most sites engaged in strategic planning specifically around youth homelessness. To guide the development and implementation of the plans, all sites formed governance structures, engaged YABs in the planning process, and collaborated with other agencies that also serve youth. The strongest coordination across sites was with child welfare, education, and behavioral health agencies, whereas collaboration with juvenile justice and health care systems were the least common. This was in part because these agencies often lacked staff designated to address issues of housing and homelessness for the youth in their systems.

Availability and use of data to guide decisionmaking was variable across the sites at baseline; CoCs with more highly developed youth homeless systems had highly developed HMISs and had engaged in additional efforts to collect data on youth experiencing homelessness, such as dedicated youth Point-In-Time (PIT) counts and participation in the Voices of Youth Count. Other sites, especially the rural sites, lacked sufficient data on the population of youth experiencing homelessness and are currently working on improving their systems to permit data-driven decisionmaking.

The sites worked to overcome a range of challenges during the planning process, working with HUD-funded technical assistance providers and, in some cases, altering their approaches to developing the coordinated community plans in order to do so. Some CoCs, mainly those with fewer resources and less experience planning around youth homelessness, encountered challenges due to delays in releasing funding for the project planning phase and delays in receiving guidelines from HUD about what the plans should include. Some sites also experienced challenges in establishing governance structures for the demonstration and determining what partners needed to be involved in the planning effort. The need to engage with

and obtain buy-in from many individual stakeholders and agencies was a challenge particular to multicounty CoCs.

Sites generally reported that youth played a significant role in determining which projects to include in coordinated community plans and how to implement those projects. This youth involvement was achieved, with the help of technical assistance, despite challenges engaging and sustaining youth boards throughout the planning process and early implementation. Although most of the CoCs had histories of engaging youth in advisory boards, advocacy efforts, and decision making prior to the implementation of YHDP, those efforts were more limited in scope than the role played by YABs developed for the demonstration. Many CoCs found that YABs initially lacked adequate preparation and the necessary structure and leadership to support its active involvement in planning, had difficulty attending meetings, and experienced high turnover.

Technical assistance supported all sites with site-specific and cross-site needs, including developing their plans and outlining their proposed projects, establishing YABs—and involving them in planning—and improving their HMISs and ability to collect and use data to guide decisionmaking. Additional technical assistance, funded by other agencies, assisted sites with developing cross-sector collaboration and learning from one another. Sites perceived this technical assistance as helpful but noted that it would have been more useful had it been received earlier in the planning process.

Status of Youth Homeless Service Systems

The 10 YHDP CoCs vary considerably in the extent to which they had systems components in place to serve youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness prior to the demonstration. Using data collected for this evaluation, we created three categories of baseline youth homelessness system development levels. Three CoCs with numerous youth-focused programs and interventions were classified as having highly developed systems at baseline. Three CoCs had medium developed systems containing some core elements of youth systems in place, but fewer services tailored to youth. The remaining four CoCs had limited infrastructure in place to serve youth experiencing homelessness and were at the start of developing system responses to youth homelessness.

Sites at all levels faced challenges identifying and engaging youth in services; implementing coordinated entry systems tailored to youth's unique needs; having sufficient youth-specific shelter and housing resources to serve youth; and facilitating youth's access to mainstream services to maintain stability, such as employment and behavioral health agencies.

The CoCs' baseline level of development shaped how they are using YHDP funds and approaching the task of building stronger, more coordinated systems of services and housing. Highly developed CoCs are using the demonstration resources to engage in systems refinement (through diversion, navigation, and housing), while systems with fewer components in place at baseline are proposing a wider range of projects, including improvements to coordinated entry, drop-in centers, and outreach.

All 10 sites are using YHDP funds to increase access to housing for youth through a variety of different approaches. The most common housing interventions proposed by the sites are rapid re-housing and host homes. Plans also include transitional housing and permanent supportive housing in efforts to build systems that include a range of different levels of support.

Across the sites, YHDP-funded projects to increase access to mainstream services are rare, with only one site implementing an intervention focused specifically on increasing access to behavioral health services for youth.

Perspectives of Youth

Through over 30 focus groups with youth across the 10 YHDP CoCs and two peer CoCs, a number of common themes emerged. Despite living in dramatically different communities, youth across all sites identified similar factors that contributed to their homelessness. Family conflict and tumultuous home environments were among the most common causes of youth homelessness cited. Some youth indicated they were rejected by their families because they identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning[1] (LGBTQ) others were rejected because they were pregnant. In some focus groups, youth cited family financial issues, mental health and substance abuse problems, and overall poverty as contributors to their homelessness. Across the sites, youth believed that a caring and supportive adult in their lives or early intervention and counseling with their families could have prevented them from becoming homeless.

Similarly, youth across the sites report a number of the same challenges once they became homeless. Youth consistently indicated they did not know what assistance was available or where to go to receive it. While the degree to which youth were aware of coordinated entry varied, in some sites, youth indicated the process was too slow and burdensome or did not serve youth efficiently. Across sites, youth felt that there were not enough youth-specific shelters, and adult shelters were unsafe or otherwise not suitable for them. The lack of affordable housing and the high cost of housing was noted as a problem, especially in the larger urban areas, where youth could not find the kinds of jobs that would allow them to support themselves when assistance ended.

Youth made several recommendations for changes in their communities, including increasing the availability and accessibility of youth-specific shelter and housing, addressing poverty and income inequality, improving outreach and communication, and assisting with employment, training, and other supports. Additionally, youth recommended that service systems listen to and act upon the youth's input and provide increased training to staff about how to best provide services to youth.

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[1] Term includes gender non-conforming.

Population Size and Composition, Service Receipt, and Housing Outcomes of Youth Served

According to HMIS data, in 2017, the size of the population of youth served by HUD-funded programs in adult systems and through youth-specific providers varied dramatically across the 10 sites, from fewer than 200 youth to nearly 5,000, mostly related to the population size of the CoC as well as the extent and nature of services available.

Across the sites, the youth served were an average of 21 years of age, predominately female, and reflected a mix of racial and ethnic groups. Minors were about 10 percent of the overall cross-site population but most common in Northwest Michigan, San Francisco, and Anchorage. The rate of youth in HMIS who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming (0.1–3 percent) was higher across sites than most national estimates. Black/African American, Multiracial, and/or American Indian/Native youth were typically overrepresented in each site (from three to eight times the rates observed in the general population); racial disparities between the general population and the population of youth experiencing homelessness were especially apparent across urban sites. Hispanic youth comprised about 15 percent of the total population and were nearly one-half of the population served in Santa Cruz, and one-third of the population served in Austin/Travis County.

Two percent of the youth were accompanied by a non-child household member, most often a spouse or partner, but 14 percent had one or more children with them, generally between the ages of 2 and 3 years old. The highest percentages of parenting youth (20–29 percent) were in the Ohio BOS, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, and Santa Cruz CoCs.

More than one-third of youth across sites experienced disabling conditions or family violence, with mental health conditions being the most commonly reported. Across sites, 15 percent of youth reported receiving any income, with the largest percentages in NW Michigan and Ohio BOS, both of which also had the highest percentages of youth reporting earned income. In all sites, however, the average amount of income earned was insufficient to cover fair market rent without leaving youth severely rent-burdened.[2] Benefit receipt also varied across the sites, ranging from 2 percent in Cincinnati/Hamilton County to 45 percent in Santa Cruz, such that receipt was greatest at sites with the highest average age and the highest rates of parenting youth.

Across the five sites that included coordinated entry data in their HMISs in 2017, 41 percent of youth received coordinated entry. Homeless prevention services, day shelter, street outreach, and services only were generally received by less than 10 percent of the youth in each site, though there were a few sites that had significantly higher percentages. In NW Michigan, the site with the highest percentage of minors, one-third of the youth received homeless prevention services, and in San Francisco, a site with a high rate of unsheltered youth experiencing homelessness, one-half of the youth received street outreach services.

Other than coordinated entry, emergency shelter is the most common HMIS program that youth received in most sites during 2017 and was also frequently discussed in documents and site visits. Youth spent an average of 49 days in shelter, and one-third of youth in shelter exited

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[2] HUD defines severe rent burdened as paying more than 50 percent of one's income on rent.

to permanent housing, although both of these metrics range considerably across the sites. Youth rarely received transitional housing and permanent housing services, including rapid re-housing, (with rates of receipt typically ranging from 1 to 6 percent across housing types), except at two sites with a high number of young parents, where 20 to 24 percent of youth received rapid re-housing).

These data, together with additional data in 2020, will provide a basis for examining changes within and across communities over time in the size and composition of the population receiving services, as well as the nature of the services received. We anticipate that the magnitude and nature of population changes over time will vary across the sites and will relate to the baseline status of the system, the types of services and housing changes that sites are putting into place, and changes in the community context. For example, a site that emphasizes implementing coordinated entry or outreach efforts over time may identify greater numbers of youth in need of services and housing, resulting in increases in the size of the population served. At the same time, sites that increase the housing provided may see decreases in the size of the population served, reduction in the time youth spend in a shelter, and increases in the percent that exit to their own housing. We will examine these differences across the YHDP sites as well as in contrast with the peer sites.

Comparison with Peer Continuums of Care and All Other Continuums of Care

At baseline, the YHDP CoCs were fairly comparable not only to the three peer CoCs but also to all other CoCs in terms of their systems planning efforts and baseline services and supports for youth.

With respect to planning, the YHDP sites were more likely to have youth-specific plans and to actively engage youth in the CoC, as required by YHDP. Although all three peer CoCs had youth-specific committees or workgroups in place, only one had developed a strategic plan for addressing homelessness, which was not limited to youth. Similarly, 30 percent of other CoCs reported having a governance structure for youth in place, and nearly one-half had a strategic plan for addressing homelessness that was with youth-specific or included youth-specific goals.

All three peer CoCs worked with youth to provide input during the YHDP application process, although they encountered similar challenges to YHDP sites in maintaining youth engagement. At the time of the site visits, none of the peer CoCs had an active YAB though all were interested in integrating youth into the governance of the CoC. Among other CoCs in the country surveyed, 35 percent reported actively including youth who have experienced homelessness in the decisionmaking process for their CoC.

The three peer CoCs were intentionally selected to include sites that represented different stages of development. Sonoma County, which was selected as a highly developed site, had already implemented a wide range of outreach, prevention and diversion, housing, and other programming tailored specifically to youth at baseline. In Memphis, selected as a medium development site, youth largely accessed a breadth of services through mainstream adult and family-oriented programs. The Colorado BOS, also selected as a rural site, was in the early

stages of system development at baseline and had few resources available for youth, other than those available for specific populations, such as those exiting child welfare.

The YHDP CoCs were also similar to all other CoCs in the country in terms of the system components that were most and least developed. Across all other CoCs, most indicated they had either fully or partially implemented coordinated entry, outreach, case management or navigation services, family and natural support services, and education and employment. Prevention and diversion were least likely to be in place. In at least one-half of the CoCs, however, none of the system's components were fully implemented. In fact, no service component was fully implemented in more than one-half of the CoCs. Compared with the YHDP CoCs, a smaller percentage of CoCs had shelter, transitional housing, or other types of housing for youth implemented.

Much like the 10 YHDP sites, the three peer sites varied in the nature and amount of cross-sector collaboration, as did all CoCs surveyed nationally. Nevertheless, the 10 YHDP CoCs have higher rates of coordination with child welfare and juvenile justice, as well as education and mental health and substance abuse services than the peer CoCs or all other CoCs; this difference is likely due, in part, to being part of the demonstration program, which encouraged such partnerships throughout the community planning process.

The majority of CoCs (both peer sites and all CoCs) reported coordinating with child welfare, education, and mental health and substance abuse services; far fewer reported coordinating with healthcare and juvenile justice systems. As with the YHDP CoCs, the peer sites and all CoCs most commonly reported coordination that involved representatives of these agencies serving as members of the CoC and participating in planning for the youth homeless system. Less common were more active forms of collaboration, such as blending funding and providing services and housing. Challenges to cross-sector coordination and collaboration include different definitions of homelessness, restrictions on how funding can be spent, and difficulty in sharing confidential data across systems.

These two points of comparison—the peer sites and the data on CoCs nationally—will provide an opportunity to compare patterns of change in the YHDP CoCs over the course of the demonstration to those of other CoCs not receiving the YHDP resources. They may also provide an opportunity to understand strategies other CoCs develop to prevent and end youth homelessness without additional funding or technical assistance.

Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
AHAR	Annual Homelessness Assessment Report
BOS	Balance of State
CAN	Coordinated Access Networks
CE	Coordinated Entry
CoC	Continuum of Care
CSH	Corporation for Supportive Housing
ED	U.S. Department of Education
ES	Emergency Shelter
ESG	Emergency Solutions Grant
HEARTH	Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing
HH	Host Home
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HIC	Housing Inventory Count
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IPS	Independent Placement and Support
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning
NCHE	National Center for Homeless Education
NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability
OMB	U.S. Office of Management and Budget
ONE	Online Navigation and Entry
PIT	Point-In-Time

PSH	Permanent Supportive Housing
RHY	Runaway and Homeless Youth
RRH	Rapid Re-housing
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI	Social Security Insurance
TA	Technical Assistance
TAC	Technical Assistance Collaborative
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TAY	Transition Aged Youth
TH	Transitional Housing
USICH	United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
VI-SPDAT	Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool
VOYC	Voices of Youth Count
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
YAB	Youth Advisory Board
YHDP	Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
YYA	Youth and Young Adults

Section I: Introduction

Report Overview

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has contracted with Westat, an independent research organization, to conduct a 4-year evaluation of the 10 round one Continuums of Care (CoCs) participating in the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). This evaluation examines how comprehensive, systems-level approaches to addressing youth homelessness are developed and implemented across diverse contexts. Further, it explores how these approaches affect the size and composition of the population of youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This cross-site report assesses the baseline status of the 10 YHDP communities, using four sources of data: document reviews, site visits, a web survey of all CoCs, and Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data. The evaluation team collected the first round of survey and site visit data approximately 2 years into the demonstration timeline in late 2018 through early 2019, a year after the sites had finalized their coordinated community plans, and when they were beginning to implement YHDP-funded projects. The report provides a synthesis of the data, describing how the CoCs are using YHDP resources to develop and implement coordinated community responses. To lay the foundation for a comparative assessment of outcomes in a future report, this report also examines the configuration of existing services, housing, and system development in three peer CoCs, selected to be similar to one or more of the YHDP sites, as well as in all other CoCs nationally. Finally, HMIS data from all YHDP and peer communities are analyzed to describe the number and composition of youth experiencing homelessness, the housing services they received, and their housing outcomes prior to the implementation of the coordinated community plans.

Report Structure

Section I of this report provides an overview of youth homelessness and the demonstration developed to address it. Section II outlines the evaluation design and methods. Section III provides an overview of the 10 communities, including the contextual factors that may influence the implementation and success of coordinated responses to youth homelessness. Section IV addresses how the YHDP CoCs have been planning and implementing coordinated responses to youth homelessness, highlighting the roles played by CoC governance structures, youth engagement, technical assistance, cross-sector collaboration, and data use. Section V discusses the baseline service system in place and the proposed interventions in each of the 10 YHDP sites. Section VI summarizes youth perspectives from focus groups examining the causes of youth homelessness, the homeless services and supports available to assist youth, and the changes youth would like to see in their communities. Section VII presents the baseline measures of the size and composition of the population of youth experiencing homelessness in the 10 YHDP sites, as well as the services they utilize, the length of time in the system, and exits to permanent housing. Section VIII compares the YHDP communities with the three peer CoCs and to all other CoCs nationally according to the characteristics of the population of youth experiencing

homelessness, the baseline status of their systems, and the challenges they experience serving youth. Section IX discusses the lessons learned thus far and implications for the evaluation. Appendix A provides additional administrative data tables.

Youth Homelessness in the United States

Over 42,000 unaccompanied youth and young adults in the United States experience homelessness on any given night (HUD, 2020). One-half of these youth are unsheltered, living in cars, sleeping outside, or living in other places not meant for human habitation (NAEH, 2019). Moreover, this number does not fully capture the scope of the problem, which is magnified when taking into account the additional vast number of youth who are in living situations that heighten their risk of homelessness, including couch surfing, living in foster care, or a strained living situation with family members (Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Policy Brief, 2014; HUD, 2019; Voices of Youth Count, 2017).

A range of factors contribute to youth homelessness, often distinct from those contributing to homelessness for families and single adults. Youth experiencing homelessness have higher-than-average rates of past experiences of family conflict and abuse (Ferguson, 2009; Tyler and Bersani, 2008; RHY Act Policy Brief, 2014; Fisher, Florsheim, and Sheetz, 2005; Keeshin and Campbell, 2011; Robertson and Toro, 1999). Family residential instability also contributes to homelessness in young adulthood (Tyler and Schmitz, 2013). Youth who age out of foster care are likewise at elevated risk of homelessness; these youth are often ill-equipped to support themselves financially and experience unemployment and academic difficulties (Toro, Lesperance, and Braciszewski, 2011; Dworsky and Courtney, 2009; USICH, 2013; Fowler, Toro, and Miles, 2009; Dworsky, 2005; Courtney et al., 2001). Likewise, although their pathways to homelessness are not well-understood, youth discharged from detention facilities are at risk of homelessness, either due to a prior history of homelessness or other risks associated with detention (Toro, Dworsky, and Fowler, 2007; Sedlak and Bruce, 2010).

Youth homelessness in turn is associated with a number of risks, including substance use, health and mental health problems, victimization, lowered educational attainment, and criminal justice system involvement (Thompson et al., 2010; Tyler et al., 2007; Heerde, Scholes-Balog, and Hemphill, 2015; Thompson and Hasin, 2011; Thompson, Zittel-Palamara, and Forehand, 2005; Wenzel et al., 2010; Stewart et al. 2004; Solorio et al., 2006; Whitbeck, Hoyt, and Yoder, 1999; Thompson and Pollio, 2006; Rafferty and Shinn, 1991; Thompson, Zittel-Palamara, and Maccio, 2004; Yoder et al., 2013).

Recent research has led to increased attention to youth who are particularly vulnerable to experiences of homelessness, including pregnant and parenting youth, and youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ) (Smid, Bourgois, and Auerswald, 2010; Choi et al., 2015; Castellanos, 2015; Quintana, Rosenthal, and Kehely, 2010). LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to report having been kicked out of their homes than heterosexual adolescents (Cochran et al., 2002).

This research on the scope of youth homelessness, its distinct causes and consequences, and the needs of those impacted have contributed to awareness that to end youth homelessness,

systems need to be developed specifically to serve youth. Opening Doors, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, was amended in 2012 to include the Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness, which called for a coordinated federal response to address the issue, acknowledging youth as a specific subpopulation for whom services should be targeted to prevent and end homelessness (USICH, 2013, 2015).

In response to this call for a comprehensive, multipronged approach to addressing youth homelessness, in 2013, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) developed and released a coordinated community response framework for preventing and ending youth homelessness (USICH, 2013). The framework calls for coordination at the local, state, and federal levels to—

- Prevent youth from becoming homeless by identifying and working with families who are at risk of separation.

- Effectively identify and engage youth at risk for, or actually experiencing, homelessness and connect them with trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and developmentally and age-appropriate interventions.

- Intervene early when youth do become homeless and work toward family reunification, when safe and appropriate.

- Develop coordinated entry systems to identify youth for appropriate types of assistance and to prioritize resources for the most vulnerable youth.

- Ensure access to safe shelter and emergency services when needed.

- Ensure that assessments respond to the unique needs and circumstances of youth and, when needed, connect youth to mainstream systems and support exits from those systems.

- Create individualized services and housing options tailored to the needs of each youth, and include measurable outcomes across key indicators of performance, including education and employment.

Overview of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

Guided by the USICH framework, in 2016, HUD, its federal partners, and youth with lived experience designed the YHDP to encourage communities to develop and implement coordinated community approaches to prevent and end homelessness of youth aged 14–24 years.

Administered by HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS), YHDP requires funded CoCs to—

- Bring together a wide variety of stakeholders, including homeless service providers, local and state child welfare agencies, school districts, workforce development organizations, the juvenile justice system, and others.

- Convene Youth Advisory Boards (YABs),[3] comprised of youth age 24 and younger that have current or past lived experience of homelessness, to lead the planning and implementation of the YHDP.

- Assess the needs of special populations at higher risk of experiencing homelessness, including racial and ethnic minorities; LGBTQ youth; pregnant or parenting youth; youth involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems; and youth who are victims of human trafficking.

- Create a coordinated community plan that assesses the needs of youth at-risk of and experiencing homelessness in the community and addresses how the YHDP grant, along with other funding sources, will be used to address these needs (HUD, 2016).

To date, HUD has funded 44 CoCs through three rounds of funding, totaling $151 million, to implement a variety of interventions to prevent and end youth homelessness.

In the first round of the demonstration (the focus of this evaluation), HUD awarded $33 million[4] in YHDP funds in January 2017 to 10 diverse CoCs, including 4 rural sites.[5] Exhibit 1-1 provides a map of the 10 funded CoCs as well as the 3 peer CoCs. Exhibit 1-2 provides the award amount for each YHDP round one grantee.

Round one CoCs were selected not on the basis of the strength of their current systems, but on their ability to document their systems, and their motivation to improve them. The selected CoCs represent single cities (for example, Anchorage); large urban counties (for example, Seattle/King County); multicounty areas (for example, NW Michigan); and Balance of State (BOS) CoCs (for example, Connecticut BOS), which comprise numerous counties throughout the state. Two CoCs—Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS—selected to focus the demonstration on multicounty portions of their CoCs, rather than the full CoC.

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[3] Following round one of the demonstration, youth advisory boards have been replaced with youth action boards in all funded CoCs.

[4] Sites were considered "rural" by HUD if: the area did not belong to a metropolitan statistical area (MSA); the area was part of an MSA but 75 percent of the population was located in non-urban census blocks; or if the population was less than 30 persons per square mile.

[5] In 2018, 11 CoCs, including five rural sites were funded in round two, 23 CoCs, including eight rural sites were funded in 2019 in round three.

Exhibit 1-1.   Map of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program and Peer Sites
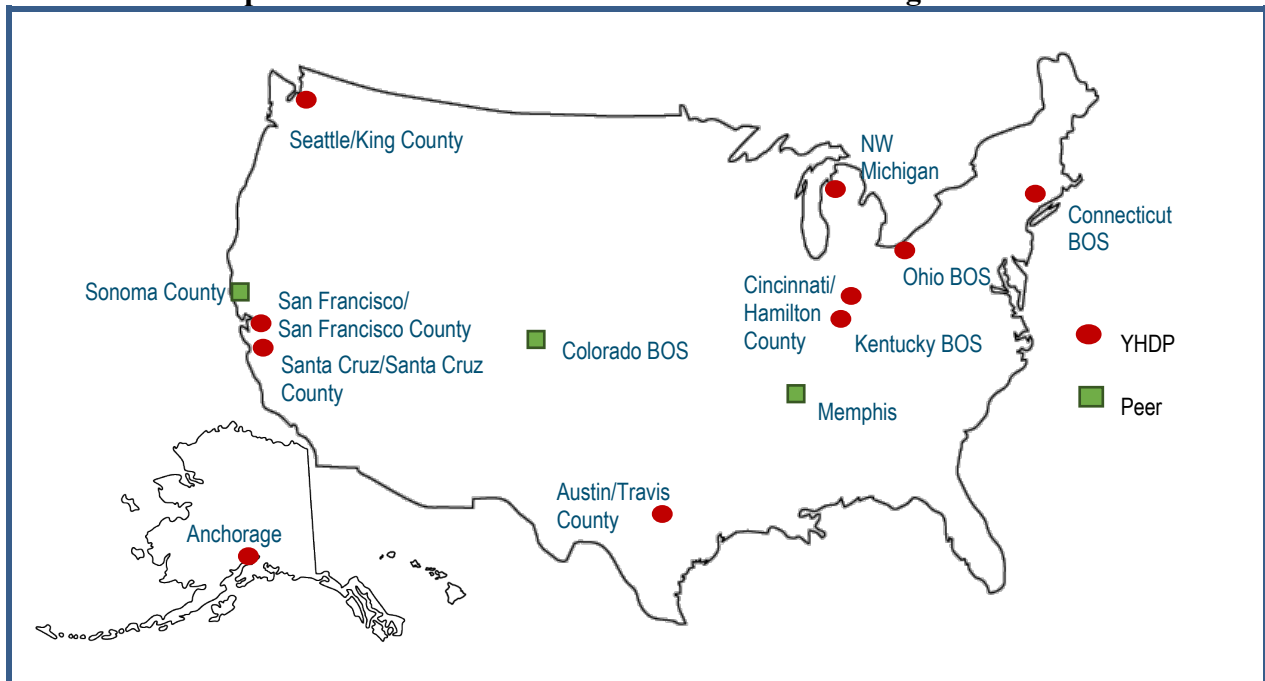
BOS = Balance of State. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Exhibit 1-2.   Round One Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Awards by Continuums of Care

YHDP CoC	Award
Anchorage (rural)	$1.5 million
Austin/Travis County	$5.2 million
Cincinnati/Hamilton County	$3.8 million
Connecticut Balance of State	$6.6 million
Kentucky Balance of State (rural)	$1.9 million
Grand Traverse, Antrim, Leelanau Counties (rural)	$1.3 million
Ohio Balance of State (rural)	$2.2 million
San Francisco/San Francisco County	$2.9 million
Watsonville/Santa Cruz City/Santa Cruz County	$2.2 million
Seattle/King County	$5.4 million

CoCs = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Grantees had 1 year to develop their coordinated community plans. Initial drafts were due to HUD in July 2017, following a 6-month planning period, and a final version, incorporating HUD feedback in January 2018.[6] The planning process was specified by HUD to lay the groundwork for implementation and provide a framework for the projects for which grantees would request HUD funding. Plans could include efforts to identify and engage youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness, resources to prevent or divert their homelessness, and services and housing resources, including rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and transitional housing as well as innovative programs such as host homes. To assist with the development of the plans, HUD funded limited and longer term technical assistance for all sites.

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[6] In rounds two and three of YHDP, grantees had 8 months to develop and finalize their plans.

Sites also had the option of applying for planning funds, equal to 3 percent of their total award, although not all sites chose to apply for these funds.

Technical assistance providers worked with the sites for 3 and a half years, through planning and initial implementation, to help develop and implement their coordinated plans, as shown in exhibit 1-3. Six organizations are funded by HUD and coordinated by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), to deliver technical assistance to the 10 sites. In addition to CSH, the organizations include Abt Associates, Homebase, ICF International, the Partnership Center, and Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC). Technical assistance occurred through in-person site visits, telephone calls, video conferencing, and email. The amount of technical assistance sites have received has varied over time, with the most intense period of delivery occurring in the initial 6 months of the demonstration (for example, 60 hours per month, including monthly site visits). In the implementation stages of the demonstration, sites have received light-touch technical assistance, largely through remote methods of contact.

Exhibit 1-3.   Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Received by Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care
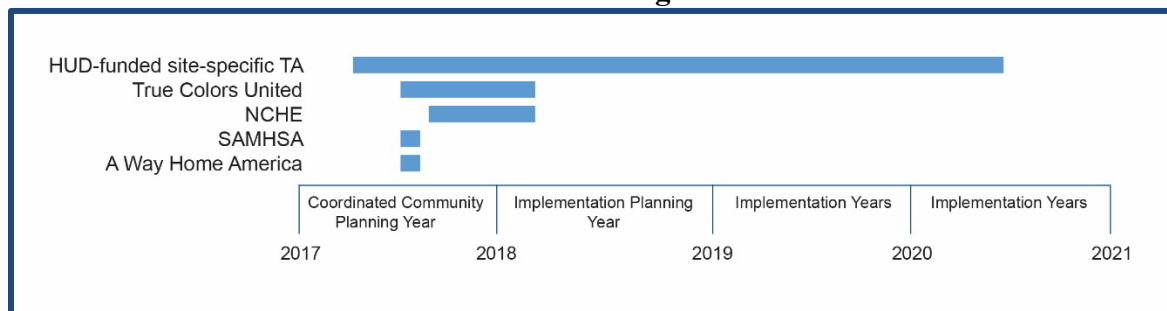
NCHE = The National Center for Homeless Education. SAMHSA = Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. TA = Technical Assistance.

Additionally, sites received more limited cross-site capacity building and technical assistance from additional organizations and agencies through site visits, phone calls, and convenings. True Colors United, a national youth-led advocacy organization focused on youth homelessness, provided HUD-funded technical assistance to sites on how to integrate youth into planning and decisionmaking. The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) provided technical assistance, funded by the Department of Education, on how to collaborate with education agencies. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) held a cross-site convening to assist the CoCs with their planning efforts. Finally, A Way Home America provided opportunities for the CoCs to convene together and share their experiences. Additionally, some sites contracted their own technical assistance to assist them with site-specific goals. For example, San Francisco contracted with Focus Strategies to help develop a youth-specific coordinated entry assessment tool.

Section II: Methodology

As noted, this baseline report is based on data from four sources. This section of the report provides an overview of the overall evaluation methodology, including how these sources fit within the study design, the evaluation questions that drive the analysis, specifics on the data collection activities and analysis strategies, the evaluation timeline, and study limitations.

Study Design

Exhibit 2-1 presents an overview of the study design. The evaluation incorporates a longitudinal comparative case study design involving the 10 round one Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) Continuums of Care (CoCs) and three peer CoCs, selected to be similar to one or more of the YHDP sites. We are collecting data from each of the CoCs over the course of the demonstration to understand—

- The baseline status of the systems in place for serving youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

- What systems changes are implemented over time to improve the coordination and availability of housing, services, and supports for youth.

- The effects of these changes on the size and composition of the population of youth experiencing homelessness.

Exhibit 2-1.   Evaluation Study Design
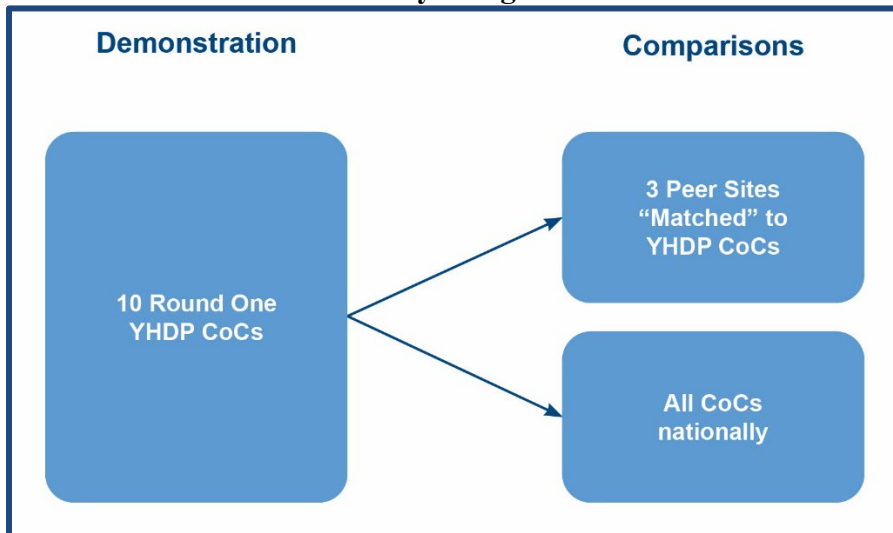
CoCs = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

We selected three CoCs—Sonoma County, Memphis, and Colorado Balance of State (BOS)—as peer sites from the pool of over 60 applicants for the first round of the YHDP that met minimum eligibility criteria and were not selected for either round one or round two. We used data from the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), Housing Inventory Counts (HIC), Point-In-Time (PIT) counts, and other existing data (such as the American Community Survey) to guide the selection. Based on these data, we selected peer CoCs that represented the best possible match to the demonstration sites in terms of baseline status of their youth homeless systems, geography, urban versus rural status, the size of the youth homeless population, and other key characteristics.

In addition, a web survey of CoCs across the country provides an additional comparative basis for understanding the role of the demonstration resources in creating system changes that, in turn, affect the youth homeless population. The evaluation is assessing the extent to which all other CoCs across the country change their systems over the same time period without the assistance of the YHDP funding and/or technical assistance, and will provide insight into the role played by the demonstration in changing the youth homeless service systems in the 10 demonstration communities.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the YHDP CoCs compare and contrast to each other and to other non-YHDP CoCs in their baseline status on services for youth experiencing homelessness?

2. How are the CoCs planning and implementing coordinated community responses to youth homelessness?

3. What role has technical assistance had in shaping the coordinated community plan and its implementation?

4. How are YHDP communities engaging youth in the planning process and in the execution of the plans?

5. What do youth and other stakeholders think worked?

6. How does the pattern of change in the services and supports for youth experiencing homelessness over the course of the demonstration in demonstration communities compare to selected peer communities as well as all other CoCs?

7. What changes have occurred in the number and composition of youth experiencing homelessness in need of services and those receiving services in the demonstration and peer communities?

Data Collection

The evaluation includes four data collection activities. For each of the case study communities, data on the community context, services and housing in place, and YHDP efforts were collected through document reviews and site visits. Data on the size and composition of the population of youth experiencing homelessness, the services and housing they received, and their housing outcomes were obtained through extractions and analysis of each CoC's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Finally, data on the type of assistance available to youth in all CoCs across the country were collected through a web survey. Each of these data collection activities are described below.

Document Review

Documents provided information on the YHDP planning process, the baseline status of the homeless system for youth, the coordinated community plans, and the history and context of each of the YHDP and peer sites. Documents included the grant applications; the YHDP community plans or other strategic plans; other CoC documents (for example, CoC Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports, Annual Action Plans, and Consolidated Plans); and documents for each site identified through the sites' websites such as pertinent meeting minutes, newsletters, presentations, and needs assessments, and information from the technical assistance providers and HUD. In addition, we reviewed secondary data from each site on the size of the youth population (for example, AHAR and PIT) and data on the housing inventories (for example, HIC).

Site Visits

The evaluation team conducted 3-day site visits to the 10 demonstration and three peer CoCs between December 2018 and May 2019. The site visits included interviews with a variety of key informants, including members of the CoC lead agencies and representatives from homeless service providers, child welfare agencies, education systems, other government agencies, and service providers. The evaluation team interviewed stakeholders from advocacy groups and philanthropic organizations in sites where they are engaged in youth homelessness, as well as interviews in each site with representatives from the youth advisory boards (YABs). We also conducted focus groups with youth who had previously or were currently experiencing homelessness. Youth focus groups included youth who represented a range of experiences and characteristics, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) youth; pregnant and parenting youth; members of racial-ethnic minority groups; and youth exiting foster care among others. For the YHDP sites, interviews focused on understanding the youth homeless services and housing before the implementation of the YHDP plans; the YHDP planning process, including the role of technical assistance and the role of youth; and the early implementation of the sites' community plans. For the peer sites, the interviews focused on understanding the youth homeless services and housing available; the types of planning processes previously conducted, underway, or proposed; the role of youth in the system; and additional initiatives planned for the future.

Homeless Management Information System Data

The evaluation team obtained HMIS administrative data records on all youth (ages 14–24) served in calendar year 2017 for each of the 10 YHDP and the three peer CoCs. After establishing a data use agreement (DUA) with each site, the evaluation team provided a template to each of the sites' HMIS administrators outlining the population of youth to be included and the data elements to be extracted. We worked with the HMIS administrators to ensure that the data obtained were accurate and complete. Eleven sites provided client-level data, and two sites (San Francisco, Colorado BOS) provided aggregate data. Within and across site analyses, we focused on the size and composition of the youth population experiencing homelessness at the baseline of the demonstration, the type of services and housing assistance youth received, youth's average length of stay in the system, and rates of exit to permanent housing.

Web Survey

A web survey gathered information about the status of youth homeless systems in all other CoCs nationally. The survey, administered between January and March 2019, was sent to the CoC lead agency director (or designee) of each of the 380 CoCs that were not a round one YHDP grantee or peer community. The survey captured information about the system's components in place to serve youth populations (for example, outreach, prevention, coordinated entry), the level of coordination across different agencies (for example, child welfare, juvenile justice, education), and challenges that communities face when addressing youth homelessness. Three hundred five communities completed the survey, for an 80 percent response rate.

Analysis

Analyses, guided by the key evaluation questions, integrated data across the qualitative and quantitative sources. Coding of qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and document reviews followed a set of *a priori* codes based on key domains related to the evaluation questions. Analysis of the HMIS in each community included descriptive analyses of demographic characteristics (for example, age, gender, race), household composition, disabling conditions, income and benefits, type of assistance received (for example, shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing), length of stay in services, and exits to permanent housing. We compared and contrasted themes from the qualitative data with the findings from the quantitative analyses, and we conducted additional analyses to better understand any areas of discrepancy within sites.

Across all demonstration sites, we examined the findings to identify patterns in system development (for example, how they developed their coordinated community response, the nature of cross-sector collaboration, and the YHDP projects they are implementing). We examined how these related to factors such as size of the youth population experiencing homelessness and urban versus rural status. We compared demonstration sites' results with the results from the three peer sites on their baseline status on services for youth experiencing homelessness as well as in the size and nature of the youth populations experiencing and at risk of homelessness in the various CoCs. Finally, we compared the 10 YHDP sites and three peer

sites with all other CoCs using findings from the web survey. We supplemented web survey findings with data from the CoCs' PIT counts providing estimates of the youth population size and Housing Inventory Counts (HICs) to generate information on the availability of beds in the CoCs. Descriptive analyses of the web survey included the extent to which each CoC had youth-specific prevention, outreach, coordinated assessment and entry, as well as the availability of housing and services and supports for youth experiencing homelessness. Additionally, we examined variations in overall community size, urban versus rural status, and the size of the population of youth experiencing homelessness.

Timeline

Exhibit 2-2 shows a timeline of evaluation activities. Findings in this report are based on the data collection activities conducted during the planning and pre-implementation stages of the demonstration.

Exhibit 2-2.   Data Collection Activities
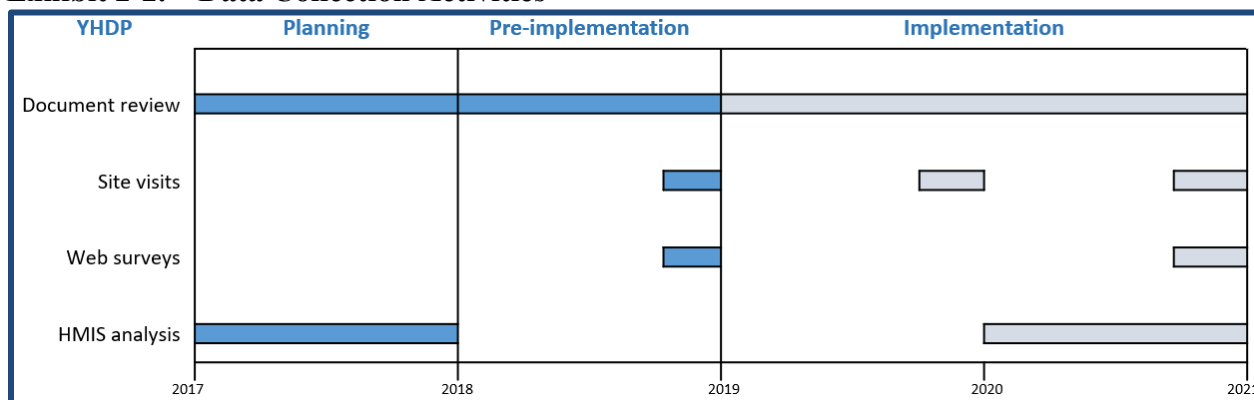
HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Study Limitations

The evaluation has several key limitations. First, there may be some confounding of the effects of the YHDP with other efforts. In some of the CoCs, several other activities and initiatives focused on ending youth homelessness overlapped with the YHDP planning and/or implementation period. For example, Seattle/King County completed a 100-day challenge to rapidly house a large number of youth experiencing homelessness in the spring of 2017, in the midst of the planning year. Connecticut BOS implemented a 100-day challenge in the spring of 2019 as its YHDP projects were being implemented. In these CoCs, it will be important to try to understand how these other activities interacted with the YHDP in developing the system and its effects on the size and composition of the population of youth experiencing homelessness to the demonstration.

Second, this evaluation was implemented during the early implementation of the plans, rather than at a true baseline period. The evaluation began in May 2017, after the 10 YHDP awards were made and the communities had begun their planning processes. The evaluation team

did not receive clearance from the U.S. Office of Budget and Management (OMB) to conduct initial data collection activities until the fall of 2018. As a result, the "baseline" data collection does not represent a true baseline, prior to YHDP, for these CoCs, the communities had already engaged YABs and been working collaboratively with child welfare agencies, education agencies, and other systems to identify and address the gaps in their systems. We provide a picture of the status of the systems prior to the YHDP award through a review of grantee applications and other documents. The round one site visits provide an understanding of how sites were developed their coordinated community plans and were beginning to implement them.

Third, a key component of the next phase of this evaluation will be to examine changes over time in the size and composition of the youth homeless population in the CoCs over time as reported through their HMIS. Improvements in the HMIS data systems could result in changes that do not exclusively reflect changes in the size of the population of youth experience. This could occur in two ways. First, the YHDP could result in improved access to services for youth in those communities. For example, implementing stronger outreach efforts or more youth-friendly coordinated entry systems may increase the number of youth who are served. Second, improvements in the quality or completeness of the HMIS data systems may occur in some communities, resulting in more comprehensive tracking of the number of youth served through the homeless services systems. This would lead to apparent increases in numbers of youth served even if the number of youth receiving homeless services has not actually increased. Throughout the evaluation, Westat regularly discusses any possible changes to sites' data collection and management processes with local HMIS administrators. When conducting longitudinal analysis, any such changes will be considered for analysis alongside qualitative measures of system change, so that any differences observed in the administrative data can be appropriately contextualized.

Fourth, variations in the quality and completeness of HMIS data across sites limits the range of conclusions that can be drawn from the data about the population of youth experiencing homelessness and their system utilization. One YHDP site, San Francisco, and one peer site, Colorado BOS, were unable to provide client-level data to the evaluation team for analysis due to local policies preventing the sharing of client-level data for research purposes. At another peer site, Memphis, several universal data elements were effectively missing following the site's migration to a new software vendor. As such, the statistical significance of comparative analyses that include these sites is not conclusive, and some calculations either exclude these sites or approximate their estimates based on the data that were available. Data management software systems and local data entry practices also varied. The evaluation team worked closely with HMIS administrators across sites to ensure HMIS samples were extracted as uniformly as possible, but some efforts to standardize data for comparison across sites limited the range of available data. For example, seven of the nine YHDP sites that provided client-level data also provided Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) data, but at over one-half those sites, RHY data were available on fewer than 10 percent of all the youth. Based on these limitations, we decided to exclude RHY data from our analysis.

Fifth, changes in contextual factors may affect the number of youth who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. For example, changes in the U.S. and local economies may affect employment opportunities, vacancy rates, and rental costs, which could subsequently affect the number of youth experiencing homelessness and the length of time they remain so. Changes in

the policies of other social service systems (such as those of the child welfare or juvenile justice systems) could also affect the number of youth who experience or are at risk of homelessness. The evaluation will document these contextual changes and aim to understand their impact on rates of youth homelessness over time. It may be difficult, however, to know what would have happened in the demonstration communities had these contextual factors remained unchanged.

This evaluation provides a critical snapshot of the youth homelessness systems within and across YHDP sites prior to and during the early implementation phase of the demonstration. The study design, incorporating comparisons with three matched peer CoCs and all other CoCs nationally, provides an opportunity to learn how diverse communities can address youth homelessness by building comprehensive systems of care for young people. The design does not allow for causal inferences about the role of the demonstration resources in these efforts. Instead, the evaluation provides explanation and insight into approaches that may work to successfully prevent and end youth homelessness.

Section III: Overview of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care

The round one Youth Homeless Demonstration Program's (YHDP) 10 Continuums of Care (CoCs) range considerably on a number of baseline conditions that potentially affect both the implementation and outcomes of the demonstration. These CoC differences include the size and urban versus rural status of the YHDP demonstration area, the size of the youth population at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the designated area, the economic context that affects the housing and employment available, and the existing resources available to serve youth. These differences reinforce the YHDP's approach to community-specific planning for preventing and ending youth homelessness. Exhibit 3-2 provides an overview of these characteristics for the 10 sites.

Geography and Population Size

Geography

The 10 round one YHDP CoCs include both urban and rural sites; however, the size of the geographic regions and of the youth populations varies widely across the urban/rural distinctions. Five of the six urban CoCs (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County) include both a major metropolitan area and the surrounding county. Of these county-level urban sites, Seattle/King County has the largest population of youth, with nearly 250,000 youth ages 15–24 residing in the target area (exhibit 3-1) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Austin/Travis County and Cincinnati/Hamilton County have between 100,000 and 200,000 youth residents, while San Francisco and Santa Cruz each have fewer than 100,000 youth residents.

Exhibit 3-1.   Size of Youth Population in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Sites

YHDP CoC	Population (Ages 15–24)
Anchorage	41,288
Austin/Travis County	155,209
Cincinnati/Hamilton County	106,575
Connecticut BOS	493,215
Kentucky BOS	436,939
NW Michigan	18,274
Ohio BOS	925,499
San Francisco	80,131
Santa Cruz	50,566
Seattle/King County	248,388

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 American Community Survey

The three Balance of State (BOS) CoCs have the largest youth populations; more than 900,000 youth ages 15–24 in Ohio and over 400,000 youth in Connecticut and Kentucky. Two of these sites—Ohio and Kentucky—are classified as rural sites and are focusing their demonstration on only a subset of this population in a selection of counties within the BOS region. The two remaining rural sites, Anchorage and NW Michigan, each have fewer than 45,000 youth residents.

Exhibit 3-2.   Overview of Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Sites

Site Characteristic	Anchorage	Austin/ Travis County	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS
Geographic Context and Population Size					
Geographic Area	Entire CoC: Anchorage	Entire CoC: Austin/Travis County	Entire: CoC: Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Entire CoC: 7 of 8 counties in Connecticut	Portion of CoC: 8 counties (Bell, Clay, Harlan, Knox, Leslie, Letcher, Perry, & Whitley)
Urban/Rural	Rural	Urban	Urban	Urban	Rural
Overall Youth Population Size (ages 15-24)	41,288	155,209	106,575	493,215	436,939
# of Youth Experiencing Homelessness on One Night in January (2018 PIT Count)	112	127	110	191	132
# of Unduplicated Youth (14–24) Receiving Services (2017 HMIS Count)	896	1,131	2,985	4,959	748
Economic Context					
Summary	• High housing availability • Moderate cost of housing • High unemployment • Medium wages	• Medium housing market • Moderate cost of housing • Low unemployment • Low wages	• Tight housing market • Low cost of housing • Medium unemployment • Medium wages	• Medium housing market • Moderate cost of housing • Medium unemployment • Medium wages	• Medium housing market • Low cost of housing • High unemployment • Low wages
Rental Vacancy Rate	11.1%	7.0%	4.4%	6.1%	6.2%
1 Bedroom Fair Market Rent	$1,035	$1,023	$643	$985	$481–526
Unemployment Rate	5.5%	2.7%	4.1%	4.1%	5.0–7.1%
Minimum Wage	$9.84	$7.25	$8.30	$10.10	$7.25
Existing Resources and Challenges					
Homeless Service Providers	One youth-specific provider	One youth-specific provider	One youth-specific provider	Multiple youth-specific providers	Few providers, none youth-specific
Reported challenges	High cost of living, diversity of population, geographic isolation, magnet city for opportunity-seeking rural youth	Transient population, diversity of population	Lack of transportation, prevalence of substance abuse	Diversity of population and resources across the region	Lack of infrastructure, geographic isolation, limited transportation, impoverished population, prevalence of substance abuse

CoCs = Continuums of Care. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. PIT = Point-In-Time.

Exhibit 3-2. Overview of Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Sites (continued)

Site	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
Geographic Context and Population Size					
Geographic Area	Entire CoC: Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee, Grand Traverse, & Wexford Counties)	Portion of CoC: 5 counties (Athens, Meigs, Vinton, Jackson, and Gallia)	Entire CoC: San Francisco/San Francisco County	Entire CoC: Santa Cruz/Santa Cruz County	Entire CoC: Seattle/King County
Urban/Rural	Rural	Rural	Urban	Urban	Urban
Overall Youth Population Size (Ages 15–24)	18,274	925,499	80,131	50,566	248,388
# of Youth Experiencing Homelessness on One Night in January (2018 PIT Count)	18	258	1,449	364	1,620
# of Unduplicated Youth (14–24) Receiving Services (2017 HMIS Count)	175	1,828	1,306	122	4,237
Economic Context					
Summary	• Medium housing market • Low cost of housing • Medium unemployment • Medium wages	• Medium housing market • Low cost of housing • High unemployment • Medium wages	• Medium housing market • High cost of housing • Low unemployment • High wages	• Medium housing market • Moderate cost of housing • Medium unemployment • Medium wages	• Tight housing market • High cost of housing • Low unemployment • Moderate wage
Rental Vacancy Rate[1]	7.4%	7.1%	5.4%	4.4%	4.8%
1 Bedroom Fair Market Rent	$561–756	$529–669	$2,499	$1,477	$1,529
Unemployment Rate	3.7-5.9%	5.8-7.3%	2.4%	4.9%	3.2%
Minimum Wage	$9.25	$8.30	$15.00	$11.00	$11.50
Contextual Challenges and Existing Resources					
Homeless Service Providers	One youth-specific provider	Few providers, none youth-specific	Multiple youth-specific providers	One youth-specific provider	Multiple youth-specific providers
Reported challenges	Seasonal tourist population, lack of transportation and employment opportunities, geographic isolation	Lack of infrastructure, sparsely populated area, impoverished population, prevalence of substance abuse, limited transportation,	Expensive and tight housing market, diversity of population, transient population prevalence of substance abuse	Limited infrastructure, geographic isolation, transient population, lack of transportation	Expensive and tight housing market, diversity of population, fatigue of broader community

BOS = Balance of State. CoCs = Continuums of Care. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System.
PIT = Point-In-Time.

[1] Rental vacancy rates for BOS sites represent state-level estimates from the U.S. Census Bureaus' 2018 Housing Vacancies and Homeownership (HVS) statistics; all other sites reflect estimates from the largest metropolitan statistical area within the site's geographical region, except for NW Michigan and Santa Cruz, whose rental vacancies estimates reflect the state-level rates.
Sources: 2017 American Community Survey; 2018 PIT counts; 2017 HMIS

Size of Population

Two data sources yielded the estimates of the size of the population of youth experiencing homelessness. These are illustrated in exhibit 3-3 and include annual Point-In-Time (PIT) counts and counts from the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS). The numbers produced by these two data sources differ in two important ways. First, the HMIS includes the number of youth who received HUD-funded services over the course of a year, while the PIT estimate represents a single night in January. Second, the two estimates include different groups of youth. Unlike the PIT, the HMIS does not include youth who are unsheltered and not receiving any services. Additionally, the HMIS includes people who would not be included in the PIT, such as those receiving housing assistance, including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing. As such, the HMIS represents not only the number of youth experiencing homelessness, but also the capacity of the system to serve them. Taken together, the two numbers provide a better understanding of the size of the population of youth experiencing homelessness in each CoC.

Exhibit 3-3.   Data Sources

Point In Time Count Data (PIT)
An annual inventory on a single night in January to count the number of people experiencing homelessness (sheltered and unsheltered). Includes youth who are living in shelters, transitional housing, or are unsheltered on a night in January.
Homeless Management Information System Data (HMIS)
Data collected by each CoC on each person who is served by a HUD-funded program. Includes youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness that are receiving HUD-funded services.

CoC = Continuum of Care.

The size of the population of youth experiencing homelessness also varies across sites. As exhibit 3-4 indicates, most sites included fewer than 300 unaccompanied youth in their 2018 PIT count, and one site (NW Michigan) counted only 18 youth. In contrast, Seattle/King County and San Francisco counted more than 1,400 unaccompanied youth. In most sites, the majority of youth are sheltered. This is not the case in Seattle/King County, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz, in which at least two-thirds of youth are unsheltered.

Exhibit 3-4. Sheltered and Unsheltered Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Site

Site	Sheltered	Unsheltered	N
Seattle/King County	30%	70%	N=1,620
San Francisco	22%	78%	N=1,449
Santa Cruz	8%	92%	N=634
Ohio BOS	83%	17%	N=258
Connecticut BOS	75%	25%	N=191
Kentucky BOS	70%	30%	N=132
Austin/Travis County	60%	40%	N=127
Anchorage	97%	3%	N=112
Cincinnati/Hamilton County	98%	2%	N=110
NW Michigan	94%	6%	N=18
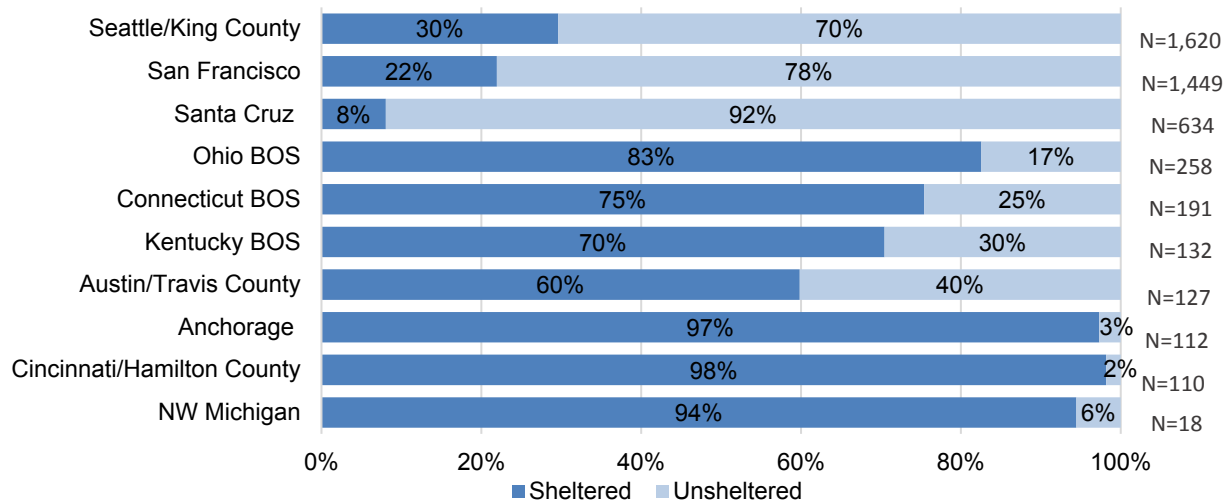
BOS = Balance of State.
Source: 2018 Point-In-Time Count

The size of the total youth population is not consistently correlated with the size of the youth population using homeless services within these sites. Exhibit 3-5 shows the proportion of youth experiencing homelessness, as determined by the 2018 PIT count, among all youth estimated based on the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), organized by largest youth homeless population to smallest. The three sites with the largest proportion of youth experiencing homelessness among the total youth population are the three West Coast CoCs experiencing tight housing markets and low unemployment rates (San Francisco, Seattle/King County, and Santa Cruz). These are also the three sites with the largest counts of unsheltered youth.

In contrast, the three BOS CoCs (Ohio BOS, Kentucky BOS, and Connecticut BOS) have the smallest proportions of youth experiencing homelessness among the total youth population. This finding may be accurate, or it may reflect the difficulty of conducting a PIT count across broad geographic areas and represent an undercount of the actual number of youth experiencing homelessness. Due to logistical constraints, in many BOS CoCs, including Ohio BOS, the count of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness during the PIT is conducted in a portion of the BOS rather than across the whole region (Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, 2020).

Exhibit 3-5.   Proportion of Youth Experiencing Homelessness Ages 14–24 and Among All Youth Ages 15–24
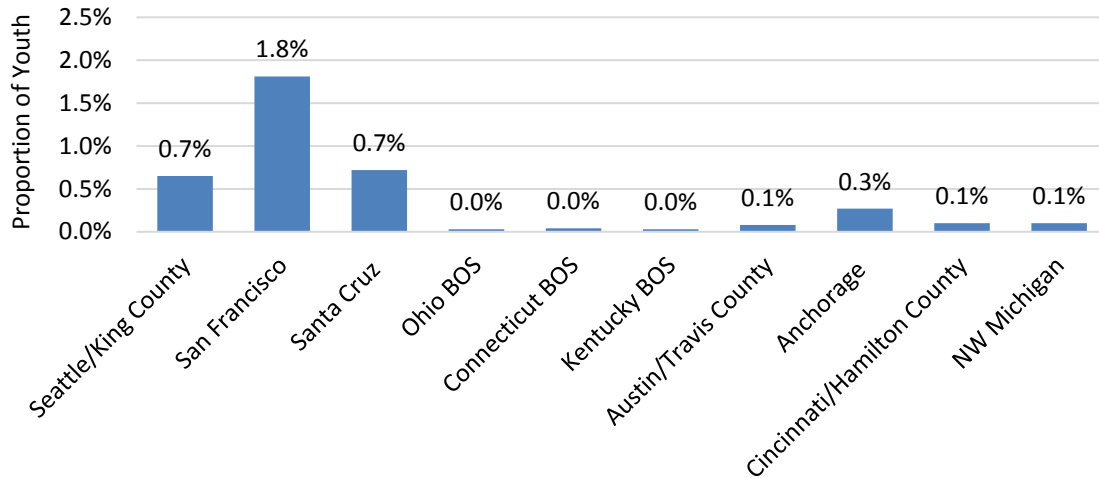
BOS = Balance of State.
Sources: Ages 14 through 24—2018 Point In Time Count; ages 15 through 24—2017 American Community Survey

Exhibit 3-6 presents the number of youth that received HUD-funded housing and services in each site over the course of a full year. Three sites (Connecticut BOS, Seattle/King County, and Cincinnati/Hamilton County) served over 2,000 youth; three sites (Ohio BOS, San Francisco, and Austin/Travis County) served between 1,000 and 2,000 youth; and the remaining four sites served fewer than 1,000 youth, with NW Michigan and Santa Cruz serving fewer than 200 youth.

Exhibit 3-6.   Number of Youth Receiving Homeless Management Information System Services in 2017 by Site
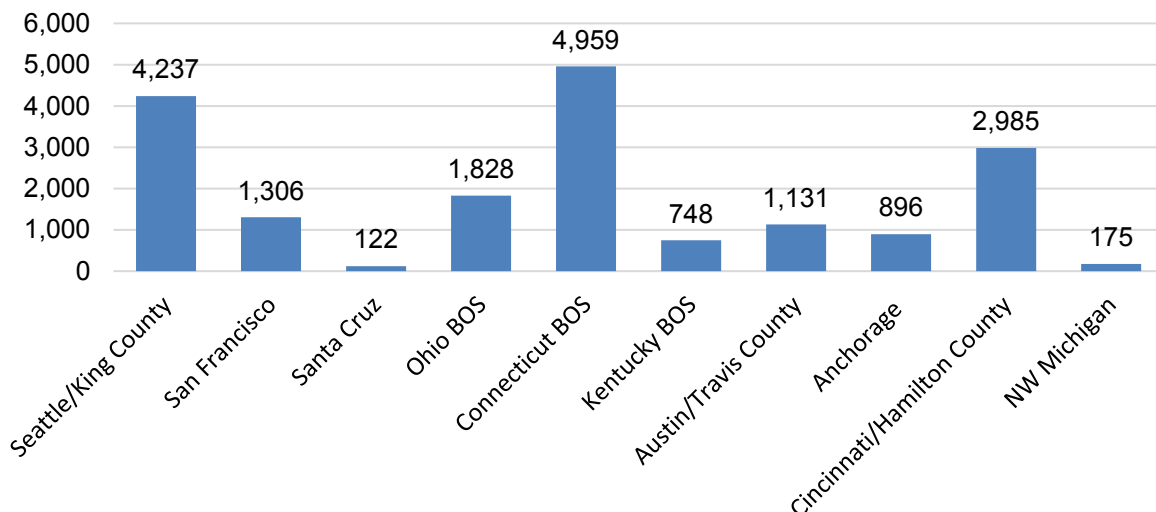
BOS = Balance of State.
Source: 2017 Homeless Management Information System

Exhibit 3-7 shows the proportion of youth that received HUD-funded housing and services in each site over the course of a full year among all youth estimated based on the 2017 ACS, organized by largest youth homeless population to smallest. The two sites with the largest proportion of youth receiving HUD-funding housing and services among the total youth population are Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Anchorage. In contrast, Ohio BOS, Kentucky BOS, and Santa Cruz have the smallest proportions of youth receiving HUD-funded housing and services among the total youth population.

Exhibit 3-7.   Proportion of Youth in Homeless Management Information System Among All Youth
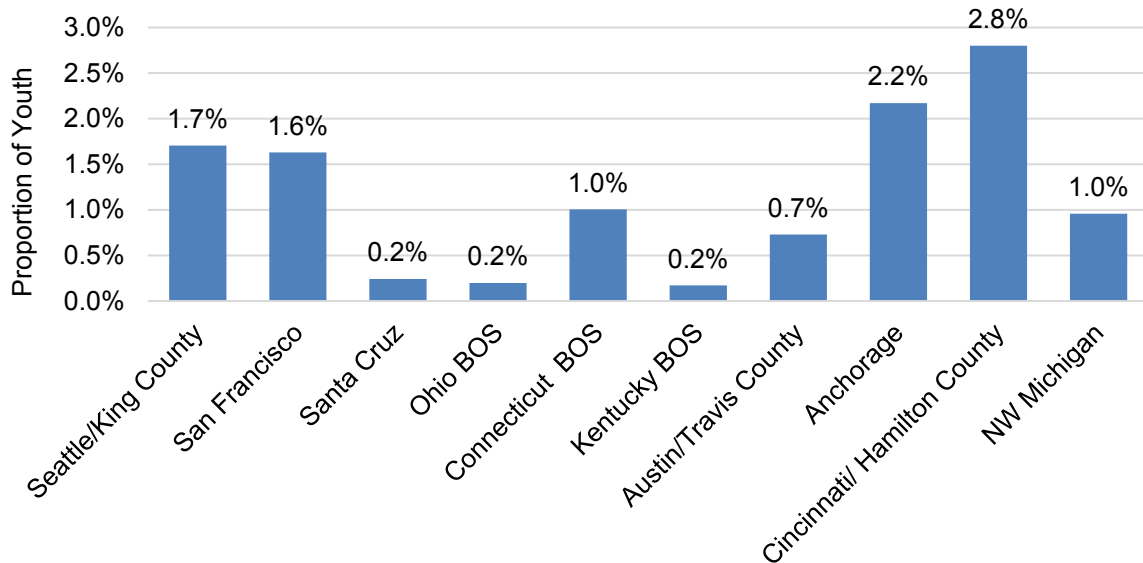
BOS = Balance of State.
Sources: 2017 Homeless Management Information System; 2017 American Community Survey

The large ratio of HMIS to PIT numbers in Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Connecticut BOS suggest that those CoCs are able to identify and engage a large portion of youth experiencing homelessness in services (exhibit 3-8). In contrast, smaller numbers of youth in the HMIS than in the PIT in San Francisco and Santa Cruz indicate that those systems may struggle to engage youth experiencing homelessness in services or may have fewer services available than are needed.

Exhibit 3-8. Ratio of Youth in Homeless Management Information System to Point in Time Counts

YHDP CoC	Ratio
Seattle/King County	2.62: 1
San Francisco	0.90: 1
Santa Cruz	0.34: 1
Ohio BOS	7.09: 1
Connecticut BOS	25.96: 1
Kentucky BOS	5.67: 1
Austin/Travis County	8.91: 1
Anchorage	8.00: 1
Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	27.14: 1
NW Michigan	9.72: 1

BOS = Balance of State. CoCs = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Sources: 2017 Homeless Management Information System; 2018 Point-In-Time Counts

It is important to note that PIT and HMIS estimates presented here include the number of youth experiencing homelessness in the full CoCs. For Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS, these numbers over-estimate the number of youth experiencing homelessness in the regions that are the focus of the demonstration activity. In its community plan, Kentucky BOS indicated there were 19 youth in the demonstration region included in the 2017 PIT count. Likewise, Ohio BOS noted there were 24 youth in its demonstration region in the 2017 PIT count.

Economic Context

Like the sites' geographic contexts and population sizes, the economic context of the YHDP communities varies significantly, as illustrated by the indicators in exhibit 3-1. Some sites are experiencing significant economic growth that exacerbates disparities among the local population, while other sites are experiencing economic recessions (Shearer et al., 2018). Some sites include a mixture of these economic contexts due to the large geographic coverage of the YHDP CoCs.

San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County are experiencing significant economic development, a result of growth in the technology industry headquartered in these areas (Shearer et al., 2018; Atkinson, Muro, and Whiton, 2019). These three CoCs have among the tightest and most expensive rental housing markets nationally, with vacancy rates at or below 5 percent and rent for a one-bedroom apartment costing $1,500 or more per month. As a result of this rapid economic growth, rates of homelessness among all populations in these communities are increasing and have drawn national media attention. San Francisco has among the highest rate of unsheltered youth experiencing homelessness in the country despite being the metropolitan hub of Silicon Valley (HUD, 2019). In 2015, the mayor of Seattle declared a state of emergency to address the homelessness crisis in the region, and Seattle/King County became the first city in the country to allow permitted encampments of homeless individuals (Seattle.gov, 2015).

Youth participants in focus groups in these three communities reported they were worried about being able to support themselves, given the cost of living. There was a sense of defeat

among even those who were employed. They spoke of having money, but never enough to "make it." They noted the cost of being homeless, including the need to spend money to stay warm and off the streets (for example, spending time in bars to be off the street) and the wear and tear on their clothes and shoes. *"Even if you work, you cannot save anything because it is way more expensive to be homeless than housed. I may have more money in my pocket, but I can't afford what I need."*

Austin/Travis County is also experiencing economic growth that is perceived to be resulting in economic inequality among residents (Shearer et al., 2018). One respondent noted, Austin has *"this crazy, intellectual, and economic explosion that is contributing to vibrancy and economic health in our community, and absolutely leaving more and more people behind, because they can't access the education, or stable housing to stay inside the city....We are bifurcating into a tale of two Austins right now."* Many respondents noted that the infrastructure in the city was not keeping up with the rate of development. One respondent noted that despite Austin's population growth, it still seems like a small city. "There's one of everything," such as one public community clinic, one primary youth provider, and one major domestic violence provider.

Another group of the YHDP CoCs have mixed economic climates. Connecticut BOS, for example, encompasses seven of the eight counties in the state, representing both the wealthiest and poorest communities in Connecticut. With a state-level rental vacancy rate of 6 percent, fair market rent less than $1,000 per month, and a $10.10 minimum wage, interviewees indicated there exist areas where affordable housing is attainable for youth. Similar disparities exist in Cincinnati/Hamilton County. Cincinnati is the headquarters of several Fortune 500 companies, and the unemployment rate in the area is fairly low (at 4.1 percent). Despite this, there are reportedly few employment opportunities for youth without college degrees. Moreover, rental vacancy rates in the region are lower (at 4.4 percent) than the other YHDP sites, and a lack of public transportation in the region reportedly makes it challenging for youth experiencing homelessness to access the limited employment and housing opportunities that are available. Likewise, NW Michigan includes areas with mixed economic climates. With an economy driven significantly by tourism, the region hosts large numbers of visitors taking advantage of the Traverse City's natural setting and festivals in the summer months. Whereas increased tourism has reportedly supported economic growth in Traverse City, it has also led to increased housing costs that exceed what local residents working in service positions can afford. Areas outside of Traverse City remain economically depressed with few employment options and transit options are scarce.

The Anchorage CoC faces unique challenges due in part to economic disparities between local/native populations and the temporary transplants who pursue oil business opportunities in the region. Alaska's economy, impacted by dropping oil prices, is currently in a recession that puts it last among all states for economic growth (Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, 2017). This economic condition along with a reportedly high cost of housing in Anchorage, are major factors in homelessness, despite having the highest rental vacancy rate among all the YHDP sites, at 11.1 percent. According to Anchorage's YHDP coordinated community plan, the area has an overall cost of living at 131.3 percent of the national average, and housing costs are 153.1 percent of the national average. Despite Anchorage's relatively high unemployment rate, finding employment for youth is an additional challenge. Interviewees reported that lack of a

high school diploma or the General Educational Development (GED) test are barriers to employment for many youth. Employers perceive youth from Covenant House Alaska as high risk and are reluctant to hire them. Additionally, providers in Alaska noted a high rate of migration of families and youth (especially Alaskan Natives) from rural communities to Anchorage, seeking jobs, education, and health care. These individuals reportedly often lack a safety net of nearby extended family and are at increased risk of homelessness.

While most of the YHDP CoCs contain geographic areas of wealth and poverty, such is not the case in Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS. Both sites encompass very rural Appalachian areas, and interviewees repeatedly described limited resources and investment and few opportunities for youth to improve their situation. In the Ohio BOS, Athens County is the economic center of the region, with the local economy tied to Ohio University, Ohio Health, and the coal industry. The regional unemployment rate is the highest of all the YHDP sites and ranges from 5.8 to 7.3 percent. Youth reported that the available jobs were largely limited to fast food restaurants and the local sawmill or recycling plant. They indicated feeling stuck and unable to get better-paying jobs because of inability to afford a car and lack of access to public transportation in these rural areas.

Likewise, the Kentucky BOS is focusing its YHDP efforts in an eight-county region sub-section of the Kentucky BOS CoC designated as the Southeastern Kentucky Promise Zone.[7] This rural eight-county region has a total population of about 200,000 people and has no population centers of 10,000 or more residents. Since January 2012, declines in Eastern Kentucky coal production have resulted in the loss of more than 8,000 coal-related jobs in the region. These job losses and the corresponding hundreds of millions of dollars in wages lost from the region's economy have had a ripple effect in the region's overall jobs picture, leading to job losses in sectors outside coal. Numerous families with children and young adults have reportedly lost jobs, which is thought to have contributed to the number of youth currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Other Challenges

Representatives across sites discussed a range of other challenges that they believed impacted the planning and implementation of their local YHDP programming. Stakeholders in all sites reported that affordable housing availability was an issue, but opportunities were especially rare at sites like Seattle/King County, San Francisco, and Austin/Travis County, where industry growth brought professionals with incomes that inflated the already tight housing market. CoCs in these densely populated areas face challenges addressing the needs of a particularly large number of individuals who require homelessness services, while navigating political tensions and disparate attitudes about homelessness from the broader community. Stakeholders in these sites described strong local philanthropic efforts in these communities, in part due to the regional influx of wealth. Some also noted that the continued visibility of homelessness in increasingly gentrified areas resulted in tensions with the broader community and "fatigue" around

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[7] Promise Zones are high poverty communities where the federal government partners with local leaders to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crime, enhance public health and address other priorities identified by the community.

homelessness support. Youth at these sites cited "classism" or a prevailing "caste system" as contributing to their homeless circumstances.

At most sites, employment opportunities were described as limited or insufficient to allow youth to attain independence. At sites where tourism is a major economic driver, seasonal or temporary jobs were reportedly plentiful, but not enough to sustain a young person throughout the year. These jobs included working at music festivals in Austin/Travis County, or working in summer resort hospitality positions in NW Michigan. In Seattle/King County, youth noted that Amazon warehouse positions are available but that it is challenging to work the night shift when those hours are the only time when most shelters provide access to safe sleeping spaces. At other sites, like Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS, poverty was reportedly extremely pervasive, and employment options for youth were typically limited to fast food or factory work. At some sites, low rates of high school diploma attainment reportedly further limited youth's employment viability.

Substance abuse, particularly opioid and methamphetamine addiction, was a frequent concern across sites. Stakeholders from the Ohio BOS noted that the region has been especially challenged by the opioid epidemic. In 2017, Ohio had the second-highest rate of deaths from opioids, following West Virginia, and stakeholders from the Ohio BOS noted the challenges to the region of the opioid epidemic (CDC, 2020). Similar remarks were made in neighboring Cincinnati/Hamilton County. Like Ohio BOS, the Kentucky BOS has been impacted by substance abuse and drug overdose, facing a rate of 55.4 pharmaceutical opioid-caused deaths per 100,000 residents more than 10 times the national rate of overdose according to the 2017 Kentucky Health Issues Poll. In focus groups, youth identified the pervasive cycle of poverty and drug use as the primary cause of youth homelessness in the region. They reported that work opportunities are rare, and most jobs pay only minimum wage, incentivizing illegal drug sales as a source of income.

Stakeholders in some CoCs also discussed how urban areas/city centers serve as "magnets" for youth from more rural areas. Stakeholders in Anchorage reported that Native youth from rural village communities come to the city in search of employment opportunities but are often unprepared for independent urban living. In Seattle/King County and San Francisco, youth described seeking out these metropolitan areas hoping to access more services and opportunities to connect with other youth with similar experiences. In reality, these hopes were not realized; rather, youth reportedly often felt the lack of social connection in these metropolitan areas more acutely. Stakeholders in Santa Cruz likewise noted that Santa Cruz has an increased rate of unsheltered youth homelessness. They perceived that this was because, as a resort vacation destination for wealthy Silicon Valley residents, Santa Cruz draws youth experiencing homelessness from surrounding areas who often find refuge on the town beaches.

Existing Youth Resources

The communities vary both in existing resources to address youth homelessness and in prior involvement in youth homelessness initiatives. Some of the CoCs have a number of providers that have a history of serving youth. Other sites have no youth-specific providers and a limited range of homeless services available to all populations.

In Seattle/King County and San Francisco, several youth-specific providers reported that their organizations began serving youth experiencing homelessness for more than 40 years, some dating back to the 1950s, with early initiatives often concentrating on outreach and shelter opportunities for runaway youth. Prior to this demonstration, in both CoCs, over a half a dozen youth-specific providers offered HUD-funded youth-specific emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing. Likewise, nearly a dozen providers in Connecticut BOS offered HUD-funded youth-specific shelter and housing opportunities across a dozen different programs.

The majority of CoCs, including Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, NW Michigan, and Santa Cruz are represented by one or two long-standing organizations who serve as the primary providers of youth services and the central referral point for youth entering the homelessness system. Other sites, such as Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS, have few homeless service providers within the demonstration area and are just beginning to develop systems-level responses to youth homelessness.

Service accessibility also varies widely across the communities. Providers in Seattle/King County and San Francisco utilize the existing public transit systems, providing youth with bus passes to connect them to available resources. Youth in large, rural sites (NW Michigan, Ohio BOS, Kentucky BOS), however, are challenged by the lack of public transportation and the large distances they must travel to access services. In NW Michigan, the majority of homelessness service programs are reportedly located in Traverse City and transportation is limited to the outer lying communities. In Kentucky BOS, providers indicated the mountainous Appalachia region is a barrier to coordination across their network, as there are few opportunities for staff to interact across county lines. Transportation poses a challenge to youth in some urban sites as well (Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, Santa Cruz), where public transit options are available but operate via limited hours or routes. Youth in Connecticut BOS indicated that the available buses require long travel times and multiple transfers for youth to move between their jobs, services, and housing. In Santa Cruz, stakeholders described a bifurcation of resources across two distinct geographies—the wealthy "north county" and the agricultural "south county"—with a scarcity of public transportation connecting the two.

Section IV: Findings: Development of a Coordinated Community Response

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Key Findings

Planning and Governance. *The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) represents the first time most of the 10 round one sites engaged in strategic planning around youth homelessness. All sites formed governance structures to guide the development and implementation of their coordinated community plans. Some sites, however, experienced challenges, particularly around establishing who would be involved in the governance. Delays in funding and guidelines from HUD posed additional challenges to Continuums of Care (CoCs), especially those with fewer resources and less prior experience planning around youth homelessness. This necessitated that many sites modify their plans for developing coordinated community plans. The sites' technical assistance providers assisted them in dealing with these challenges.*

Youth Engagement. *Most of the CoCs had histories of engaging youth in advisory boards, advocacy efforts, and decisionmaking that pre-date YHDP. Most of these previous efforts, however, were more limited in scope than the role played by the demonstration youth advisory boards (YABs),[8] a required component of the demonstration. The structure, size, and operation of the YABs varied across sites, and many sites faced challenges in developing, engaging, and sustaining youth boards throughout planning and early implementation. Despite these difficulties, most sites indicated that youth played a significant role in determining what projects to include in the plan and how to implement them.*

Technical Assistance. *Technical assistance, supported by HUD and delivered by designated providers, helped all sites to develop their plans and outline proposed projects, assisting with site-specific challenges as they arose. Challenges included establishing governance structures, engaging youth, and establishing cross-sector collaboration. Sites indicated that the technical assistance was helpful and supportive, though some assistance was provided too late in the planning process to be useful.*

Cross-Sector Collaboration. *The YHDP CoCs all reported collaborating with other agencies that also serve youth; the strongest coordination across sites was with child welfare, education, and behavioral health agencies. Fewer sites coordinated with juvenile justice and healthcare systems, in part because these agencies tended not to have staff designated to address issues of housing and homelessness for the youth in their systems. The multicounty CoCs struggled to collaborate across agencies because such collaboration required engagement of a large number of individuals.*

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[8] In subsequent rounds of the YHDP, this name was changed from Youth Advisory Board to Youth Action Board.

> *Data and Evaluation. Decisionmakers' access to and use of data varied considerably across the sites. Some CoCs had highly developed Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and had engaged in additional efforts to collect data on youth experiencing homelessness, such as dedicated youth Point-In-Time (PIT) counts and participating in the Voices of Youth Count, a national survey on unaccompanied youth homelessness (Voices of Youth Count, 2017). Other sites, especially the rural sites, have not had sufficient data on the population of youth experiencing homelessness to guide their decisionmaking and are working on making improvements to their HMISs.*

Development of Coordinated Community Plans

Sites launched the demonstration by developing a coordinated community plan, incorporating input from stakeholders throughout the CoC. Stakeholders include representatives from local governments, youth and non-youth homeless services providers, behavioral health providers, child welfare agencies, school districts, and youth with lived experience, among others. To be approved by HUD, coordinated community plans had to include—

- A statement of the need of youth either at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the geographic area.

- A list of partners involved, including a description of their involvement.

- A shared vision, list of goals, objectives, and action steps, including which partners are responsible for each action.

- A list of new projects to be funded by HUD or other sources.

- A governance structure.

- A plan for continuous quality improvement during implementation.

- A signature page including signatures of official representatives from the CoC, child welfare agency, local government agency, and YAB.

Additionally, the coordinated community plans had to address how the communities would incorporate into their overall approach—

- The principles of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness's (USICH's) Framework to End Youth Homelessness.

- Special populations.

- Positive youth development and trauma-informed care.

- Family engagement.

- Immediate access to housing with no preconditions.

- Youth choice.

- Individualized and client-driven supports.

- Social and community integration of youth.

- Coordinated entry.

This section of the report discusses the planning process and structure used by the sites to develop the community plans, highlighting the roles of youth engagement, technical assistance, cross-sector collaboration, and data and evaluation. Throughout the section, we describe challenges experienced in the process and strategies the sites used to resolve them.

Planning and Governance

The development of YHDP-coordinated community plans represented the first time most sites conducted strategic planning around ending youth homelessness. Most of the CoCs had engaged in strategic planning to address homelessness overall; Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, and Seattle/King County were the only sites to have youth-specific strategic plans prior to receiving the YHDP award. Two of these sites, Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Seattle/King County, are highly developed, while Connecticut BOS is medium developed. Moreover, in all but two sites (Connecticut BOS and NW Michigan) the demonstration represents the first time the CoC has had a committee or workgroup specifically focused on youth homelessness. This is outlined in greater detail in the description of planning and implementation groups below.

Governance Structures

As required by the YHDP Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), each CoC's coordinated community plans outlined a governance structure, responsible for guiding YHDP decisionmaking throughout the demonstration and including youth with lived experience and representatives from across the community. Exhibit 4-1 presents an overview of the governance structure for the YHDP CoCs.

Exhibit 4-1. Overview of Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Governance Structure
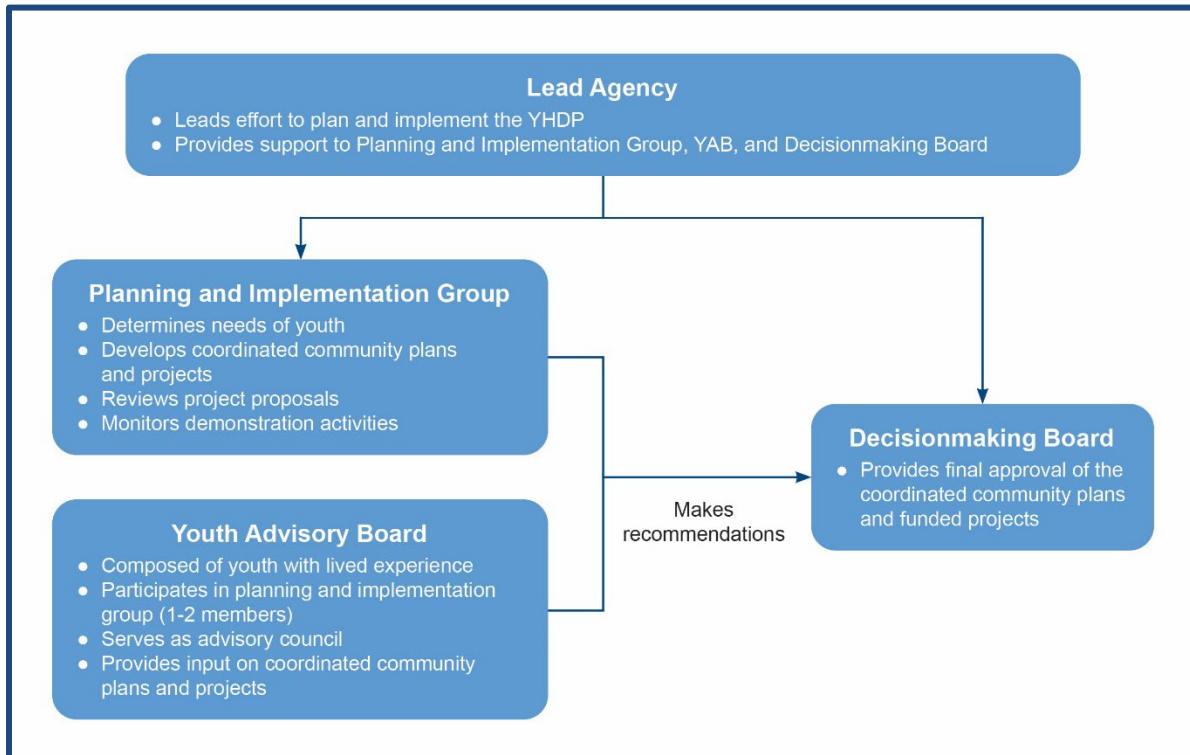
YAB = Youth Advisory Board. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Lead Agency. The YHDP-funded CoCs designated a variety of organizations to lead the effort to plan and implement the coordinated community responses. In 6 of the 10 sites, the lead agency of the CoC is the YHDP lead. In three sites (Anchorage, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, and Santa Cruz), a provider of youth homeless services was selected as the YHDP lead because it was a leader in serving youth experiencing homelessness within its respective community. Kentucky BOS designated as YHDP lead The Partners for Education at Berea College, a nonprofit organization located near the Promise Zone with a history of engaging in anti-poverty and educational initiatives in the region.

Planning and Implementation Group. In each site, the YHDP planning and implementation group is generally composed of representatives from local governments, youth and non-youth homeless services providers, behavioral health providers, child welfare agencies, school districts, and youth with lived experience. These groups also include representatives from advocacy groups, philanthropic groups, juvenile justice, and law enforcement in communities in which they are present and engaged in youth homelessness, such as Seattle/King County and Cincinnati/Hamilton County. In two sites (Connecticut BOS and NW Michigan), these groups pre-dated the YHDP, whereas in the remaining eight sites these groups were formed in response to the demonstration. In Seattle/King County, this planning and implementation group is the same group that has final decisionmaking responsibility; however, in all other sites, these are distinct groups.

Youth Advisory Board.[9] All 10 sites also developed YABs composed of youth with lived experience. In most sites, the full YABs serve as advisory councils, providing input into and feedback on the coordinated community plans and proposed projects, while a subset of members, generally one-to-two, participate in the YHDP planning and implementation workgroups that develop the plans, review project proposals, and make recommendations to the decisionmaking body. Representatives from YAB also participate in the final decisionmaking in Connecticut BOS and Seattle/King County. The role of youth in the development and implementation of the plans is discussed in more detail below.

Decisionmaking Group. Final approval of the plans and funded projects, based on recommendations from the planning and implementation group lies with the CoC board in seven sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Kentucky BOS, NW Michigan, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz) and with new decisionmaking groups formed in response to the demonstration in three sites (Connecticut BOS, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County). In Seattle/King County, this decisionmaking body has been designated in order to align YHDP efforts with other efforts to address youth homelessness in the community and is intended to be sustained following the demonstration. In contrast, in Connecticut BOS, the YHDP management team will be dissolved once the demonstration is over, and its responsibilities will be absorbed by the CoC lead agency. In other sites, it remains to be seen whether the youth-specific planning bodies or decisionmaking bodies will be sustained following the YHDP.

Challenges in Planning and Governance

Throughout the YHDP planning period, a few sites experienced challenges with establishing a community of partners to plan and govern the plans. In a few CoCs, the lead agencies did not initially embrace a community focus in their planning process but rather operated as if the YHDP funds were similar to previous grants they had received in which they received all of the funding and had sole authority on how to spend it. This was more common in CoCs such as Anchorage and Santa Cruz, where the designated YHDP lead agency was a youth provider. In these sites, the technical assistance providers helped the lead agencies understand the importance of including community partners in the planning and implementation of YHDP-funded projects. In Cincinnati/Hamilton County, providers in the CoC reportedly did not engage and buy-in to the project initially because they assumed Lighthouse Youth Services, the largest youth provider, would be awarded all the YHDP projects. Frequent messaging from the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC lead about the community-focus of the demonstration helped engage additional providers in the planning process.

In CoCs where the CoC lead agency led the planning process, some but not all the sites struggled with the role of providers in this process. Two such sites were Connecticut BOS and Seattle/King County. In Connecticut BOS, the CoC lead agency initially struggled to develop a system for decisionmaking about YHDP activities and funding that balanced community and provider input with impartial decisionmaking. Providers have historically been considered integral members of the CoC, but during early discussions about what YHDP projects to consider, some community planning participants felt providers were advocating for projects that

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[9] In subsequent rounds of the demonstration, YABs are Youth Action Boards, rather than Youth Advisory Boards.

would benefit their own agencies rather than what was best for the CoC as a whole. Multiple interviewees described these early meetings as tense and antagonistic instead of collaborative. The CoC sought out additional HUD-provided technical assistance from a new technical assistance provider to help establish a governance structure that included a new decisionmaking body, the YHDP Grants Management Team. This team receives input from a broad array of community members, including providers, but does not include any potential recipients of YHDP funding.

Similarly, Seattle/King County, where the CoC lead agency is likewise the YHDP lead, noted initial challenges in engaging and sustaining representation of service providers in planning and early implementation efforts. Seattle/King County includes numerous service providers that have historically been leaders in addressing youth homelessness and are integral to implementing various aspects of the coordinated community plan. These providers reported resentment at being initially excluded from the Joint Committee, the body charged with overseeing the development of the YHDP plan. At the time of the site visit, the site was restructuring the Joint Committee in an effort to align itself with the CoC's broader youth homelessness efforts and to integrate providers as active partners.

Sites indicated several logistical challenges during the planning process, the most common of which was a delay in HUD funding, guidance, and procedures. These delays most adversely affected sites such as Ohio BOS without additional discretionary resources (such as philanthropic partners) able to fill the gap. Sites could apply for a planning grant up to 3 percent of their overall award amount to assist in planning efforts. These funds were not released to the CoCs until October 2017, after an initial draft of the coordinated community plan was due to HUD for review. All sites were required to develop alternate funding strategies to cover the cost of the planning process. In some locations, such as NW Michigan and Anchorage, teams were able to access funds from outside organizations, such as the Rotary Charities and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to assist with the costs of planning. In other sites, such as San Francisco and Seattle/King County, the CoCs used in-kind and internal resources to cover the costs. In at least two sites, the delay in the release of planning funds required the CoC to change its process for developing the coordinated community plan. Ohio BOS was unable to implement its intended plan to hire a consultant to assist with developing the plan, a resource that was needed because all the organizations involved are small nonprofits and could not dedicate staff to write the coordinated community plan. Connecticut BOS was unable to hire researchers to complete planned system dynamic modeling before the first draft of the plan was submitted; the intended modeling would have allowed for empirically derived estimates of the cost and impact of different interventions throughout the CoC, but could not be incorporated into the plan.

Sites also perceived an initial lack of clarity from HUD around expectations for their coordinated community plans. They received guidelines for what was to be included in the plan only a few days before the initial draft was due. As a result of this delay, many of the sites' initial drafts were incomplete and required significant revision. Technical assistance providers worked with sites to revise their plans, but stakeholders in multiple sites reported that the delay in receiving guidelines from HUD prevented them from maximizing the planning period, requiring that they conduct much of the planning activity in the last 6 months of the period rather than using the full year. Stakeholders from one site indicated that the lack of clarity regarding expectations for the plans hampered the forward momentum of the CoC. Sites that were

developing strategic plans for youth for the first time, such as Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS, reported more difficulty as a result of these delays than did sites that had previously engaged in this kind of systems planning, such as Seattle/King County and Cincinnati/Hamilton County. Sites attributed the delays to being part of the first round of the demonstration and believed that sites funded in subsequent rounds were unlikely to experience the same challenge.

Youth Engagement

All sites engaged youth through the development of YABs, as required by the demonstration grant. Exhibit 4-2 provides an overview of the YABs.

Development of the YABs

Most of the YABs were developed in response to the YHDP, although many (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Seattle/King County) have histories of engaging youth in advisory boards, advocacy efforts, and decisionmaking that pre-date the YHDP. Most of these efforts have been organized to provide input from specific providers rather than the CoC as a whole. For the three remaining rural sites, there was not organized youth involvement prior to the YHDP.

As exhibit 4-2 illustrates, the YABs range in size, how youth are recruited, and operation. The YABs range in size considerably, from 3 to more than 20 members, with most sites having 6 to 8 regular members. Most sites (7 of the 13) recruited their members from providers, with both Anchorage and Santa Cruz adapting previously existing advisory groups. One site (NW Michigan) recruited participants through the local McKinney-Vento liaison in Traverse City. In two CoCs (Seattle/King County, Connecticut BOS), both of which contracted with external organizations to manage the YAB, youth applied and interviewed for positions on the board. In the three remaining sites (Anchorage, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, and San Francisco), the YAB is open to anyone who wants to attend. Large numbers of youth attended each meeting at these sites, but they did so irregularly. A smaller group of youth at each of these sites are part of a steering or executive committee whose members participate in YHDP leadership activities and decisionmaking. Interviewees in sites with more open groups reported appreciating a diversity of voices included, but also struggled to have youth invested in the planning process and regularly attend meetings.

Exhibit 4-2. Overview of the Youth Advisory Boards

YHDP CoC	Name	When Formed	Recruitment of Members	Number of Members[1]	Meeting Schedule	Payment
Anchorage	Youth Task Force	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Developed from Covenant House Alaska's Youth Advisory Council	21 members (5 member steering committee)	Quarterly	$25/hour in Visa gift cards, food, & transportation
Austin/ Travis County	Austin Youth Collective to End Homelessness	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Through providers	8 members	Monthly	$15/hour
Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Lighthouse Youth Advisory Council	2013	Through Lighthouse programs	10–20 members (2 leads)	Monthly	$10/hour
Connecticut BOS	Youth Action Hub	2015	Through normal employment hiring strategies	8 members	Monthly	Hourly rates vary by tenure, food, and transportation
Kentucky BOS	Youth Action Board	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Through providers	3–5 members	Monthly	Data Unavailable
NW Michigan	Youth Advisory Board	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Through McKinney-Vento liaison	5 members	Bi-weekly	$20/meeting, food, and transportation
Ohio BOS	Youth Action Board	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Through providers	6–7 members	Monthly	$20/hour, iPads, & transportation
San Francisco	Youth Policy and Advisory Committee	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Through posted fliers, word-of-mouth	Open (6–8 member executive committee)	Monthly	$25 Visa gift cards
Santa Cruz	Youth Advisory Board	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Developed from Encompass Youth Advocacy Group	6 members	Weekly	$25 per 2-hour meeting ($12.50 per hour), food, & transportation
Seattle/ King County	Youth Advisory Board	2016 (to support YHDP application)	Through youth advocacy organizations	6 members	Monthly	$15/hour, food, and transportation

CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] In many sites, the number of members varied over time. When site visit data was inconsistent with information provided in the community plans, the latter is presented.

Role of Youth in Planning and Governance

Most sites' YABs met monthly during the planning process, although two sites (Santa Cruz and NW Michigan) met more frequently (either weekly or bi-weekly, respectively), and Anchorage met quarterly. Lead YAB members and members of steering committees also attended meetings for other YHDP governance bodies. Additionally, four sites (Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, Kentucky BOS, and San Francisco) integrated input on the coordinated community plans from youth who were non-YAB members through open forums or listening sessions to obtain input from community members in the early stages of planning, with three of these specifically engaging youth audiences. Additionally, NW Michigan conducted focus groups and a survey with youth in four of the five counties included in the demonstration.

In a number of sites, YAB-members played a significant role in determining what projects to include in the plan and how to implement those projects. Three highlights are presented in exhibit 4-3.

Exhibit 4-3.   Highlighted Examples of Youth Advisory Board Member Contributions

Connecticut BOS Youth Action Hub	NW Michigan Youth Advisory Board	Seattle/King County Youth Advisory Board
In response to an initial YHDP exclusive focus on improving access to permanent housing, YAB advocated for including additional youth crisis housing in the plan so that youth have a safe alternative to adult shelters and unsafe doubled up situations.	YAB vetoed a plan for a mobile outreach van in favor of rural "drop-in centers" located in existing locations where youth congregate, such as schools, libraries, and parks.	YAB negotiated the salary for a clinical therapist position that anchors the Youth Engagement Team. The youth members argued that high staff turnover was an obstacle for many youth in receiving effective services and a $20/hour salary (compared with the initially proposed $15/hour) would be more competitive in hiring someone with extensive trauma-informed experience and in retaining that individual in the position over time.

CoC = Continuums of Care. YAB = youth advisory board. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

All sites compensated YAB members for their participation. Part of the impetus for compensation came through the technical assistance provided by True Colors United, which encouraged sites to recognize monetarily the value of youths' time and input. Sites varied considerably in the amounts and types of compensation provided, however, ranging from $10 to $25 an hour. Eight sites provided this compensation in cash, and two sites (Anchorage and San Francisco) provided gift cards. Youth indicated gift cards were less desirable than cash because cards limited what they were able to purchase. In addition to payment, several sites also provided YAB members with food at YAB meetings and transportation to attend meetings. Ohio BOS also provided iPads to YAB members because they wanted youth to be able to participate fully in electronic meetings and email conversations.

Reasons for variation across sites in compensation of youth include the size of the population and number of YAB members, as well as the CoC's ability to access funding. While all CoCs were encouraged by True Colors United to provide funding to youth, and CoCs were able to use planning grant dollars after their release in October 2017 to fund the YABs, prior to October 2017, CoCs had to support youth participation through additional funding (such as through local foundations).

Challenges in Engaging Youth

Throughout the planning process, a number of sites struggled to develop, engage, and sustain YABs for a variety of reasons. Exhibit 4-4 provides a summary of the challenges experienced and the strategies they employed to address those challenges.

Exhibit 4-4.   Challenges with Engaging Youth and Strategies Implemented

Challenge	Strategy
Lack of adequate preparation	• Educate YAB members about the CoC/system
Lack of structure or leadership	• Establish executives or steering committees • Delineate specific roles for youth • Identify an individual or organization to support YAB
Inconsistent meeting attendance	• Pick meeting times/locations to accomodate YAB members' schedules • Provide transportation support • Provide equipment to support virtual meeting attendance
High turnover	• Hold regular meetings with action steps • Establish a cohort model • Fill open positions on an ongoing basis

CoCs = Continuums of Care. YAB = youth advisory board.

Lack of Adequate Preparation. In Seattle/King County, several interviewees indicated that, at its inception, YAB members were not adequately prepared to understand the homeless services systems' functioning and vetoed all of the planning group's suggestions, thereby stalling the development of the plan. To address these issues, site leads contracted with a new sponsoring organization experienced in working with youth and youth advocacy and in developing youth as advocates. They focused on educating the YAB members about the Seattle/King County homelessness system and made meetings more accessible to the youth (such as changing meeting times and locations to be more accommodating of YAB members' schedules). These changes the YAB adopted led to a more formalized and respected role in YHDP decisionmaking.

Lack of Structure/Leadership. Several sites began their YABs with limited structure or leadership, lacking specific roles for youth and/or a designated individual or organization to provide support with setting agendas, locating meeting space, and arranging transportation. In these sites, neither the YAB members nor other community members were clear as to their role. In Anchorage, the YAB did not have specifically delineated roles for youth, reportedly making it difficult to involve youth in a meaningful way. Consequently, no youth took a leadership position or attended meetings with community planners. Anchorage's technical assistance providers helped the site develop a YAB steering committee with specific responsibilities designated to specific individuals. Similarly, in NW Michigan, without initial leadership, early YAB meetings lacked focus, making it difficult to keep youth engaged and attending meetings on a regular basis. A community volunteer with experience in meeting facilitation worked to improve the YAB by helping members set clear meeting agendas, identify a core team of youth leaders, and introduce a cohort model of membership to allow new youth to join.

Attending Meetings. Barriers to attending meetings interfered with engaging youth, particularly in the more rural sites, where the number of unaccompanied youth is small and there are limited providers available to support YAB participation. Kentucky BOS and Ohio BOS both

experienced challenges in recruiting and retaining YAB members due to the difficulty of finding ways for members to regularly meet together because of vast distances with the demonstration regions and limited public transportation. Ohio BOS purchased iPads for youth to facilitate electronic communication and Kentucky BOS tried to implement virtual meetings but noted that Internet access is not always reliable.

High Turnover. Sites reported trying to address high turnover in YAB and the need for ongoing recruitment of members. A few sites were responding to the challenge by building in opportunities for ongoing recruitment of youth. Some turnover was expected due to youth aging out or moving on to other activities in their lives such as returning to school, becoming employed, or focusing on health issues. Other turnover, however, was likely a result of the early ambiguities in the operation of YABs. For example, numerous sites mentioned high rates of member turnover, particularly in the post-plan development stage when there were less frequent meetings and no clear action steps for youth engagement. NW Michigan has designed a cohort model for YAB membership in which membership of the board is renewed every year and each cohort has a particular focus area around which to guide its efforts. Because YAB members in Connecticut BOS are regular employees of the Institute for Social Research, new members are routinely hired when a position becomes available.

Technical Assistance

As noted, each site was provided site-specific technical assistance from a HUD-designated lead technical assistance provider. This technical assistance occurred in-person via site visits and remotely through phone calls, video conferencing, and email. The amount of technical assistance sites received varied over time, with the most intense period of delivery occurring in the initial 6 months of the demonstration (for example, 60 hours per month, including monthly site visits). The technical assistance provided was site-driven, but largely focused on helping the sites develop their plans and outline projects. Exhibit 4-5 outlines the technical assistance providers and the types of assistance they generally provided.

Technical assistance providers also assisted with other site-specific needs as they arose, such as issues involving leadership and governance, youth engagement, and collaboration. For example, technical assistance providers assisted—

- Connecticut BOS with developing a governance structure with policies and bylaws around funding that allowed providers to offer general input but not to be involved in decisions that might affect their own funding.

- Kentucky BOS with the transition in leadership of the YHDP grant from Partners for Education at Berea College to the CoC lead agency in a way that would retain as much institutional memory as possible.

- Anchorage's lead agency, the only youth homeless service provider in the CoC, embraces a community-focus in its planning rather than operate as if it would receive all of the funding and have sole authority on how to spend it.

Further, technical assistance providers helped multiple sites develop and engage their YABs. The providers offered strategies for structuring the boards and integrating them into the

sites' governance structures. They also helped the CoCs determine how to engage other service systems, such as child welfare and education, in the planning process.

Exhibit 4-5. Site-Specific Technical Assistance

Providers	Assistance Provided
Corporation for Supportive Housing	Understanding HUD regulations (such as, which projects could be funded) and apply for waivers, as needed
Abt Associates	Developing their plans on time and with the "right" partners at the table
Homebase	Determining which projects to include and where to locate them, especially in geographically diverse communities, such as Connecticut BOS
ICF International	Developing policies and procedures around projects that represent new intervention models for a site, such as host homes
Technical Assistance Collaborative	Developing RFPs or other processes for selecting providers within the CoCs to implement the projects

BOS = Balance of State. CoCs = Continuums of Care. RFPs = requests for proposal.

In addition to each site having a HUD-designated technical assistance provider, all sites received assistance from a variety of organizations on a set of common issues. Exhibit 4-6 provides an overview.

Exhibit 4-6. Cross-Site Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Providers	Assistance Provided
The Partnership Center	• Modifying sites' HMIS systems to create reports that included their new YHDP programs • Improving sites' data systems to guide future decisionmaking
True Colors United	• Integrating youth meaningfully into CoCs' planning and decisionmaking
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	• Collaborating with behavioral health and education agencies in the planning process
National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)	• Integrating behavioral health and education agencies' services into their community responses to youth homelessness
A Way Home America	• Learning from one another through cross-site convenings

CoCs = Continuums of Care. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Assessment of Technical Assistance

Sites indicated that the site-specific technical assistance they received provided much needed guidance in developing community plans and projects and increased communities' capacity to address youth homelessness. The technical assistance providers were reportedly accessible and encouraged open communication, although multiple sites noted that it may have been more

helpful to have on-site or local technical assistance from providers more familiar with their communities. Some stakeholders perceived their community as unique and outsiders as unable to understand fully the nuances of how things work locally. Others noted that it was difficult for the technical assistance provider to fully participate in meetings as the only remote participant and that time zone differences between the site and the provider's location limited a site's ability to have real-time access to the provider.

In general, sites described the cross-site assistance they received as helpful. Interviewees appreciated having convenings that offered the opportunity to meet with and learn from one another. They noted that this assistance would have been more useful had it been received earlier in the planning process. Technical assistance contracts with True Colors United National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) did not start until mid-way through the planning year, after the sites had established their youth boards and submitted a first draft of their plans to HUD for review.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

During this baseline and early implementation period, the YHDP CoCs all reported coordinating with other sectors, including child welfare, education, and a range of other agencies. Stakeholders in multiple sites noted that the development of the coordinated plan itself increased cross-agency collaboration within the CoC. In Anchorage, for example, the community planning process was viewed as integral to pushing local community partners and agencies to articulate common goals and consider the logistics of implementing a youth-focused initiative in their CoC. Exhibit 4-7 provides a summary of the level of collaboration occurring between the CoCs and child welfare, juvenile justice, education, health care, and behavioral health care agencies.

Exhibit 4-7.   Cross-Sector Collaboration

YHDP CoC	Child Welfare	Juvenile Justice	Education	Health Care	Behavioral Health
Anchorage	●	◉	●	◉	◉
Austin/Travis County	○	○	●	○	◉
Cincinnati/Hamilton County	●	◉	◉	◉	
Connecticut BOS	●	●	◉	○	●
Kentucky BOS	○	○	○		○
NW Michigan	◉		●		
Ohio BOS	○				○
San Francisco	○	○	○	○	◉
Santa Cruz	◉	●	◉	○	
Seattle/King County	○	○	◉		◉

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

○   Agency representative serves on CoC/participates in system planning.

◉   Agency representative serves on CoC/participates in planning and agency provides services or housing.

●   Agency representative serves on CoC/participates in planning, agency provides services or housing, and agency shares data or blends funding.

Note: Blank cells indicate no evidence of collaboration.

As exhibit 4-7 indicates, four sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Connecticut BOS, and San Francisco) reported coordinating with all five types of partners, and three additional sites reported coordinating with at least four. The CoCs with the fewest cross-sector partners, NW Michigan and Ohio BOS, are both rural sites covering numerous counties, where the broad geographic area may act as a barrier to collaboration.

Child Welfare

Following the development of the coordinated community plans, the strongest coordination across sites existed with child welfare agencies. In line with YHDP requirements, all sites indicated that representatives from child welfare served on CoC and/or participated in systems planning.

In one-half of the sites, child welfare agencies provided services or housing to youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. A number of youth homeless service providers, including Lighthouse Youth Services in Cincinnati and Encompass Community Services in Santa Cruz, had child welfare-funded contracts. Blending funding and sharing data were less common forms of collaboration, in place only in Anchorage, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, and Connecticut BOS. Finally, some sites reported that child welfare involvement was limited to intermittent meeting attendance rather than meaningful cross-systems collaboration.

Stakeholders in some sites reported that there has historically been some tension between homeless service and child welfare providers, often involving responsibility for shared clients. For example, in Anchorage, the question of which agency should fund runaway foster youths' services can be difficult to resolve, and the agencies have not developed consistently agreed-upon protocols to address such cases. Multiple sites also indicated that despite having buy-in from some individuals in an agency, it could be challenging to get it from everyone. In Connecticut BOS, stakeholders reported strong coordination between the homeless service system and the child welfare system at the state level; however, they also reported that engaging local representatives in day-to-day service provision requires time and effort, because addressing youth homelessness is often outside the boundaries of these individuals' primary jobs.

Education

As exhibit 4-7 indicates, the CoCs reported relatively higher levels of collaboration with the education system than other systems. Representatives from school districts or statewide education agencies served on the CoC board or participated in planning in all sites except Ohio BOS. Education agencies also provided homeless services, typically prevention and outreach, in seven of the sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, NW Michigan, Santa Cruz, and Seattle) and shared data with the CoC in three sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, and NW Michigan).

A few sites noted particularly strong partnerships with education agencies. In Connecticut BOS, for example, the homeless service system and the education system worked together to develop a Youth Rights and Resources Toolkit for schools to use to identify youth that are

homeless or unstably housed and help connect them to services. Connecticut BOS has also engaged school districts in the youth PIT count.

Other sites, particularly multicounty sites, faced challenges, however, collaborating with education agencies because it required engaging with individuals from many different school districts. For example, Ohio BOS reported there were more than 14 school districts in the five-county YHDP region. Some stakeholders noted that the use of different definitions of homelessness by HUD and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) provided a barrier to cross-sector collaboration.

Behavioral Health

Prior to the demonstration, numerous sites had identified high rates of mental health and substance abuse problems among youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness, and the CoCs had worked to increase collaboration between homeless service providers and behavioral health providers to address these needs. Behavioral health organizations, as well, reported securing stable housing as a key concern for the youth they serve.

In 7 of the 10 sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Connecticut BOS, Kentucky BOS, Ohio BOS, San Francisco, and Seattle/King County), representatives from behavioral health agencies participated in systems planning. In five of those sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, and Seattle/King County), the behavioral health agencies also provided housing or services to youth experiencing homelessness, and in one site (Connecticut BOS) they also blend funding or share data with the CoC (see exhibit 4-6). Examples of the collaboration include the behavioral health agencies—

- Providing funding for services for youth on-site at homeless providers (Anchorage).

- Adding mental health and substance abuse professionals to the outreach teams (Austin/Travis County).

- Meeting monthly with the CoC lead agency to address behavioral health needs of youth experiencing homelessness to identify and adopt shared systems performance metrics and discuss opportunities for service coordination and blended funding (San Francisco).

Juvenile Justice

Representatives from the juvenile justice system participated in eight of the YHDP sites. Two sites had no collaboration between the juvenile justice system and the youth homeless services system.

Among the sites with some participation of the juvenile justice system, participation in one-half of the sites (Austin/Travis County, Kentucky BOS, San Francisco, and Seattle/King County) was limited to serving on the CoC or participating in planning. In the other four sites (Anchorage, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, and Santa Cruz), the juvenile

justice system was collaborating in other ways with the youth homeless system. Examples of collaboration between the homeless and juvenile justice systems include—

- The Department of Juvenile Justice in Anchorage provides programs that offer family counseling, remediation, and unification for youth upon exit to prevent them from becoming homeless.

- In Cincinnati/Hamilton County, the juvenile justice system operates as a referral source to shelter. They identify youth who need services and housing upon exiting detention and refer them to an emergency shelter where they receive case management, life skills education, mental health services, and legal services (through Children's Law Center).

- In Connecticut BOS, the juvenile justice system, along with the CoC, behavioral health, and child welfare are engaging in a data matching project to identify how much overlap exists between the populations served by the different systems.

- Similarly, in Santa Cruz, the CoC and juvenile justice department share data in order to understand how many youth are served by both systems.

Across the sites, collaboration with juvenile justice tended to be a more recent development than collaboration with child welfare and education agencies. Some sites reported it is not always clear who within the juvenile justice system should be engaged because, unlike child welfare and education, there is not always a staff person designated to address issues of housing and homelessness for youth in the system.

Health Care

Across the sites, the healthcare system was the least involved in the youth homeless systems. Six sites (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz) included representatives from healthcare agencies in their CoC workgroups; however, only Anchorage and Cincinnati/Hamilton County had healthcare services specifically designated for youth experiencing homelessness through clinics co-located with the major youth service providers in the community.

Several youth homeless service providers indicated the lack of coordination between the local healthcare service system and the youth homeless service system was a barrier to serving youth. One site reported, for example, that due to a lack of resources, the healthcare system would discharge youth to shelter with higher medical needs than could be appropriately addressed in shelter.

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Activities to Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration

All CoCs outline plans to increase cross-sector collaboration in their coordinated community plans. Sites' plans to foster this collaboration include—

- "In-reach" activities into child welfare and juvenile justice systems to better identify youth at risk of homelessness.

- Increased referrals from coordinated entry to needed services, such as health care and behavioral health care.

- Partnering with employment organizations in their communities to increase access to services for youth experiencing homelessness.

- Funding specific projects to encourage collaboration through interagency teams (see exhibit 4-8; more detail is provided in Section V).

Exhibit 4-8.   Examples of Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Activities to Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration

Youth Engagement Team (Seattle/King County)	**Transition Empowerment Program (STEP)** (NW Michigan)	**Systems Navigators** (Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County)
Team involving clinical therapist, a child welfare representative, and a legal counselor to provide family therapy and wrap-around services to minors experiencing homelessness (HUD categories 1, 2, and 4)	Homeless service providers collaborating with the local McKinney-Vento liaisons to identify out-of-school youth, assess their risk of homelessness, and reconnect them with school or other needed services	Cross-sector teams to assist youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness with accessing needed housing and services

Data and Evaluation

Baseline Status

Sites' use of data and experience with evaluation varied considerably. A number of sites (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, and Seattle/King County) had HMIS systems with wide system participation, data dashboards to understand the flow into and out of their systems, and recent efforts to improve their youth PIT counts. Two of these sites (Austin/Travis County and Seattle/King County) also participated in Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count.

To guide its decisions, Anchorage supplemented analysis of its HMIS with data from Covenant House Alaska, its primary youth provider, which collects extensive data on the youth it serves, beyond what is required for HMIS.

All other sites were more limited in how they used their data in decisionmaking. The rural sites in particular, Kentucky BOS, Ohio BOS, and NW Michigan, reportedly not having sufficient data on the population of youth experiencing homelessness to guide their decisionmaking. These sites have few HUD-funded providers entering data into HMIS as well as low annual PIT counts of youth experiencing literal homelessness. Stakeholders in Ohio BOS also reported the lack of reliable internet access in the YHDP counties prevented providers from real-time data entry, further limiting the completeness and usefulness of the HMIS.

In San Francisco and Santa Cruz, data-driven decisionmaking was limited by low numbers of youth beds currently in HMIS. In its YHDP application, San Francisco reported that only 39 percent of its youth beds were included in HMIS, in part because the CoC has many youth programs supported by local and private resources that are not required to participate. In an effort to turn HMIS into a tool for real-time communications to support coordinated entry and CoC decisionmaking, beginning in 2017, San Francisco CoC has been migrating its multiple data systems into a new HMIS that includes both HUD-funded and non-HUD funded units. In Santa Cruz, there were no HUD-funded youth-specific beds. The only beds dedicated to youth aged 18–24, were available through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)-funded Transitional Living Program and HUD's Family Unification Program, neither of which participated in HMIS.

Technical Assistance and Quality Improvement

Throughout the planning and early implementation periods, the Partnership Center provided technical assistance to all YHDP sites through individual and cross-site meetings. This assistance included modifying HMIS systems to create reports that included new YHDP programs, developing tools to collect additional data, such as Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) data elements, on all youth served through YHDP projects, and helping sites determine the goals and benchmarks for individual projects and how to measure progress towards achieving those goals.

HUD required that the sites' coordinated community plans to include plans for continuous quality improvement plans, including—

- Increasing participation of non-HUD funded services in HMIS (NW Michigan and San Francisco).

- Building new data dashboards to track the outcomes of youth in YHDP-funded programs (Cincinnati/Hamilton County).

- Collecting and analyzing qualitative data from youth receiving services (Seattle/King County).

- Routinely reviewing YHDP project goals and outcomes (Ohio BOS) among others.

It was too early at the time of our site visits to know how these plans will be implemented or whether they will lead to changes in the sites' projects.

Implications

These findings provide a number of key implications for the evaluation.

As required by the grant, all of the YHDP sites developed youth-specific governance structures to guide the development and implementation of their coordinated community responses. Sites, however, vary in their intentions about whether these structures will remain in place after the YHDP concludes or be absorbed into the larger CoC body of work. The evaluation will be able to assess whether and how these different approaches to governance influence the ability of the CoC to maintain a focus on youth in the CoC's ongoing activities.

All of the CoCs faced challenges in engaging with youth; however, with help from the technical assistance providers, they were able to overcome these challenges and incorporate youth into the planning and implementation of their coordinated community plans. Sites varied in the degree to which their YABs were larger and more open, permitting a diversity of voices, or smaller, more defined, and focused. An important component for the evaluation will be to examine how these differences in the structure of the YABs affect the ongoing role of the youth in the CoCs.

Finally, although cross-sector collaboration is challenging, all sites are engaging in additional efforts to foster cross-sector collaboration through the demonstration, some through YHDP-funded projects. The evaluation will assess whether these efforts contribute to collaboration with additional partners and/or deeper collaboration with existing partners and how sites are able to foster cross-sector collaboration outside of funded projects.

Section V: Findings—Components and Status of Youth Homeless Service Systems

> ### *Key Findings*
>
> *Prior to implementing the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), the 10 sites' Continuums of Care (CoCs) varied considerably in the extent to which they had services and housing in place to serve youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness. The sites can be characterized by the extent to which they had coordinated systems in place to serve youth, ranging from those that had highly developed systems with numerous youth-focused programs and interventions, to those with medium developed systems with some core elements of youth systems in place but fewer services tailored to youth, to those that were beginning to develop system responses to youth homelessness and had limited infrastructure in place.*
>
> *Despite these differences in baseline system status, the sites faced similar challenges in addressing youths' needs. Sites reported difficulties in identifying and engaging youth in services, having coordinated entry systems tailored to youths' unique needs, having limited youth-specific crisis housing resources, and having limited ability to access mainstream services such as employment and behavioral health services to help youth maintain stability.*
>
> *To build stronger, more coordinated systems of services and housing, the sites are implementing projects supported with YHDP funds as well as additional activities funded through other sources. More highly developed systems are using the demonstration resources to engage in systems refinement (through strengthening diversion, navigation, and housing), while systems with fewer components in place at baseline are proposing a wider range of projects, including improvements to coordinated entry, drop-in centers, and outreach.*
>
> *All 10 sites are using YHDP funds to increase access to housing for youth. The most common housing interventions proposed by the sites are rapid re-housing and host homes, but plans also include other crisis housing and permanent supportive housing in an effort to build systems that include a range of different levels of support.*
>
> *Across the sites, YHDP-funded projects that increase access to mainstream services were rare, with only one site (Seattle/King County) proposing a YHDP-funded intervention to facilitate access to behavioral health services.*

YHDP aims to—

- Strengthen and expand CoCs' capacity to identify youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

- Prioritize and match youth to the appropriate resources.

- Provide individualized services, supports, and shelter and housing options tailored to the needs of youth.

This section describes how YHDP sites are using demonstration and other funds to achieve these goals. It begins with a description of the baseline status of the services and housing systems overall and then addresses that status and YHDP plans for each of the following components: prevention, diversion, outreach/drop-in centers, coordinated entry, case management and navigation, family intervention, crisis housing, housing, employment, and behavioral health.

Level of Systems Development

For the purposes of this report, we have categorized the 10 CoCs into three broad groupings based on their starting points at the beginning of the demonstration, as displayed in exhibit 5-1.

Exhibit 5-1. Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Level of Development

Level of Development
High Development
Austin/Travis County
Cincinnati/Hamilton County
Seattle/King County
Medium Development
Connecticut BOS
Ohio BOS
San Francisco
Early Development
Anchorage
Kentucky BOS
NW Michigan
Santa Cruz

BOS = Balance of State.

Sites with "high development" baseline systems all had in place some outreach services, youth-specific or included coordinated entry systems, housing interventions specifically for youth, and availability of other assistance, including prevention, family interventions, employment services, and other services.

Those sites with "medium development" starting points had some core elements of outreach, coordinated entry systems, and housing interventions that served youth, but had fewer other services for youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness than did the highly developed sites.

Sites categorized as "early development" entered the demonstration with limited outreach services available, coordinated entry systems still being developed or at the early stages of implementation, and few housing interventions specifically for youth.

This categorization of baseline levels of development provides one way to group and understand the variability among the sites and provides a basis for matching peer sites and a comparison to CoCs across the nation. Additional detail about the demonstration sites' baseline systems is provided below. More detail on the peer sites and the broader set of CoCs across the country is available in Section VII.

Summary of Baseline Status and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions

Exhibit 5-2 provides an overview of the YHDP-funded interventions each site is implementing, categorized according to the system components with which they most closely align. All sites are implementing permanent housing interventions, and the majority are implementing interventions that align with navigation and crisis housing. None of the sites invested YHDP funding in prevention or employment services and few sites funded projects specifically focused on drop-in centers, family intervention services, or behavioral health services. It is important to note that many of the YHDP interventions serve multiple purposes. For example, in numerous sites, navigators are responsible for conducting outreach and engagement services, connecting youth with coordinated entry, helping them find short-term and/or permanent housing, and connecting them with needed services such as family intervention services, employment assistance, and behavioral health services. Moreover, in addition to the projects funded through HUD YHDP funds, the 10 CoCs include in their coordinated community responses additional activities that are funded through other sources.

While all sites are investing in additional youth-specific permanent housing, the type and number of other YHDP-funded services implemented the sites is largely dependent on the sites' baseline level of development. More highly developed systems, such as Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, and Seattle/King County that already had fully implemented coordinated entry systems and youth-specific outreach, as well as other youth-specific housing and services, are using the demonstration resources to engage in systems refinement. In addition to housing, they are investing in diversion assistance to limit the number of youth who enter the homeless service system as well as navigation services to help youth connect to the housing and resources they need. In contrast, systems with fewer service components in place at baseline tend to be implementing a wider range of projects. In addition to permanent housing and navigation services, these sites are using YHDP funds to enhance their coordinated entry systems with youth-specific processes and procedures, develop or enhance outreach programs and/or establish drop-in locations where youth can be engaged in services.

Below, each service and housing area is summarized, beginning with a discussion of the baseline status of the system component, followed by a discussion of the YHDP activities. Information about each site's youth homeless service system and YHDP activities is derived from—
- The initial YHDP applications.

- The coordinated community plans and project applications for YHDP funding.

- Evaluation site visits to the communities conducted between December 2018 and March 2019.

In 9 of the 10 sites, YHDP projects had start dates between October 2018 and February 2019, and projects were in the early stages of implementation at the time of the evaluation site visit. They were hiring and training staff, but few had begun serving youth. Seattle/King County began implementing YHDP projects in the summer of 2018 and was a little further along in implementing its activities at the time of the site visit.

Exhibit 5-2.   Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program-Funded Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC	Prevention	Diversion	Outreach	Drop-In Centers	Coordinated entry	Navigation	Family intervention	Crisis Housing	Permanent Housing	Employment	Behavioral Health
High Development											
Austin/ Travis County		✓						✓	✓		
Cincinnati/ Hamilton County		✓					✓		✓		
Seattle/ King County		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
Medium Development											
Connecticut BOS		✓					✓		✓	✓	
Ohio BOS			✓						✓	✓	
San Francisco						✓			✓	✓	
Early Development											
Anchorage							✓		✓	✓	
Kentucky BOS							✓		✓	✓	
NW Michigan			✓			✓				✓	
Santa Cruz					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Prevention

Baseline Status. Prior to the demonstration, prevention services for youth were available in most sites, but not systemwide (see exhibit 5-3). In seven sites (Austin/Travis County, Seattle/King County, Connecticut BOS, Ohio BOS, Anchorage, NW Michigan, and Santa Cruz) prevention services were typically supportive services and/or rental assistance targeted to specific subgroups such as youth transitioning from child welfare services or provided through selected providers. Schools in Austin/Travis County and Seattle/King County offered prevention assistance to youth through programs that expanded McKinney-Vento services. Santa Cruz's child welfare system sought to prevent homelessness among child welfare-involved youth through the development and support of resource (foster) parents. NW Michigan provided youth ages 12–20 with prevention services through its primary youth provider.

YHDP Activity. None of the sites included a prevention project in their YHDP-funded projects; however, a number of sites are implementing prevention services funded through other sources. NW Michigan is implementing a number of prevention services, including a matched savings and financial counseling program that allows youth who are involved in the child welfare system, ages 14–21 years old, to save towards costs such as security deposits, car repairs, books for school, uniforms or equipment for work, and so on; Open Table, a faith-based model that connects youth at risk of homelessness to volunteer adults in their community; and a Transitional Living Program grant funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide 18 months of housing and intensive case management to youth ages 16–20 at risk of homelessness.

Six sites (Anchorage, Connecticut BOS, Ohio BOS, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County) are strengthening partnerships with other youth-serving systems, including child welfare, juvenile justice, health, and educational systems to better identify youth at risk of homelessness and prevent them from becoming homeless. For example, Santa Cruz provides prevention services in schools through its Homeless Crisis Response Integrated Services Team. This team aims to connect youth at risk of homelessness to case management and supportive services, housing navigation, education, employment training, and mentoring. Anchorage is embedding prevention services in coordinated entry by providing information on available services to youth at risk of homelessness who may be eligible and in need of family counseling, mediation, and reunification resources from child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavioral health agencies.

Exhibit 5-3.   Summary of Baseline Prevention Services and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	Prevention available through AISD Project Help LifeWorks prevention for youth in RRH Supports for youth existing child welfare	
High	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County		Expanded prevention through diversion program
High	Seattle/King County	Prevention for children, youth, and families through schools and select providers through Best Starts for Kids	Strengthened cross-systems partnerships
Medium	Connecticut BOS	Limited services for youth exiting child welfare	Strengthened cross-systems partnerships
Medium	Ohio BOS	Available through Sojourner's Basic Center prevention program	Outreach and education on to other systems to identify youth at risk
Medium	San Francisco		Strengthened cross-systems partnerships
Early	Anchorage	Transition services for youth aging out of foster care or exiting juvenile justice	Embedded in coordinated entry
Early	Kentucky BOS		Through host homes program
Early	NW Michigan	Crisis intervention services for youth ages 12–20	Matched savings program and financial counseling "Open Table" faith-based model of support RHY Transitional Living Program
Early	Santa Cruz	Services for child welfare-involved youth	Available to youth in schools through Homeless Crisis Response Integrated Services Team

AISD = Austin Independent School District. BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. RHY = runaway and homeless youth. RRH = Rapid Re-Housing. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

Diversion

Baseline Status. Diversion assistance involves a focus on problem-solving and often short- to medium-term financial assistance and/or supportive services to divert youth/young adults from entering shelter. Four sites had diversion services in their baseline systems (see exhibit 5-4). At baseline, Austin/Travis County had a CoC-wide diversion program that youth accessed through coordinated entry and focused on family reunification and self-resolution. In both Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Seattle/King County diversion services for youth were available through coordinated entry (description to follow). Youth entering coordinated entry were offered opportunities to resolve their homelessness without entering the homeless service system. Seattle/King County's youth-specific diversion funds were provided from 2014–2016 by the Raikes Foundation, as part of a 2-year pilot program.

Exhibit 5-4. Summary of Baseline Diversion Services and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	Diversion program for all populations through coordinated entry system	Diversion coupled with and family support Services (Funded)
High	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Shelter diversion available through Central Access Point (coordinated entry system)	Youth-specific diversion program (including couch surfing youth) (Funded)
High	Seattle/King County	Youth diversion pilot from 2014–2016	Diversion assistance for youth (Funded)
Medium	Connecticut BOS	Toolkit and training on youth-diversion but no financial assistance	Youth shelter diversion and rapid exit services (Funded)
Medium	Ohio BOS		Provided through coordinated entry
Medium	San Francisco		Embedded in youth-specific coordinated entry
Early	Anchorage		Embedded in coordinated entry
Early	Kentucky BOS		
Early	NW Michigan	Diversion protocol used with coordinated entry	Youth-specific diversion protocol
Early	Santa Cruz		

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

YHDP Activity. Diversion plays a critical role in the coordinated community plans for four sites, all of which had previously existing diversion projects. Austin/Travis County is building on its existing diversion assistance for all populations to provide "deeper diversion and familial home supports" tailored specifically for youth. The goal of this project is to provide services designed to strengthen, stabilize, or reunify families, such as limited emergency housing rental assistance, food assistance, family counseling, conflict resolution, parenting supports, relative or kinship caregiver resources, targeted substance abuse and mental health treatment, and safety planning. Youth, screened through coordinated entry, will typically be provided one-time assistance but may receive assistance for up to 12 months as needed.

Cincinnati/Hamilton County is expanding its existing diversion program for youth to include intensive case management, reconnection, and reunification assistance. This program is primarily for couch surfing youth, who may receive 3 to 6 months of rental assistance and supportive services that may continue, as needed, after rental assistance has ended. Connecticut BOS is building on a previous diversion program for youth that did not include financial assistance by providing one-time financial diversion assistance, administered with flexible funds through coordinated entry. It is also providing diversion-like rapid exit financial assistance to help youth move out of shelter quickly. Assistance for both projects may include money for

security deposits, moving costs, transportation expenses, or other expenses. Seattle/King County is expanding its systemwide capacity for diversion services by providing diversion training and access to a pool of diversion funds to partners throughout the CoC, including shelters, outreach teams, day centers, and navigation teams. Additionally, housing navigators and peer mentors offer youth direct assistance in finding housing and connecting with needed services (such as employment, education, mental health, substance dependency, and benefits access).

NW Michigan, which includes a "Nine Steps of Diversion" protocol for all populations in its coordinated entry, plans to develop a youth-specific protocol.

Other sites without previously implemented diversion projects outline plans to provide diversion assistance through projects funded through other sources. In particular, the plans involve integrating diversion conversations into coordinated entry systems (in Anchorage and San Francisco) or into crisis response teams (in Ohio BOS and Santa Cruz).

Outreach Services

Baseline Status. At baseline, outreach, generally described as street or mobile outreach, was in place in seven of the sites (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Seattle/King County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, Anchorage, and NW Michigan) (see exhibit 5-5). While there are differences across communities, these outreach activities usually entailed providers making direct contact with youth on the street to provide information, referrals, and food and supplies. Ohio BOS trained a group of high school and college students as peer outreach workers to spend time in places where youth in crisis congregate and share information about the services available in the community. In Connecticut BOS, teachers were trained using the Youth Rights and Resources Toolkit to improve the identification of youth experiencing homelessness in schools and to provide youth with information about the type of assistance available.

Exhibit 5-5. Summary of Baseline Outreach Services and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	Street outreach program	Expand street outreach Build a 211 App Strengthen connections with AISD, JJ, and DFPS to identify youth
	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Youth outreach through Lighthouse with a mobile van	
	Seattle/King County	Youth-specific street outreach program in Seattle	
Medium	Connecticut BOS	Street and school-based outreach	
	Ohio BOS		Youth Crisis Response Teams (Funded)
	San Francisco	San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team Encampment Resolution Team Youth-specific street outreach	Expanded outreach services
Early	Anchorage	Youth-specific street outreach through CHA	Expand outreach services through community outreach team and Youth Task Force
	Kentucky BOS		Conducted by Systems Navigators
	NW Michigan	Street outreach for age 18 and up	Additional street outreach for youth (Funded) Education-based outreach and training (Funded)
	Santa Cruz		Outreach efforts through Homeless Crisis Response Integrated Services Team and RHY grant

AISD = Austin Independent School District. BOS = Balance of State. CHA = Covenant House Alaska. CoC = Continuums of Care. DFPS = The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. JJ =Juvenile Justice. RHY = runaway and homeless youth. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

YHDP Activity. Only two sites (Ohio BOS and NW Michigan) included YHDP-funded outreach projects in their coordinated community plans, but multiple sites are building outreach services or expanding their existing services through projects not funded by YHDP.

Ohio BOS is implementing Youth Crisis Response Teams that will move throughout the five-county region, visiting common hot spots, to meet unsheltered youth in need of emergency shelter services. The teams will provide transportation assistance to help youth return to family or friends, if safe, or assist them in accessing other services that will help end their unsheltered episode. The Youth Crisis Response Teams will also conduct coordinated entry assessments and help connect youth to housing resources and supportive services, as needed.

NW Michigan is investing in two funded outreach projects. One project uses YHDP dollars to fund two new youth outreach positions through Goodwill Industries, which has conducted street outreach in the community to both youth and adults for over a decade. The second project is an education-based outreach and training project that allows outreach workers to partner with McKinney-Vento liaisons to identify and engage with out-of-school youth to assess their risk of homelessness and reconnect them with school or coordinated entry and other needed services.

Other sites are implementing similar projects with other funding. In Kentucky BOS, Systems Navigators (discussed in more detail below) will conduct youth outreach. Similarly, in Anchorage, a Community Outreach Team that comprises outreach team members from various agencies will coordinate existing resources to conduct outreach and increase connections with coordinated entry. Austin/Travis County is implementing a slightly different outreach mechanism by building a web-based app that will facilitate youth's access to 211.

Drop-in Centers

Baseline Status. Prior to the demonstration, four sites (Seattle/King County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, and Anchorage) had drop-in centers where youth experiencing homelessness could access food, clothing, hygiene items, and other resources to meet their basic needs as well as become connected to other resources in the community (see exhibit 5-6). A fifth site, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, opened the Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth in 2018 after its coordinated community plan had been submitted but before any YHDP projects had been launched.

YHDP Activity. Three CoCs are expanding their use of drop-in centers for youth, however, only Santa Cruz is investing YHDP funding in the effort. Santa Cruz and San Francisco are both developing new 24-hour drop-in centers where youth can obtain assistance to meet basic needs and connect with resources and services. In NW Michigan, "drop-in" centers will be identified throughout the five-county area, including non-traditional options, such as coffee shops, movie theaters, libraries, and parks where youth already congregate. These drop-in centers will serve as locations for outreach and connection to coordinated entry.

Exhibit 5-6.   Summary of Baseline Drop-In Centers and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County		
	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Sheakley Center for Youth opened in 2018, includes a drop-in center	
	Seattle/King County	Drop-in centers located throughout the county	
Medium	Connecticut BOS	Drop-in centers located throughout the state	
	Ohio BOS		
	San Francisco	Drop-in centers located throughout the city	24-hour drop-in center
Early	Anchorage	Drop-in center at CHA	
	Kentucky BOS		
	NW Michigan		Rural "drop-in centers"
	Santa Cruz		Drop-in center (Funded)

BOS = Balance of State. CHA =Covenant House Alaska. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

Coordinated Entry

Baseline Status. Coordinated entry is defined as a process that ensures all youth/young adults experiencing homelessness or other housing crises are quickly identified, assessed, referred, and connected with housing and homeless assistance in a coordinated manner. Prior to the demonstration, coordinated entry was in place or in process in nearly all sites, as required by HUD (see exhibit 5-7). In five sites (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, Ohio BOS, and Seattle/King County) coordinated entry/assessment was in place for all populations (that is, adult, family, youth). In NW Michigan, youth ages 18–24 years old had access to coordinated entry through the adult system. In some sites, the CoC was implementing youth-specific processes and procedures, including the use of youth-specific access points, assessment tools, and case conferencing. For example, in 2013, Seattle/King County launched Youth Housing Connection, a component of its coordinated entry system specifically for individuals ages 17 to 24. Connecticut BOS was planning improvements to youth experiences and access to assistance. San Francisco was developing an Online Navigation and Entry System that included a youth-focused coordinated entry system that uses culturally competent, youth-targeted tools to facilitate access into the youth homelessness response system. Anchorage, Kentucky BOS, and Santa Cruz were in the early stages of implementing coordinated entry systems across their CoCs.

Exhibit 5-7. Summary of Baseline Coordinated Entry Services and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	Coordinated entry for all populations	AYC partnered to create youth-friendly CE materials Increase referrals to CE from education, criminal justice, and other mainstream systems
	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Coordinated entry for all populations through Central Access Point hotline	
	Seattle/King County	CoC-wide coordinated entry with youth-specific processes	
Medium	Connecticut BOS	CoC-wide coordinated entry with youth-specific processes	Expand referrals to include additional services
	Ohio BOS	Coordinated entry for all populations	
	San Francisco	Coordinated entry systems for families and adults	Youth-specific coordinated entry system (Funded)
Early	Anchorage	Early implementation of coordinated entry for families and adults	Development of youth-specific processes
	Kentucky BOS	Early implementation of coordinated entry for all populations	Development of youth-specific coordinated entry processes
	NW Michigan	Centralized intake for youth 18–24 in adult system	Development of Coordinated Entry System for Youth (for youth 12–24) (Funded)
	Santa Cruz	Early implementation of coordinated entry for all populations	Development of youth-specific coordinated entry process (Funded)

AYC= Austin Youth Collective. BOS = Balance of State. CE= Coordinated Entry. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

YHDP Activity. In their coordinated community plans, all 10 sites layout plans to develop or improve upon their coordinated entry systems for youth with youth-specific processes and procedures. Three sites (NW Michigan, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz) are using YHDP funds for these enhancements. NW Michigan is developing a coordinated entry system for youth that includes youth-specific access points and youth-trained assessors trained on the Transition Aged Youth–Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (TAY-VI-SPDAT). Similarly, San Francisco has developed a youth-specific assessment tool to standardize outreach, assessment, prioritization, and referrals to youth-specific housing and services for all youth under 25. Santa Cruz is building a coordinated entry system designed to be welcoming to youth, with bilingual staff, web-based assessment, and youth-friendly access through a youth drop-in center.

Austin/Travis County is working to increase referrals to coordinated entry from schools, criminal justice systems, and youth-accessed mainstream services such as employment programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and walk-in health clinics. The CoC partnered with members of the youth advisory board (YAB), the Austin Youth Collective, to create coordinated entry tools and assessments that are designed for ease-of-understanding by youth and reflect the youth's strengths and goals, risks, and protective factors such as high self-esteem, strong academic achievement, and good problem-solving skills.

Similarly, Cincinnati/Hamilton County is enhancing its youth-centered coordinated entry by providing reconnection support over the phone, implementing a second assessment aimed at self-resolution, and making connections to case management and navigation. Connecticut BOS is expanding its existing coordinated entry system by including referrals to additional services through mental health, substance abuse, Transitional Living Program for minors, and other systems. Ohio BOS and Kentucky BOS are both developing youth-specific processes in their coordinated entry systems, including identification of multiple youth-centric access points. In Kentucky BOS, these will include some non-traditional access points, such as movie theaters and shopping centers, where youth congregate.

Navigation Services

Baseline Status. Navigation assistance is defined as assistance provided by navigators to guide youth through the system of housing and services. In this context, it is assistance available to youth accessing coordinated entry; it is distinct from case management assistance youth may receive from the individual housing and service programs, such as rapid re-housing. These navigators are not meant to replace program case managers but to work alongside them to connect youth to the resources they need. As exhibit 5-8 shows, this type of assistance was rare in the 10 CoCs prior to the demonstration. Only one site, Seattle/King County, indicated having navigation services available specifically for youth before the demonstration.

Exhibit 5-8. **Summary of Baseline Navigation Services and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site**

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County		
High	Cincinnati/Hamilton County		Youth Dedicated Service Team—through all programs up to 24 months (Funded)
High	Seattle/King County	Housing navigation team through the City of Seattle	Housing Navigators and Peer Mentors help youth navigate service system (Funded)
Medium	Connecticut BOS		Youth navigator in each regional coordinated entry site (Funded)
Medium	Ohio BOS		
Medium	San Francisco		
Early	Anchorage		Permanency Navigators to shepherd youth through system (Funded)
Early	Kentucky BOS		Systems Navigators to guide youth through the system (Funded)
Early	NW Michigan		
Early	Santa Cruz		Homeless Crisis Response Integrated Services Team (Funded)

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

YHDP Activity. Assistance for youth to navigate housing and services is a central component of the coordinated community plans in six sites (Anchorage, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Seattle/King County, Connecticut BOS, Kentucky BOS, Santa Cruz). Each of these sites is using YHDP funds to hire individuals or teams to help youth accessing coordinated entry secure safe shelter, find housing, and eliminate barriers to stability, including accessing behavioral health, education, and employment services. In two sites (Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Santa Cruz) navigation assistance will be provided by cross-sector teams. In Seattle/King County navigators work alongside peer mentors. Two sites (Anchorage and Cincinnati/Hamilton County) include in aftercare in their case management projects after to youth once they are placed in housing. If a housing intervention does not work or the youth chooses to leave, the navigator will be available to assist in finding alternate assistance. Youth navigators in Connecticut BOS and Seattle/King County will provide diversion assistance as well as assistance accessing housing and services when diversion is not a solution.

The remaining four sites (Austin/Travis County, NW Michigan, Ohio BOS, and San Francisco) indicate in their coordinated community plans that housing navigation services will be provided to youth through coordinated entry or by shelter and housing providers; however, none of these sites is implementing specific YHDP projects with dedicated staff to fulfill this role.

Family Intervention Services

Baseline Status. Family intervention services are counseling, mediation, and reunification assistance to help youth strengthen family ties and return to their families, if appropriate and safe, or to identify new kinship supports and housing opportunities. As exhibit 5-9 shows, at baseline, 9 of the 10 sites had family intervention services in place for youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness, though these services were largely provided to child welfare-involved youth or through individual youth providers rather than in a systematic way across the CoC.

YHDP Activity. All 10 sites include family intervention services in their coordinated community plans; however, for all systems except Seattle/King County, these services do not include YHDP-funded projects. Rather, efforts to re-unify youth with family or make new family placements are usually embedded in other projects the CoC is implementing, such as coordinated entry, diversion, and navigation services. Three sites (San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County) are providing wrap-around family-based crisis intervention services. For example, Seattle/King County's Youth Engagement Team is a multidisciplinary team that comprises a clinical therapist, a child welfare representative, and a legal counselor who work closely with youth and their parents/natural support systems to provide family therapy and wrap-around services to minors (ages 18 and below) who are experiencing homelessness.

Exhibit 5-9.   Summary of Baseline Family Intervention Services and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

	YHDP CoC	Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	**Austin/Travis County**	Available through main youth provider	Embedded in Deeper Diversion program
	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Available through main youth provider	Youth Dedicated Service Teams work toward family reunification, when appropriate
	Seattle/King County	Available through youth providers	Incorporated into diversion and Youth Engagement Team efforts
Medium	**Connecticut BOS**	Training for Project STRIVE family intervention services	Family intervention services through diversion, navigation, and crisis housing
	Ohio BOS		Provided by Youth Crisis Response Teams
	San Francisco	Available through youth providers	Wrap-around family reunification and family-based crisis intervention strategies
Early	**Anchorage**	Available through main youth provider	Provided by Permanency Navigators
	Kentucky BOS	Child welfare family preservation program	Through Systems Navigators
	NW Michigan	Available through main youth provider	Embedded in youth-specific diversion protocol

YHDP CoC	Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
Santa Cruz	Available through main youth provider	Embedded in Homeless Crisis Response Integrated Services Team

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

Crisis Housing

Baseline Status. Crisis housing typically provides short-term assistance to people needing emergency housing assistance and may include emergency shelter, transitional housing, and host homes. At baseline, youth-specific crisis housing was available in all sites except Kentucky BOS (see exhibit 5-10). The number of units available varied dramatically from a high of more than 543 units in Seattle (219 shelter beds and 324 transitional housing beds) to only 6 units in Ohio BOS. In all sites except Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Anchorage, and NW Michigan, the number of youth-specific crisis housing units was less than one-half the number of youth in the 2018 Point-In-Time (PIT) count, indicating that in most sites youth in need of crisis housing relied on non-youth-specific programs for assistance. The four rural communities tended to have fewer crisis housing units for youth than the urban sites, except for Anchorage, where there were 60 units of emergency shelter and 54 units of transitional housing specifically for youth. Host homes (that is, families in the community that provide short- or long-term housing for youth), were in place in Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Seattle/King County.

Exhibit 5-10. Summary of Baseline Crisis Housing and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	20 shelter beds for 18–24 33 units of TH (26 for parenting youth)	20 Housing Navigation Shelter beds for youth (Funded)
	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	64 shelter beds (28 beds for minors) 25 units of TH Host homes for LGBTQ youth	Provide dedicated safe shelter beds
	Seattle/King County	219 shelter beds (38 for minors) 324 units of TH	A Safe Space for our Youth—short-term crisis stabilization beds for minors at risk of juvenile justice involvement Tiny Homes for Youth
Medium	Connecticut BOS	28 shelter beds (8 beds for minors) 16 units of TH (6 for pregnant and parenting youth) 5 RHY programs	10–20 short-term crisis housing beds (Funded)
	Ohio BOS	6 units of TH	Short-term crisis transitional housing (Funded) Crisis housing host homes
	San Francisco	101 shelter beds (66 for minors) 257 units of TH	Host homes for LGBTQ youth (Funded) Expanded emergency response system
Early	Anchorage	60 shelter beds (for youth 13–20) 54 units of TH (16 units for pregnant and parenting youth)	Host homes for LGBTQ youth 13–24 (Funded)
	Kentucky BOS	None specific to youth in YHDP region	Transitional Crisis Housing for youth 18–24 (Funded) Host Homes for youth including minors (Funded)
	NW Michigan	6 shelter beds (all for minors) + seasonal shelter 3 units of TH	Temporary host homes
	Santa Cruz	28 units of TH	Host homes for LGBTQ, pregnant and parenting, and youth of color (Funded)

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning.
RHY = runaway and homeless youth. TH = temporary housing. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

YHDP Activity. Seven sites are using YHDP funding to provide additional crisis housing for youth. Austin/Travis County includes 20 low-barrier crisis housing beds in an existing shelter coupled with navigation to connect youth rapidly to housing. Connecticut BOS, upon the urging of its YAB, included funding for 10–20 new crisis housing beds for youth. It is

also working with its adult shelters to help them develop strategies to better serve youth, including implementing youth-friendly policies and youth programming, training staff in positive youth development and cultural competency, and increasing safety measures, personal storage, and/or privacy in the bathroom and bed areas. Kentucky BOS is implementing two new crisis housing projects with 8–10 beds for unaccompanied or pregnant and parenting youth and supportive services for up to 6 months after exit. Lastly, Ohio BOS is providing vouchers for short-term, scattered-site crisis housing in counties with no emergency shelters.

Two sites are using non-YHDP funding to pursue strategies to increase the availability of crisis housing. Cincinnati/Hamilton County is developing dedicated safe shelter beds in its emergency shelter. Seattle/King County is implementing short-term crisis stabilization beds for youth ages 11–17 at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system and is considering tiny home villages, a strategy used for the adult population, to provide safe, low-barrier shelters for youth ages 18–24 with wrap-around services.

Six sites include host homes in their coordinated community responses. Projects in Anchorage and San Francisco are aimed specifically at LGBTQ youth. Santa Cruz's host homes are targeted to LGBTQ youth, pregnant and parenting, and youth of color between 18–24 years. Kentucky BOS targets host home specifically to school-aged minors who are not able to live at home with their parents or guardians but also do not rise to the level of needing to be in the care of the state child welfare system. These projects include financial assistance for increased utility costs and move-in costs, as well as case management for youth (in Kentucky BOS). Cincinnati/Hamilton County is expanding its host home project to serve up to 20 youth at a time. Both NW Michigan and Ohio BOS are working to build a stock of temporary host homes to provide crisis housing to youth. Austin/Hamilton County and Connecticut BOS are not planning host homes. Seattle/King County is considering adding host homes to its housing portfolio.

Permanent Housing for Youth

Baseline Status. Prior to the demonstration, permanent housing for youth was operating in all sites except Anchorage, Kentucky BOS, and NW Michigan, although there was great variability in the number and types of CoC-funded permanent housing available. Various sites also had non-CoC funded permanent housing that youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness could access (see exhibit 5-11). For example, Connecticut BOS had more than 80 units of rapid re-housing funded by the U.S. Department of Children and Families. Across the sites, permanent supportive housing was the most common type of permanent housing provided for youth, with rapid re-housing as the second most common approach and used in the medium and high development sites. San Francisco had the greatest number of permanent supportive housing units for youth, whereas rapid re-housing was most common in Cincinnati/Hamilton County. Five sites (Austin/Travis County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County) had Family Unification Program vouchers dedicated to youth aging out of the child welfare system. Of the sites with the larger numbers of youth experiencing homelessness, two (Seattle/King County and San Francisco) also had the greatest number of permanent housing units; however, even in those sites the demand was greater than the supply.

YHDP Activity. As part of the demonstration, all 10 sites are using YHDP funding to expand existing efforts or to develop new rapid re-housing projects. These projects typically combine rental assistance with case management and include connections to employment services and behavioral health services in some sites. Most of the CoCs are providing assistance for up to 24 months, though youth in Austin/Travis County may receive up to 36 months of rental assistance and up to 42 months of case management. Three sites (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, and Connecticut BOS) note they are using a progressive engagement approach, in which the amount of housing assistance provided is initially small but increases if and when additional assistance is needed.

Exhibit 5-11. Summary of Baseline Permanent Housing and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	7 units of RRH 23 units of PSH 23 units of other PH (all provided through LifeWorks) FUP vouchers	RRH Plus (up to 36 months of financial assistance and 42 months of case management) (Funded)
High	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	36 units of PSH 73 units of RRH non-CoC funded housing programs for systems-involved youth	Progressive engagement housing model to tailor amount of assistance to youths' needs (Funded)
High	Seattle/King County	69 units of RRH 61 units of PSH 113 units of other permanent housing FUP vouchers	Bridge Housing Model (joint TH/RRH housing tailored to youth's needs) (Funded) Flexible funding for youth in TH to exit to PH
Medium	Connecticut BOS	80+ units of RRH (through DCF) 21 units of PSH for parenting youth FUP vouchers	Additional RRH throughout the CoC (Funded)
Medium	Ohio BOS	9 units of PSH	RRH for youth (Funded)
Medium	San Francisco	20 units of RRH 91 units of PSH FUP vouchers	RRH for African American youth (Funded) Supportive housing for justice involved youth (Funded)
Early	Anchorage	None specific to youth	RRH for youth (Funded) PSH for youth with behavioral health problems (Funded)
Early	Kentucky BOS	None specific to youth in YHDP region	RRH (Funded)
Early	NW Michigan	None specific to youth	RRH for pregnant and parenting youth (Funded) Long-term RRH (Funded) Community Built Shared Homes Youth Rooming House
Early	Santa Cruz	Transitional voucher program for youth aging out of foster care FUP vouchers	New Roots PH for youth with disabilities (Funded) Young Adults Achieving Success RRH program for pregnant and parenting youth (Funded)

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. DCF = the Department of Children and Families.
FUP = Family Unification Program. PH = public housing. PSH = Permanent Supportive Housing. RRH = Rapid Re-Housing.
TH = temporary housing. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

Six CoCs (Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, Ohio BOS, and Seattle/King County) are aiming their rapid re-housing assistance to all youth populations. NW Michigan, Kentucky BOS, and Santa Cruz are targeting their rapid re-housing projects to pregnant and parenting youth and San Francisco is targeting its project to Black or African-American youth.

Finally, Seattle/King County is implementing a joint transitional housing/rapid re-housing model in which two transitional housing projects will operate as crisis housing for youth while they find permanent housing with rapid re-housing assistance. This project will use an individualized progressive engagement model to determine the length and amount of rental assistance a youth needs, with a target of 90 days. The rental assistance will be coupled with employment services.

Three sites are implementing YHDP-funded permanent supportive housing projects to address the lack of housing resources for youth who need long-term assistance. In Anchorage, Covenant House Alaska is partnering with a behavioral health provider to provide eight beds in permanent supportive housing for young adults ages 18–24 with severe mental health or substance abuse service needs. San Francisco is implementing permanent supportive housing for 10 youth involved with the justice system. The initiative is being led by the San Francisco Superior Court's Young Adult Collaborative Court, which is a diversion court designed to give justice-involved youth (ages 18–24) support and a pathway to conviction expungement. The initiative existed prior to YHDP but did not previously provide housing support for youth. Encompass Community Services in Santa Cruz will provide permanent housing and supportive services to about five youth with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness. Funding will be used to pay for tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services such as case management and housing navigation.

Additionally, two other sites (Cincinnati/Hamilton County and NW Michigan) outline plans to transition youth from rapid re-housing to existing permanent supportive housing should they demonstrate a need for longer-term assistance than is available through their rapid re-housing projects.

Employment

Baseline Status. Prior to YHDP, employment programs for youth were in place in seven sites (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Seattle/King County, San Francisco, Anchorage, Kentucky BOS, and Santa Cruz) (see exhibit 5-12). These programs were typically limited in scope, serving only small portions of the youth experiencing homelessness. Seattle/King County provided employment navigation to youth through the coordinated entry system. Austin/Travis County had implemented the Independent Placement and Support (IPS) model that encouraged rapid employment for youth with severe mental illness in jobs matched to their strengths and interests. Kentucky BOS's initial lead agency had partnered with the local workforce investment board to implement a Performance Partnership Pilot to increase employment and other outcomes for youth ages 14–24 years old who are disconnected from work and school. The Community Action Board in Santa Cruz collaborated with community organizations to design and deliver employment assistance services to youth, including those at

risk of or experiencing homelessness. In other sites, youth were largely served by mainstream employment services available to the general public.

YHDP Activity. As employment outcomes represent one of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) benchmarks for ending youth homelessness, all of the sites indicate in their coordinated community plans the goal to increase access to employment services for youth. Almost all sites indicate they plan to increase partnerships with employment organizations in their communities to increase access to services for youth experiencing homelessness, however, few sites indicate mechanisms through which this access will occur. Additionally, all sites indicate that youth participating in YHDP-funded projects, such as navigation services and rapid re-housing, receive employment supports through case managers either through direct assistance or referrals to partner agencies. For example, youth receiving housing assistance in Ohio BOS will receive help to develop housing plans that include employment goals, and Santa Cruz will make employment services available onsite at its new drop-in center and through housing case management. None of the sites is proposing a YHDP-funded project specifically around employment.

Exhibit 5-12. Summary of Baseline Employment and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	Independent Placement & Support model for youth with mental health problems	Employment supports for youth receiving diversion and housing assistance
High	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Dohn Community High School operates vocational training for youth experiencing homelessness	Employment supports for youth receiving diversion and housing assistance
High	Seattle/King County	Employment navigation connected to coordinated entry	Employment supports for youth receiving diversion and housing assistance
Medium	Connecticut BOS		Employment supports for youth receiving diversion and housing assistance
Medium	Ohio BOS		Employment supports for youth in crisis TH and RRH
Medium	San Francisco	Youth-specific employment supports through numerous providers	Employment supports for youth in RRH and PSH (as appropriate)
Early	Anchorage	Youth-specific employment services through main youth provider	RRH case managers assist with employment goals
Early	Kentucky BOS	Performance Partnership Pilot to increase employment for disconnected youth	Employment supports for youth in crisis TH and RRH
Early	NW Michigan		Employment supports for youth through outreach and receiving housing assistance
Early	Santa Cruz	Youth-specific employment supports through main youth provider	Employment supports for youth receiving other assistance and services provided on-site at drop-in center

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. PSH = Permanent Supportive Housing. RRH = Rapid Re-Housing.
TH = temporary housing. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

Behavioral Health Services

Baseline Status. At baseline, mental health and substance abuse services for youth experiencing homelessness were available in all sites (see exhibit 5-13). In some cases, such as Anchorage, those services were provided on-site at youth homeless providers. In other sites, such as Connecticut BOS, services were available in the community. Both Austin/Travis County and Seattle/King County had outreach teams in place that included mental health and substance abuse professionals.

Exhibit 5-13. Summary of Baseline Behavioral Health and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Interventions by Site

YHDP CoC		Baseline	YHDP Activity[1]
High	Austin/Travis County	LifeWorks provides youth-specific services; Integral care offers other services, including PATH and participates in Street Outreach	
	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Youth-specific services available	
	Seattle/King County	Youth-specific services available	Youth Engagement Team provides family therapy and wrap-around services to minors (Funded) Behavioral Health Crisis Response expanded to serve youth 18–24 (Funded)
Medium	Connecticut BOS	Youth services available through DMHAS for youth 18–25 with diagnosis	
	Ohio BOS	Youth-specific services available	
	San Francisco	Youth-specific services available	Build connections between homeless services and youth-targeted behavioral health services
Early	Anchorage	Youth-specific services available	Behavioral health consultant at CHA
	Kentucky BOS	Youth-specific services available in YHDP region	
	NW Michigan	Youth-specific services available	
	Santa Cruz	Youth-specific services available	

BOS = Balance of State. CHA = Covenant House Alaska. CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] YHDP activities are designed to build upon activities offered at baseline.

YHDP Activity. Few sites are implementing behavioral health services as part of their community plans. Through their coordinated entry systems, Anchorage, Kentucky BOS, and San Francisco are working to increase the referrals made to mental health and substance abuse agencies to ensure that youth have access to services to support their housing stability.

Seattle/King County is the only site to use YHDP funds to invest in behavioral health services. Its Behavioral Health Crisis Response project will expand the age group served under King County's existing Department of Community and Health Services (DCHS) Children's Crisis Outreach Response System, from just youth who are experiencing homelessness under age 18 (as was the case prior to YHDP), to include young adults ages 18–24 experiencing

homelessness. The Children's Crisis Outreach Response System involves behavioral crisis response teams that provide 24/7 mobile outreach with in-home and community supports for up to 8 weeks and stabilization beds where youth with more intensive needs can stay.

Challenges in the Baseline Systems

During the site visits, interviewees, including YAB members and youth participants in focus groups, revealed a number of challenges they faced in their baseline systems that proposed YHDP projects are aiming to address. These challenges are discussed below. Additionally, Section V provides a more detailed description of youth perspectives on the services and housing available in the CoCs at baseline.

Interviewees noted difficulty identifying and engaging youth in services. Multiple CoCs, especially the rural communities, described youth as a hidden population that moved frequently between different housing, doubled up, and homeless situations and did not often reach out for assistance from the homeless service system or other mainstream services. Stakeholders suggested that youth may not seek out help because that required a level of systems knowledge that they did not have. They also may be reluctant to ask for assistance due to stigma. Providers in Kentucky BOS, for example, reported that there may be a hesitancy among people in Appalachia from seeking help outside one's own family.

Interviewees in many sites indicated their coordinated entry systems at baseline were not youth-friendly. Providers expressed concerns that their assessment tools for youth did not capture the necessary data they needed to correctly serve youth, such as including questions about their family members and other natural supports. They believed these assessment tools also did not accurately prioritize youth for assistance because they often prioritized youth who are literally homeless (for example, staying in a shelter or in a place not suitable for human habilitation) over those who were in unsafe, doubled-up situations at risk of sexual abuse, violence, sex trafficking, substance abuse, and other dangers. They believed that youth in unsafe doubled situations may be at greater risk than some youth who are literally homeless and should be prioritized for assistance.

Additionally, providers in multiple sites expressed frustration at the length of time it took to fill available units and their inability to play a more direct role in the placement process. In Anchorage, for example, as a small, connected community, providers historically relied on their own personal connections to identify available assistance for youth and quickly get them into programs. With coordinated entry, they reported the process took much longer, and beds remain unfilled while youth were waiting for assistance. Youth in multiple sites where coordinated entry was in place expressed frustration with the coordinated entry process, including the amount of time it took to get an appointment, the length of the assessment, and the difficulty of recounting an often traumatic history of instability with a stranger.

The CoCs struggled with the lack of youth-specific crisis housing to offer youth needing assistance. While all of the CoCs had crisis housing for youth, in most sites the number of youth experiencing homelessness was substantially greater than the number of units available. The challenge of insufficient youth-specific resources was exacerbated in the multicounty CoCs

where youth may have to travel great distances to access available resources. In more urban sites, such as Seattle/King County and San Francisco, where there are a larger number of youth-specific crisis housing, the demand is so great that there are long waitlists for those units. In many sites, adult emergency shelters presented the only options for youth. Yet, in focus groups and interviews, youth reported that they did not feel safe in adult shelters because they would be preyed upon by older people who were staying there.

Youth also faced challenges in receiving housing assistance. Interviewees reported that they are not often eligible for permanent supportive housing because they do not qualify as "chronically homeless" by HUD standards, as they have fewer years within which to become eligible. Youth offered rapid re-housing assistance faced difficulties finding landlords who were willing to rent to them with limited rental and employment histories. In more rural communities, the aging condition of available housing and limited stock limit their abilities to find permanent housing.

Interviewees noted limited educational and employment opportunities for youth. Many youth experiencing homelessness do not have their high school diplomas or additional training, making it difficult to find jobs that will enable them to earn a living wage. Moreover, providers noted that employers considered youth experiencing homelessness high-risk and were reluctant to hire them. In many sites, interviewees indicated that mental health and substance abuse were key issues facing youth experiencing homelessness but noted that there were limited services available to address these needs. Behavioral health supports were limited and are generally not youth-centric.

Finally, sites faced challenges in serving minors. State-level regulations often prevent minors from signing contracts or leases for housing, consenting to data sharing, and in many cases receiving shelter assistance or other health and behavioral health services without parental consent. These regulations thus restricted youth homeless service providers in the assistance they were able to provide. Only six of the sites have crisis housing available for minors in their CoCs, and at baseline, only one site served minors through coordinated entry. In other CoCs, all minors experiencing homelessness were generally referred to the child welfare system.

Implications

Despite having very different economic climates at baseline, the lack of affordable housing is a challenge in almost all sites—including both sites with high rents and low vacancies and those that are more affordable, but which lack housing stock. Despite these differences, all sites are using YHDP funds to invest in projects that will increase their housing capacity for youth. The most common approaches are rapid re-housing and host homes, yet both approaches rely on factors outside of the CoC's control to be successful. To successfully house youth, rapid re-housing projects require having sufficient housing stock and landlords that are willing to rent to youth. Host homes require identifying a sufficient number of host families that are an appropriate match for the youth needing housing. An important component for the evaluation will be to understand not only whether these programs are successful at placing youth, but also what barriers they face and how those may be shaped by the environments in which the projects are being implemented.

Additionally, the sites are serving as laboratories not only for understanding the development and implementation of coordinated youth systems but also for understanding how specific services may effectively address the needs of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. For example, a number of sites are implementing non-traditional approaches to increase the accessibility of services for youth. For example, in a rural five-county territory in NW Michigan in which most services are concentrated in a single city, the CoC is implementing mobile "drop-in" centers including non-traditional options like coffee shops and parks where youth already congregate. Austin/Travis County's plans include building a web-based app to facilitate access to coordinated entry for youth.

Section VI: Findings—Perspectives of Youth

> ### *Key Findings*
>
> *A series of focus groups were conducted across all 10 of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) Continuums of Care (CoCs) and two of the three peer CoCs to better understand youth's lived experiences of homelessness, their perceptions of the youth service systems in place, and their recommendations for change. Youth identified a number of common themes across sites, including similar contributors to their homelessness and a lack of knowledge about supports and services. They shared their recommendations for system improvement.*
>
> *Youth most often reported that family conflict, abusive or neglectful parenting practices, family rejection due to youth's sexual/gender orientation and poverty, substance abuse, and mental health problems contributed to their homelessness. Across the sites, youth believed that a caring and supportive adult in their lives or early intervention to their families, including counseling, could have prevented them from becoming homeless.*
>
> *Regarding the current services and supports, youth across sites indicated they often did not know what assistance was available or where to go to receive it. While the degree to which youth were aware of coordinated entry varied, youth in some sites indicated the process was slow, burdensome, or did not serve youth efficiently. Youth across sites felt that there were not enough youth-specific shelters and that adult shelters were unsafe or otherwise not suitable for them. The lack of affordable housing was noted as a problem, especially in the larger urban areas, where youth could not find the kinds of jobs that would support them when assistance ended.*
>
> *Youth made a number of recommendations for changes in their communities, including increasing the availability and accessibility of youth-specific shelter and housing, addressing poverty and income inequality, improving outreach and communication, and assisting with employment, training, and other supports. Additionally, youth recommended that service systems listen to and act upon youth's input and provide increased training to staff about how to best provide services to youth.*

The evaluation team conducted focus groups with youth across the YHDP and peer CoCs during the early implementation phase of the demonstration to capture the perspectives of youth experiencing homelessness early in the implementation of the demonstration. This section of the report presents—

- Background information on the youth participants, including their demographic characteristics, current homeless and housing situations, contributors to their homelessness, and thoughts about what might have prevented it.

- Youth's perceptions of the systems of services and housing currently in place across the sites and the challenges they experience utilizing them.

- Youth's recommendations for change.

The evaluation team recruited youth for focus groups through youth providers in each of the YHDP and peer communities, aiming for 6 to 8 participants in each group. We conducted between one and five focus groups per site across 12 sites (no focus groups were conducted in Memphis)[10]. The groups ranged in size from 3 to 10 youth. A total of 173 youth participated in 1 of the 32 focus groups. Youth represented in the focus groups were not necessarily representative of the full population of youth at each site. Rather, in order to represent the diversity of youth's experiences within the CoCs, participating youth were recruited to include subpopulations of interest, including minor youth; LGBTQ youth; pregnant and parenting youth; and other groups that composed the population of youth served in each community (see exhibit 6-1). Youth completed a brief survey on their demographic characteristics, living situation, and history of involvement in the foster care and juvenile justice system at the start of each group. To compensate them for their participation, youth were provided a $20 gift card to a local store. They were also provided food during the focus group and assistance with transportation, if needed.

Exhibit 6-1. Composition of Focus Groups

Focus Groups
• 7 groups with pregnant and parenting youth
• 4 groups with youth under age 18
• 3 groups with LGBTQ youth
• 2 groups with youth aging out of foster care
• 2 groups with Youth Advisory Boards (YABs)
• 14 groups with mixed populations

Background Information on Youth Participants

Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

Youth focus group participants ranged in age from 15 to 28 years,[11] with a median age of 21. Most participants (85 percent) were over the age of 18, as seen in exhibit 6-2. Fifty-two youth (30 percent) self-identified as LGBTQ. Seven youth self-identified their gender as gender fluid or non-binary; the remaining youth identified as female (43 percent), male (36 percent), or did not provide information on gender (17 percent). About one-third of youth identified as White, 25 percent as Black or African American, 22 percent as multiracial, 10 percent as Hispanic, 3 percent as Native American, and 3 percent as Asian/Pacific Islander. One participant did not

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[10]   A focus group was scheduled at the third peer site, however, only one participant attended. The evaluation team conducted an individual interview with this individual and incorporated her perspective in the overall analysis for the site.

[11]   Across the sites, seven individuals over the age of 24 participated in focus groups. In most cases, youth aged 25 were still enrolled in programs they entered as youth (aged 14 to 24). In one case, a 28-year-old male accompanied his youth partner.

provide information on race. About one-fourth of the focus groups participants were pregnant or parenting.

The majority of youth participants reported a history of systems involvement, with 29 percent having been in foster care, 14 percent having been in juvenile detention, and an additional 18 percent of youth having been in both systems.

Comparable percentages of participants were in school and employed (38 and 39 percent, respectively) at the time the focus groups were conducted.

Twenty percent of the youth had participated on some type of youth board or advisory committee.

Exhibit 6-2.   Characteristics of Youth Participating in Focus Groups (N=173)
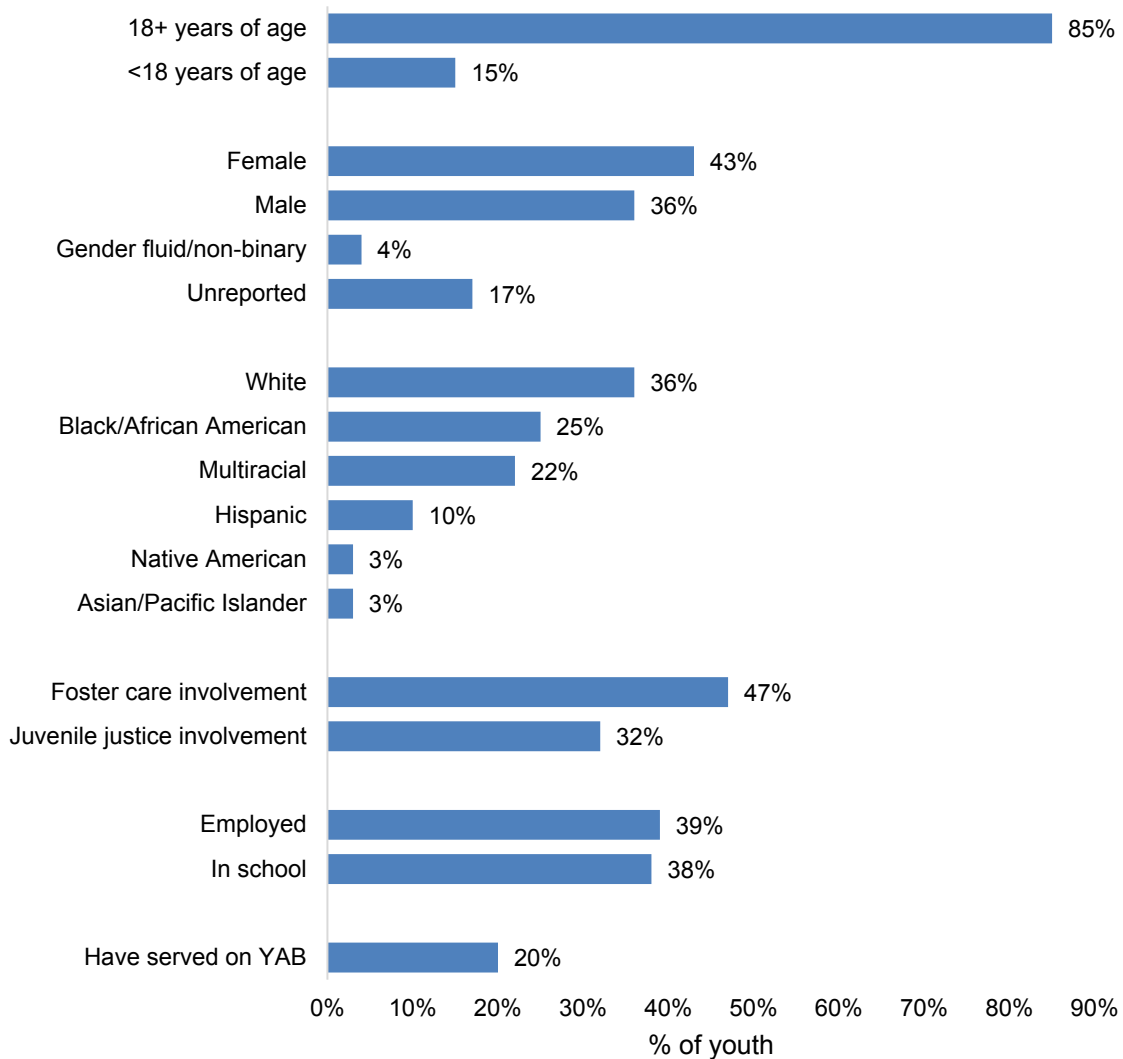
YAB = Youth Advisory Board.
Source: 2019 survey of youth in focus groups

Current Homeless and Housing Situations

At the time of the focus groups, youth described living in a variety of different situations, most commonly emergency shelter, transitional housing, or their own place, including with rapid re-housing assistance or Section 8 vouchers (see exhibit 6-3). Some youth were living with their parents, other family members, friends, couch surfing, in unsheltered homeless situations (for example, in the woods, under a bridge), or in some other housing arrangement (for example, residential treatment or foster care). Across most sites, youth reported highly unstable housing histories, moving from shelter to shelter or bouncing from one place to another before accessing their current assistance.

Exhibit 6-3.   Current Housing Situations for Youth Participating in Focus Groups (N=173)
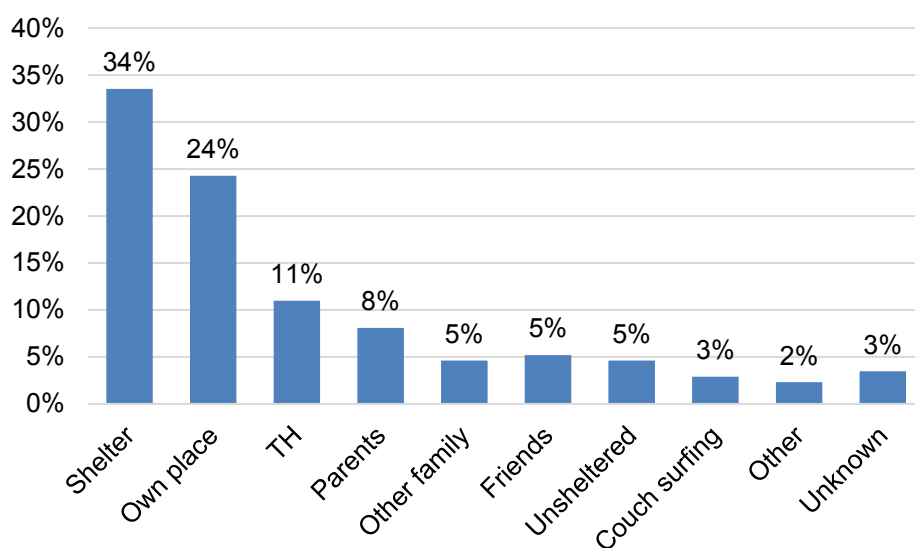
TH = transitional housing.
Source: 2019 Survey of Youth in Focus Groups.

Contributors to Homelessness

Youth most commonly cited family conflict and tumultuous home environments as contributing to their homelessness. A dominant theme that was reported by youth across the groups was the role of abusive and neglectful parenting practices, family rejection, and troubled relationships with family members. One youth in Connecticut BOS described how family conflict resulted in her homelessness:

> "So [my mom] evicted me, I got in a fight with her boyfriend, and she evicted me and then that's how, I called 211, and then that's how I got into this program."

Some youth who identified as LGBTQ indicated their parents rejected them because of their sexual orientation or gender. Other youth reported being rejected or mistreated for a variety of reasons including youth pregnancy and conflicting views between adults and youth. Pregnant

and parenting youth described being kicked out or opting to leave unstable or conflictual home environments. Likewise, youth reported that involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems resulted in their housing instability. In Anchorage, a youth noted:

> *"In recent developments, I found out I was pregnant, and there's not enough room for me and the child in the foster home, so the foster home said that I need to find other means of living."*

Youth also cited family financial issues, drugs, and overall poverty as contributors to homelessness. For example, a youth in Ohio BOS described the death of a family member as having contributed to their housing instability. Others described a history of housing instability while living with their parents who were not financially stable or able to maintain stable housing.

Some youth described a cycle of poverty in which family homelessness in childhood laid the groundwork for their experiences of homelessness as youth. A focus group participant in Connecticut BOS reported:

> *"I went from being in foster care to being in my mother's custody where she couldn't take care of me. Sleeping in a van with her, so I pretty much grew up knowin' what it was to be homeless. By the time I was 18, I was on my own. I ended up on the streets."*

Youth also described their own conditions contributing to homelessness. These included mental health and substance use problems, and system involvement among youth. Some youth described mental health conditions as interfering with employment and resulting in homelessness, and others described their own substance use as a contributing factor. As a youth in Sonoma County (peer site) put it:

> *"I know for me, with my mental health, it was really hard for me to hold down and keep a job."*

What Could Have Prevented Youth Homelessness

Youth offered ideas about what may have prevented their homelessness. Across the sites, youth indicated that having a caring adult or network of support could have prevented their homelessness. A youth in Seattle/King County said:

> *"I need someone to help with insight and reasoning, to help with managing money and buying groceries…someone to tell me not to buy that $300 car."*

Youth also suggested that early intervention to assist families by addressing family poverty and conflict could also have helped to prevent homelessness. For instance, in Connecticut BOS, one young woman recommended as an avenue to prevention:

"Maybe trying to help moms a lot more 'cause a lot of, I don't know. It could be grandmas, it could be moms, it could be dads, but our situations always stem from our parents."

In Santa Cruz and other sites, youth believed that families could have benefited from counseling or mediation services. Having varying opinions and not being able to communicate effectively often led to disagreements with parents. Providing counseling or mediation services could have provided youth and family members with the skills necessary to communicate effectively and amicably resolve problems:

"I think mediation with parents. A lot of situations that I've seen, 'cause I also work as a counselor at a crisis center, so I see a lot of people who are homeless and a lot of them don't have a support system from their families and it starts from like young age where maybe their parents didn't understand certain situations."

Additional youth believed that their homelessness was due to poor money management on the part of their families. They mentioned that had their parents had access to financial literacy, things would not have been so bad. Moreover, they believed if their parents had more education they would have been able to obtain jobs with higher income, thus resulting in more money for housing.

Services and Supports

Youth provided their perspectives on types of services and supports that were available in their communities, including their awareness of assistance available and their thoughts about the specific services they received. These services include prevention and diversion, outreach, coordinated entry, family services, shelter and housing, employment, behavioral health, and other services.

Awareness of Available Assistance

Across sites, youth repeatedly described limited awareness of available services and resources and difficulties navigating the system to access services. In Anchorage, youth said:

We're forgotten and there's not enough information. Not enough is given to us. We don't know how to access [help]. We don't know we could."

Youth across a number of sites viewed a good case manager or another knowledgeable person as key in helping them to access services. As one youth in Santa Cruz reported, having the "right person" can make all the difference in their ability to access needed services. In Ohio BOS, youth described how it helped to have access to a person who goes beyond connecting them to needed services but also provides emotional support:

"Honestly, I came here, and I didn't think I'd have any emotional support. I have these guys around for support...They'll help you figure

out yourself, and they were very helpful with that. They're good and considerate on how they can like, 'Hey, you need advice? Here, talk to [staff name removed] or somebody.'"

Finally, youth in several sites spoke about how shame and stigma make it difficult to seek help and access services. One participant in Cincinnati/Hamilton County stated:

"I had to put my pride to the side. I really did."

In Anchorage, one youth said:

"There's a huge stigma that youth are sitting here and youth are the reason that their life is messed up."

Outreach

Given limited awareness of available services, youth in many sites noted that their communities needed more outreach services and those services needed to be made more accessible to youth. For example, youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County noted that outreach activities should be coupled with events that included food and music to make them appealing to youth, outreach could be conducted electronically through advertisements on social media or on t-shirts with printed information and on fliers and posters distributed in parks. Youth also believed outreach should be conducted by youth with lived experience to whom other young people experiencing homelessness could relate. These sentiments were echoed in a number of other sites, including large urban CoCs, such as Seattle/King County where youth proposed advertising homeless services on buses, and rural locations, and Kentucky BOS where youth said lack of knowledge about services was a barrier.

In Santa Cruz, YAB was creating kits with information and basic supplies (for example, socks, water) to provide to youth who were homeless. In Anchorage, youth talked about needing bulletin boards, posters at school, resource books, ads on the Internet, descriptions of where to go to find help of all kinds, and marketing of the resources so youth can find them. They recommended that information include more than just a phone number, such as a description of where to go and what assistance was available. They suggested school counselors should be educated about homelessness. Youth noted that they go to them for help, but the counselors are often not a good source of information because they do not know what youth are eligible for and end up being a "waste of [youth's] time."

Prevention and Diversion

Prevention and diversion services were not a salient theme in focus groups with youth at most sites either because services were not available in their CoCs or they had not received them. Youth in a few sites where the services were in place, such as Seattle/King County and Cincinnati/Hamilton County, however, generally expressed positive views about them. In Cincinnati/Hamilton County, one focus group participant noted that diversion had allowed her to live with her mother and find an apartment rather than entering a shelter while searching for an

apartment. Several focus group participants who were members of the CoC's YAB viewed diversion as a promising practice and one they supported. They saw the main advantage of diversion was that it would open up more beds for youth in the greatest need of housing. The diversion pilot project in Cincinnati/Hamilton County had diverted 18 youths. One participant noted:

> *"Think about that. There's 18 more beds that's available that people can sleep in, [instead of] sleeping under the bridge and sleeping in tents and sleeping in the woods and stuff like that."*

Another youth emphasized the youth-centered aspect of diversion and affirmed it would put youth in the driver's seat or decisionmaking regarding their future:

> *"I think what I love about this whole process is we actually let the clients, the youth, go ahead and just pave the way. We'll be there, you know, you need open arms, that's cool, but in order to make this journey happen, you have to make it for yourself. So it's like, we'll help you. We'll probably just push you out there a little bit and then just see how it goes. But we won't let you go...You can always come back, and we can try it again and we could try it again. But it won't be over until the client no longer wants to do it."*

In Anchorage, one youth expressed a need for more diversion and prevention services to eliminate youth homelessness, particularly through programs that incorporated peer leaders. The youth believed that having youth leaders with lived experience of homelessness in such programs would help to better serve youth.

Coordinated Entry

Sites varied in the degree to which youth were familiar with the coordinated entry system and their experiences with intake processes.

In Seattle/King County, youth in all focus groups were knowledgeable about the coordinated entry system. They were able to describe the assessment to gauge their vulnerability and the prioritization process. At least one youth realized that her lack of openness about her issues the first time she connected with coordinated entry likely blocked her from getting the supports she needed. She found that she needed to be more open in order to get the assistance she needed.

In Connecticut BOS, youth also accessed services through the coordinated entry system but felt the process was too slow. All youth indicated they had called 211 when they needed help and received an assessment through coordinated entry. A few indicated they had been assessed more than once during their experience of homelessness because they had contacted coordinated entry multiple times. Youth largely reported that it took a long time to receive assistance after a coordinated entry appointment and the process required a lot of effort from them. To maintain their position on the list of individuals eligible for housing assistance, youth must call in regularly to indicate that they still need assistance, a requirement viewed as challenging to meet

with limited access to phones and/or minutes. Youth were aware that their receipt of housing assistance was dependent on their vulnerability scores (from the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool or TAY-VI-SPDAT). Multiple youth reported that it was hard to get assistance if they were staying with friends or family, even if those situations were temporary or unsafe. Some youth indicated that they entered emergency shelters so that they could speed up the process of getting assistance.

At other YHDP sites, where coordinated entry systems were still in the early stages of implementation, youth were less familiar with coordinated entry. In Santa Cruz, only one youth (out of 17), a member of YAB, was familiar with coordinated entry. This youth shared excitement about the potential of the coordinated entry system to serve youth more efficiently. They expressed a need to ensure that social workers were well-informed so appropriate information was passed along and systems would be able to connect through coordinated entry.

In San Francisco, one youth (out of seven) was knowledgeable about coordinated entry; this youth perceived coordinated entry negatively, viewing it as making service access more difficult because a "single person" was coordinated housing services instead of multiple case managers being able to do so. One housing provider was mentioned as conducting assessments that gauged vulnerability. The perception was that your housing situation needed to be severe in order to get services, and that "you really have to put yourself out there" or exaggerate or lie about the severity in order to access services.

In Anchorage, youth did not describe service access through coordinated entry but had positive perceptions of the intake processes outside the coordinated entry system through Covenant House Alaska (CHA) and the school program, Child in Transition (CIT), describing paperwork as straight forward and being able to access the services they needed. The intake process through CIT was perceived as more difficult, but several spoke appreciatively of help from a particular staff member in quickly accessing services. In Colorado BOS (peer site), none of the youth had experience with coordinated entry.

Family Intervention Services

Although youth perceived early interventions to assist families as a potential way to prevent youth homelessness, they rarely recounted experiences receiving such interventions. The family intervention services described during focus groups primarily consisted of services provided through the child welfare system. This discrepancy highlights that this area of service may warrant additional attention, as discussed further in the implications section.

Emergency Shelter

Youth perspectives on emergency shelter centered around three themes: Lack of safety in adult shelters, a need for youth-focused housing options, and safety and suitability concerns even in youth shelters.

Lack of Safety in Adult Shelters. Youth expressed concerns surrounding the safety of adult shelters. Numerous youth voiced concerns about the safety and suitability of most shelters.

They reported feeling unsafe or particularly vulnerable in the adult shelters and in the surrounding area where the shelters were located. In multiple sites, youth said that they would forego accessing services provided in areas that they deemed unsafe. The perceived danger of staying in adult shelters was voiced repeatedly by youth who noted that they would prefer to sleep in the surrounding woods or on the streets and be exposed to the elements rather than stay at adult shelters. These concerns and issues were particularly salient for female youth in Austin/Travis County, who noted fear of sexual assault or rape:

> *"If I was on the streets again I would never go around the [adult shelter]. You're legit asking to be raped the minute you walk up in that area. As a female. Yeah, I wouldn't go without another male present. I'd rather go sleep in the woods. At least I know I'm safe."*

Youth reported being bullied and robbed while they were in shelters and feared being arrested if they were to defend themselves or get into altercations with other shelter occupants. Additionally, most shelters were co-ed, which was especially intimidating for young females; they reported there were few female-only shelters but they were hard to get into. As a youth from Connecticut BOS put it:

> *"I feel like the shelter, and they can't really protect you once you go in your room if there's [someone] who wants to do something."*

Focus group participants reported that many adults in shelters had substance abuse problems and youth staying in shelters were at risk of using drugs themselves:

> *"I saw a kid that literally he looked like he never touched any drugs a day in his life before. And he started hanging out with [older people that were doing drugs] after, just because the shelter put them together now. So now they're start doing drugs and stuff, now he's coming back strung out. Now, he's getting kicked out the shelter and now he really has nowhere to go, and now he has an addiction on top of it."*

Need for Youth-Focused Housing Options. Youth appreciated having youth-focused housing options and felt youth shelters were safer and more welcoming than adult shelters. They also reported the benefit of being around peers their own age.

Several youth did report wishing there were more youth-focused housing options in their communities. In Cincinnati/Hamilton County, six participating youth were in a shelter serving youth under 18, the only shelter of its type in the region. An additional eight youth were in the shelter's facility for youth ages 18 to 24. Youth at this shelter viewed it as a "landing pad" and a place for youth with nowhere else to go. Youth expressed some disgruntlement around shelter rules and restrictions, but several respondents expressed gratitude for having a place to go, someone to help them, and someone to talk to them. Youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County expressed that the need for youth shelter exceeded the available beds.

This sentiment was echoed by youth in Austin/Travis County, where one youth reported:

"Like the shelter they have right here, it's pretty cool. They need like a little more. I think they could make a little more shelters maybe."

In Santa Cruz, many youth indicated more shelters were needed, particularly ones that were for youth only. These shelters could provide access to toiletries, showers, and basic essentials. They wanted to create a safe space with minimal requirements.

In Colorado BOS (peer site), there was no youth homeless shelter in Morgan County, and homeless people were described as sleeping "all over the place" in a variety of unsheltered situations. Youth recommended converting a shopping center into a large air-conditioned homeless shelter, including a cafeteria, kitchen, bedrooms, classrooms, and locations for other services.

Shelters Do Not Meet the Needs of Specific Groups of Youth. Youth described expressed aspects of shelter that were perceived as unsafe or not tailored to their needs, particularly for those who identify as female, are under 18 years old, pregnant or parenting, or living in urban areas. In Seattle/King County, female youth noted at times feeling uncomfortable around the male staff at shelters who can act "creepy" (for example, lingering in rooms during supervision rounds). A common concern for both males and females was feeling especially vulnerable at night in the congregate settings:

"You have to keep one eye open when you sleep."

In NW Michigan, youth under 18 pointed out that after 2 weeks in a shelter, they are encouraged to return to their families, which posed a problem for youth who have family problems. Youth also noted that the local shelter is only open to minors, leaving an adult shelter as the main alternative for youth who are age 18 and older.

Pregnant and parenting youth in San Francisco indicated that services most often received were referrals to shelters, which is not appealing to youth with children:

"You just call these places and it's just inconvenient because you don't want to have to be in a shelter with a newborn infant child….Right now I'm in a situation where I feel like I'm forced to be put in a shelter just to get the help that I need, but I don't want to be in a shelter longer than I have to."

Youth in NW Michigan discussed how short-term shelters could be challenging because it required them to frequently move from place to place, cycling between stays at the shelter and living at home or couch surfing. Youth in multiple urban sites also described the ways in which typical shelter hours posed challenges given lack of alternative spaces to pass time. Hanging out at most public places or businesses results in accusations of loitering or trespassing. Places like retail stores and Starbucks have time limits for non-patrons. This is particularly an issue in the afternoon and early evening (between 4 and 6:30 pm) when the youth noted most daytime programs have closed, but it is too early for night shelters to open. The youth noted that having nowhere to go pushed them into trouble. Youth who work evening or night hours in Seattle/King County, for example, reported having to wake up by 7 am and exit most shelters by 9 am,

requiring them to function on a few hours of sleep (or forgo the employment opportunity in exchange for securing a place to sleep during the shelters' typical hours).

Permanent Housing

Difficulty accessing permanent housing due to a lack of affordable housing and the high cost of living was noted as a problem across several sites (Austin/Travis County, Santa Cruz, Seattle/King County). Youth in Seattle/King County described a fear that they would not be able to "make it" in housing even with assistance due to these circumstances. They also described difficulties finding housing due to stigma and lack of credit.

In Austin/Travis County, youth noted that steep requirements for moving in (for example, an income that is three times the cost of one month's rent) were out of reach of a young person with an entry-level job. They reported a need for more housing options (including government-assisted housing) as well as reductions in housing prices (for example, rent-controlled units).

Youth in San Francisco also worried about "being able to make it," given the high cost of living, the lack of access to jobs that could cover rent, and that landlords were not willing to rent units that were well-maintained and affordable to youth. They provided several suggestions for changes that could be made to allow greater access to housing. Those changes included not requiring an income that is three times the rent amount and providing low- to no-income housing.

Concerns about securing and maintaining housing were not limited to urban areas. In NW Michigan, youth described a lack of affordable housing as a primary reason for their homelessness. One youth expressed a need for "more options for housing. Because the low-income [housing] fills up so fast." In Kentucky BOS, two respondents reported that they lived together at another friend's house, where there were seven youth sharing three bedrooms. With the cost of electricity "going sky high," they were struggling to pay bills and did not have running water. The young women explained, "So we use rainwater just to do everything."

Employment and Education Assistance

Employment opportunities were mixed across the sites and often challenged by lack of transportation. Youth in some sites such as Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, and NW Michigan believed there were a variety of work opportunities and resources available. A lack of transportation options, however, hindered their ability to find and keep employment, whereas youth in Kentucky BOS and in NW Michigan described appreciating the ability to receive transportation services to get to work.

Youth described receiving some vocational and education assistance. In NW Michigan, school-based supports, including an alternative high school, were perceived as especially useful. In Kentucky BOS, youth received help from the Sapling Center to enroll in a General Educational Development (GED) program and study for the GED. In Seattle/King County, youth spoke about getting connected to educational programs, including college and GED programs,

and obtaining internships. Youth in Colorado BOS (peer site) indicated an alternative school made it possible for them to complete high school.

Behavioral Health

Youth in some sites described the challenges in accessing behavioral health services. In Cincinnati/Hamilton County, youth were aware of available mental health services but described stigma and a fear of being perceived as weak as barriers to accessing them. Youth in Seattle/King County reported receiving mental health and substance abuse services but indicated a need for more access to therapy and one-on-one counseling to handle conflicts with others. Likewise, in NW Michigan, youth described accessing mental health services through local providers and school counselors but reported that addiction treatment programs available in the community were insufficient to meet the need. Youth in Sonoma County (peer CoC) highlighted that mental health challenges contributed to their experiences of homelessness by impacting their ability to get and keep jobs. One youth said that more mental health support would have helped her avoid homelessness, while another said that mental health support had helped her to obtain her own apartment.

Unique Experiences of Specific Groups Accessing Services

Youth with different backgrounds and experiences described unique challenges around accessing services.

LGBTQ Youth. Youth in Anchorage spoke about a need for more LGBTQ groups and programs. One LGBTQ youth noted:

> *"There's a lot of great programs, but the problem I'm having right now is there's not a lot of programs out there for me, as being a gay male and being homeless."*

Youth across several sites (Anchorage, Kentucky BOS, and Santa Cruz) also noted a need for better training of adults working with youth and for foster parents around LGBTQ issues, highlighted by one youth:

> *"I think people that are shaping young minds, people in any position in power over children could use better education around LGBTQ experiences. I think there's a lack of training… if they offered those types of classes I think I would have been able to avoid my homeless experience."*

Pregnant and Parenting Youth. Some parenting youth reported that having children made things more difficult for youth experiencing homelessness. One youth in San Francisco said:

> *"It's a lot harder for us to continue to do everything once we have our kids or while we're pregnant than it is anybody else that's going through these services."*

While a young mother in Cincinnati spoke about barriers to educational goals as a result of pregnancy:

> *"I dropped out when I got pregnant with my son. I only had three credits to graduate. I did that when I was 18. I have not went back to school currently but...I would like to go back to school."*

Pregnant and parenting youth described challenges accessing shelter with their partners and/or their children. In a focus group in Cincinnati/Hamilton County, a youth described being turned away from a shelter for young adults because she had a child. In another focus group, a young parent in Connecticut BOS described the difficulty of being able to find a shelter where she could stay with her partner:

> *"For a couple of days that we were there they had us in a special section, because of how far along I was pregnant, they knew I needed him in case anything happened. They had us still in separate beds, but just a divider between, so they still kept us together."*

Youth in Connecticut BOS living in a transitional housing program for parents described the program positively. They talked about how the guidance they received through case management was helpful. One youth spoke very highly of the childcare that was available to parents who were working or enrolled in school or training programs.

Minor Youth. Minor youth often reported difficulty accessing services. One youth in Anchorage described difficulties accessing free medical and dental care that was available due to a requirement that a parent or guardian sign a form prior to receiving care. In Austin/Travis County, several youth noted the limited amount of resources available to someone under 18 years of age as well as the difficulties of that age group accessing any assistance. Some difficulties for these youth under 18 include finding landlords willing to rent to them without the concern about then being missing persons, and also the difficulty navigating the system for help at that age (for example, legal documents, emancipating from guardians, permission to rent places). The youth suggested that those under 18 years of age be given access to the wider range of available adult resources and assistance.

Youth in Foster Care. In Santa Cruz, youth who were formerly involved in foster care noted that more work was needed to vet child welfare employees and provide training and education to foster families, particularly around the rights of foster children and the laws associated with providing care. Youth remarked that services and supports varied across the foster homes. Programs need to make sure they hired caring and responsible people to provide services. For example, youth talked about "incompetent group home faculty" and situations getting "to the point where I felt safer out on the street as a preteen than in that house." Youth also wanted to make sure that providers could quickly help them and appropriately prioritize those who needed help the most.

Youth Recommendations

When asked what they would do to end youth homeless if they were in charge, youth had a number of recommendations.

1. **Increase availability and accessibility of shelter and housing for youth.** Youth voiced a need for more affordable housing in their communities and more youth-specific shelters, available to youth up to age 24.

2. **End poverty, capitalism, and income inequality.** At several sites, youth talked about the need to end poverty, capitalism, and income inequality. In NW Michigan, one youth expressed:

   "I feel like one thing that would help is fixing up the areas that are in poverty, because I feel they are literally just stuck like that, and nobody cares."

3. **Improve outreach and communication about resources.** As described above, youth at a number of sites indicated that outreach and improved communication were needed to address youths' limited awareness and knowledge of the available resources.

4. **Create opportunities for jobs, training, and other supports.** In Ohio BOS, a common thread throughout the discussions with youth was the dire nature of employment opportunities in the area, as well as training programs. Youth noted the desire to see an increased number of jobs with better overall opportunities than the local fast food and sawmill jobs that were currently available to them. Youth across a number of sites also expressed a need for basic life skills training. In Anchorage, youth spoke enthusiastically of an "Adulting 101" course proposed by the state legislature. Similarly, in Austin/Travis County, several youth reported that they would like more assistance with life skills. For example, they reported wanting to learn how to cook, balance a budget, pay bills, and drive. Several youth who had prior experiences in the foster care system, residential treatment, and juvenile detention centers said they were not prepared for living independently while in those systems, and now they experience stress and feel overwhelmed as a result:

   > *"So, I still don't know how to drive. I still don't know how to cook and stuff like that, or whatever. So yeah, I may have a roof over my head but I'm still super… overwhelmed."*

5. **Listen to and act upon youth voices.** Youth voiced the need for respect and for adults to listen to them. In Seattle/King County, several youth voiced the need for respect. Especially for the young adults in their 20s, they spoke about not wanting more parenting, but wanting to be heard and respected. In Santa Cruz, across the groups, youth wanted to create opportunities to talk about issues from their perspective. They wanted to be able to come up with solutions and have those ideas implemented.

6. **Provide additional training to staff providing services to youth.** As described above, youth across sites emphasized the importance of adults as a caring, knowledgeable resource to help them access services. They identified areas in which the staff providing services to youth were in need of additional training to improve their sensitivities around youth needs and to increase their knowledge of the available resources.

Implications

Youth perspectives on contributors to their experiences of homelessness and the services and supports available in their communities have implications for the evaluation.

Youth identified family conflict, abuse, and rejection, as well as family poverty, residential instability, and substance abuse as primary contributors to their experiences of homelessness, particularly among pregnant/parenting youth, and those identifying as LGBTQ. Youth perceived early interventions to assist families as potentially helpful in preventing youth homelessness but rarely recounted having received such interventions. Few YHDP sites are investing in family intervention as its own intervention, although it is embedded in a number of other services. It will be important for this evaluation to understand how the family interventions at the few sites investing in them (such as Connecticut BOS or San Francisco) serve to prevent youth homelessness. Across sites, over time it will be important to monitor whether these factors continue to be cited as a primary cause of youth homelessness or whether sites are able to intervene earlier to mitigate the impacts of family conflict and abuse as contributors to youth homelessness.

Youth reported a number of contributors to their experiences of homelessness that suggest a need for increased cross-sector collaboration. These include involvement in juvenile justice and child welfare systems and substance abuse problems. All YHDP sites are aiming to strengthen cross-systems collaborations, and some (Seattle/King County, Connecticut BOS, and San Francisco) are investing YHDP funds in establishing cross-sector teams. It will be important for the evaluation to track how these projects are being implemented and whether they may be able to mitigate the risk of homelessness among youth with systems involvement or substance abuse problems.

While prevention and diversion were not a salient theme in the focus groups conducted at baseline, youth expressed a need for more services in this area, and those in sites that had diversion services in place generally viewed them positively. A number of the demonstration sites are expanding/instituting diversion services as part of YHDP. It will be important to understand whether more youth become aware of these services and how they perceive them, particularly in the sites that have YHDP-funded interventions.

Youth repeatedly described limited awareness of available services and resources and difficulties accessing services and voiced a need for more outreach to increase the accessibility of services. Sites are engaging in a number of outreach efforts as part of YHDP, some (such as Santa Cruz) informed by YAB input and youth recommendations. Youth also expressed a need for case managers able to help them navigate services. It will be important to track how different

approaches to outreach (such as the content of resources, use of schools or other institutions) and the types and degree of supports provided through case management across the sites may be associated with improvements in youth's understanding of and access to available services.

Youth's familiarity with coordinated entry varied across sites, reflecting the degree to which coordinated entry was in place at each site. Over time, the evaluation can examine whether youth familiarity at less developed sites grows as the coordinated entry systems are put into place or whether additional outreach is required to help youth gain familiarity with the process. Youth experiences of coordinated entry at the more highly developed sites also forecast possible issues to look for as implementation proceeds at the sites where coordinated entry systems are still in earlier stages of development. It will be interesting to examine whether youth perceive the need for self-disclosure as a barrier to accessing services or whether there are perceived inefficiencies in the process due to multiple assessments, the need to call back repeatedly, or barriers such as difficulty qualifying for those in unsafe, doubled-up situations. It will also be interesting to see whether these perceived issues persist or whether there are adjustments to the coordinated entry process that result in these issues improving and youth perceptions becoming correspondingly more positive.

Section VII: Findings—Characteristics, Housing and Services Received, and Outcomes of Youth Served Prior to Youth Homelessness Development Program in Round One Continuums of Care

> ### *Key Findings*
>
> *In this section, we provide a baseline snapshot of the population of youth that received assistance from the homeless system prior to implementation of Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP)-funded programs using data from each of the 10 round one Continuum of Care's (CoC's) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).*
>
> *This examination of the HMIS data revealed several key cross-site findings:*
>
> 1. *The size of the population of youth served in 2017 in the 10 sites varied considerably, from nearly 5,000 youth in Connecticut Balance of State (BOS) to 122 youth in Santa Cruz.*
>
> 2. *The average age of youth served across the sites was 21 years, and fewer than 10 percent across the sites were under 18 years of age.*
>
> 3. *Females were more likely to receive assistance than males, and the rate of youth who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming was higher than most national estimates.*
>
> 4. *Non-White and Hispanic youth are typically overrepresented in HMIS populations compared with the overall youth populations in their CoCs.*
>
> 5. *One in six youth across sites receiving HMIS services were parents with young children; fewer than 3 percent of youth in all sites were accompanied by other household members.*
>
> 6. *More than one-third of youth receiving HMIS services experienced a disabling condition, most commonly mental health conditions or family violence.*
>
> 7. *In 8 of the 10 CoCs, fewer than one-third of youth reported any income, and among those that did, it was insufficient to cover the cost of fair market rent.*
>
> 8. *Prior to YHDP, shelter was the most common service received by youth, apart from coordinated entry, which was present in the HMIS in only five sites in 2017. Receipt of residential housing services by youth, especially in permanent housing programs, was rare across sites.*
>
> 9. *Nearly one-third of youth exited to permanent housing from either a shelter or housing program, with the highest rates among those served by permanent housing programs such as rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing. Moreover, lengths of stay were longer in permanent housing and rapid rehousing, than in shelter or transitional housing.*

In this section, we provide a baseline snapshot of the population of homeless youth served by the homeless systems in the 10 round one YHDP CoCs. Using data from the sites' HMISs[12] for the year prior to the implementation of YHDP-funded projects (2017), we describe the size and composition of the population receiving services within and across communities, the services and housing assistance they received, the length of time served, and their rates of exit to permanent housing.[13] Data include youth receiving adult services as well as youth-specific services in the 10 YHDP sites. Data for the three peer communities are presented in Section VIII. Additional tables are provided in appendix A.

The 2017 HMIS data taken together with 2020 HMIS data will provide a basis for examining changes over time in the population of youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness across sites and within each site. The types of population changes within the sites that result will likely depend on the baseline status of the systems, the types of systems changes being put into place, and changes in the community context. For example, a site that has a system at baseline in early development may actually see increases in the number served over time if there is a greater emphasis on coordinated entry and/or outreach efforts. In addition, systems that bring in additional providers, especially those serving distinct populations such as youth served through foster care or juvenile justice, may realize different in the composition of the population served over time. Finally, having more housing in place may decrease lengths of time youth receive crisis housing and other services and increase the percentage of youth served that exit to permanent housing. We will examine these differences across the YHDP sites as well as in contrast with the peer sites. Data from the documents, site visits, and other contacts with sites will help us interpret the changes that occur.

Size and Composition of the Population of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Size of the Youth Population in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

As exhibit 7-1 demonstrates, across the 10 YHDP round one CoCs, the HMIS data systems record a total of 18,387 unaccompanied youth ages 14–24 served by HUD-funded programs in 2017. The number of youth served varies dramatically across the 10 sites. Connecticut BOS and Seattle/King County served the largest number of youth, with more than 4,000 each. Cincinnati/Hamilton County served almost 3,000 youth and three CoCs (Ohio BOS, San Francisco, and Austin/Travis County) served between 1,000 and 2,000 youth. The remaining four CoCs served smaller numbers of youth with two CoCs (Anchorage and Kentucky BOS) serving between 700–900 youth and two CoCs (Santa Cruz and NW Michigan) serving fewer

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[12]We collected and analyzed client-level HMIS data from nine of the YHDP CoCs and aggregate in one site (San Francisco). Some summary statistics were not available in San Francisco.

[13]Length of stay and exits to permanent housing are HEARTH measures; however, due to the limitations in the data we had available (such as, only calendar year 2017), the calculations for this analysis vary somewhat from the HEARTH calculations.

than 200 youth. Exhibit A-1 in appendix A presents the population size for each CoC as well as the percentage of the youth population present in the HMIS.

Exhibit 7-1. **Number of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017**
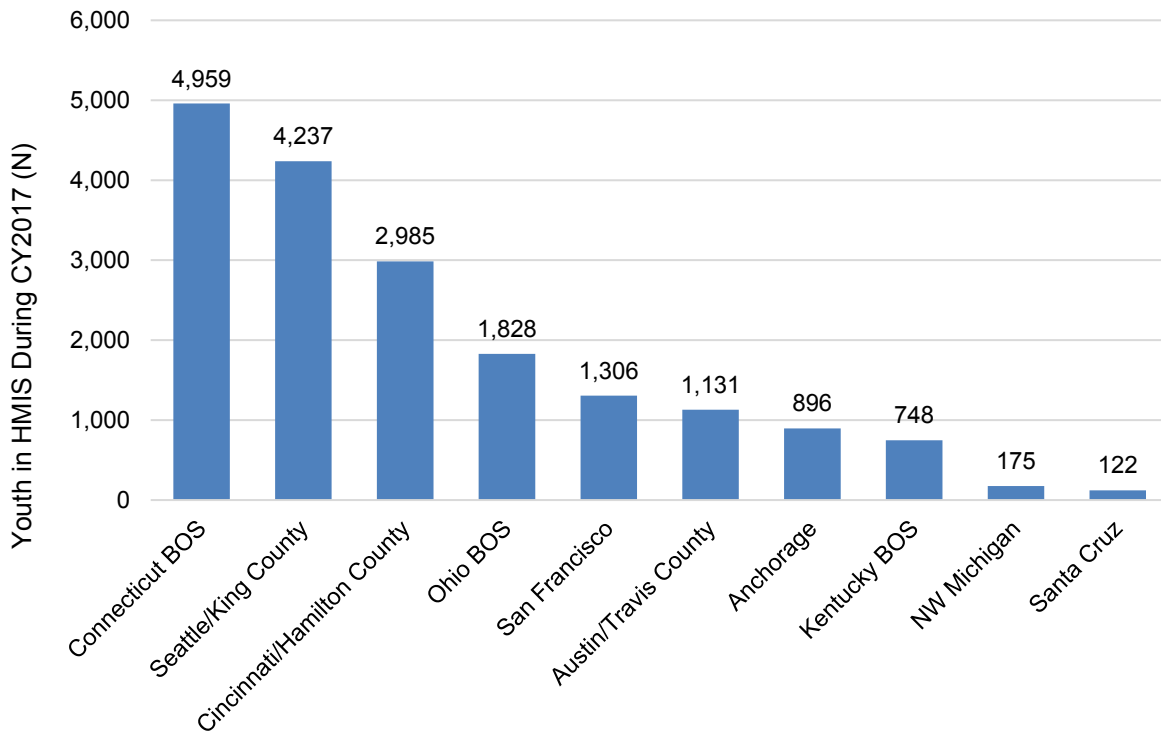
BOS = Balance of State. CY = calendar year. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Participation rates of service and housing providers in the HMIS affect whether the number of youth included in this analysis is an accurate estimate of the number of youth served in each CoC. At the time the grantees submitted their YHDP applications to HUD in 2016, only three sites (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Travis County, and NW Michigan) reported that 100 percent of their units were included in the HMIS. Other CoCs reported participation rates between 54 and 84 percent. For youth-specific units, six YHDP sites reported full participation. Two sites (Connecticut BOS and Ohio BOS) reported more than 80 percent participation, and two sites reported low levels of participation with 39 percent in San Francisco and no youth-specific units in Santa Cruz.

Characteristics of Youth Served

Age. Across all sites, the average age of youth served was 21, ranging from an average of 19 to 22 years within each site (see exhibit 7-2). The difference in average age across sites is partially attributable to differences in the proportion of minors (such as, youth between ages 14 and 18) served by each site; approximately 9 percent of the youth served across sites were minors in

2017, with individual sites ranging from 1 percent in Connecticut BOS to as many as 43 percent in NW Michigan. The different rates of minors included in the HMIS across sites may be a result of the types of services available to minors within the CoCs. NW Michigan is the only YHDP site in which minors were eligible for coordinated entry. Additionally, a large proportion of crisis housing beds available in Anchorage, San Francisco, and NW Michigan were for youth under age 18. In contrast, Ohio BOS and Santa Cruz, each with 2 percent of their reported population as minors, had few, if any, crisis housing beds for minors.

Exhibit 7-2. **Age of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017**
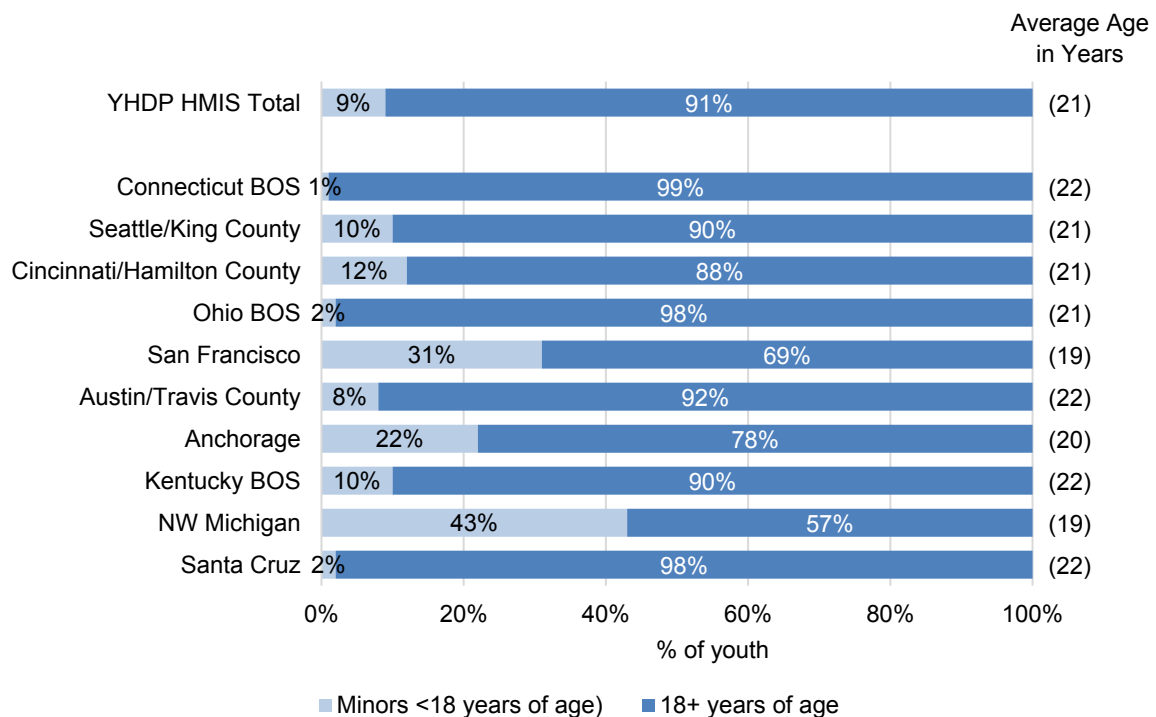
BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Gender. Across all sites, a higher proportion of females (56 percent) were served than males (42 percent) (see exhibit 7-3). This pattern is true in all sites except in Anchorage and San Francisco, which served higher proportions of males than females and Kentucky BOS, and Seattle/King County, which each served equal proportions of females and males. The largest differences between females and males were in Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Connecticut BOS, where over two-thirds (65–68 percent) of youth were female. Rates of youth who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming were low, at fewer than 3 percent across sites, although these rates were typically higher than most national estimates, which range from 0.1 percent to 0.5 percent (Gates, 2011). Youth in San Francisco had a significantly higher rate of unreported gender than other sites. Exhibit A-3 in appendix A presents the population characteristics in the CoCs according to the American Community Survey (ACS).

Exhibit 7-3. **Gender of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017**

| Characteristics	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	18,387	896	1,131	2,985	4,959	748	175	1,828	1,306	122	4,237
Gender											
Male	42%	58%	46%	32%	35%	50%	42%	44%	46%	47%	47%
Female	56%	41%	52%	68%	65%	50%	55%	55%	43%	51%	47%
Transgender/ gender non-conforming	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	<1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Unreported	1%	0%	<1%	0%	0%	<1%	0%	<1%	8%	1%	3%

HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Race. As exhibit 7-4 shows, across all sites' HMIS populations, 38 percent of youth identified as White; however, the racial composition of youth varied widely across sites. Youth who identified as White are the majority of the HMIS population in five sites (Austin/Travis County, Kentucky BOS, NW Michigan, Ohio BOS, and San Francisco), while non-White youth represent the majority of youth in the remaining five sites. Black and African-American youth were the largest group of non-White youth in all sites, except Anchorage, where 30 percent of youth identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native and NW Michigan where a larger proportion of youth identify as multiracial. In Connecticut BOS, a large portion—38 percent— did not have a reported race.

In most YHDP sites, non-White youth were overrepresented in HMIS, with significant disparities emerging between the racial composition of youth receiving services and that of the general population (see exhibit A-3 appendix A). Across all sites, except San Francisco, youth who identified as Black or African American were overrepresented in the HMIS at three to eight times the rate of the general population. The discrepancy is highest in Cincinnati/Hamilton County where over 70 percent of youth in HMIS identified as Black or African American, compared with 27 percent of the general population. Additionally, in Anchorage, three times as many youth in HMIS identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native than in the general population.

The racial composition of youth in the HMIS populations was largely consistent with the racial composition of youth receiving specific services such as coordinated entry, emergency shelter, and permanent housing in those sites with a few exceptions. Across sites, youth identifying as White were disproportionately likely to be enrolled in permanent housing programs (such as, public housing, permanent supportive housing, or rapid re-housing) in all

sites except Seattle/King County, where youth identifying as Black or African American were disproportionately likely to receive permanent housing.

Hispanic Ethnicity. As shown in exhibit 7-4, 15 percent of youth across the 10 sites identified as Hispanic. The highest rates of Hispanic youth are in Santa Cruz (46 percent), Austin/Travis County (32 percent), and Connecticut BOS (24 percent). In 7 of the 10 sites, the percentage of youth in HMIS who identified as Hispanic was higher than the percentage of individuals identifying as Hispanic in the general population (see exhibit A-3 in appendix A). This discrepancy is greatest in Santa Cruz, where nearly one-half of the youth in the HMIS identified as Hispanic, compared with 34 percent in the general population.

Exhibit 7-4.   Race and Ethnicity of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During CY2017

Characteristics	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	18,387	896	1,131	2,985	4,959	748	175	1,828	1,306	122	4,237
Race											
White	38%	33%	53%	22%	26%	87%	79%	76%	24%	65%	37%
Black	33%	10%	36%	71%	30%	10%	5%	17%	27%	7%	30%
AI/AN	3%	30%	1%	<1%	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	2%	8%	4%
Asian	1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	2%	4%	2%
Hawaiian/PI	1%	3%	<1%	<1%	1%	0%	0%	<1%	1%	1%	2%
Multiracial	7%	19%	6%	6%	4%	2%	13%	5%	3%	9%	10%
Unreported/ Other	17%	4%	2%	0%	38%	<1%	1%	<1%	41%	6%	14%
% Hispanic	15%	9%	32%	1%	24%	3%	7%	4%	19%	46%	14%

AI = American Indian. AN = Alaska Native. BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. PI = Pacific Islander.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Household Composition. Across the CoCs, 14 percent of youth served had children with them. In one-half of the sites, between one-fifth and one-third of youth had children with them; in the remaining five sites, fewer than 10 percent of youth entered the system as parents (see exhibit 7-5).[14] Youth in Ohio BOS and Cincinnati/Hamilton County were significantly more likely to have children than youth in other CoCs, with nearly 30 percent of households having at least one child. Youth in Connecticut BOS and NW Michigan were significantly less likely to enroll with children (at 4 and 5 percent, respectively). These differences are likely attributable to the composition of services available in each of the CoCs. The four CoCs with the highest proportion of youth with children also had among the highest proportion of beds for families (as opposed to beds for adults or children only) according to their 2018 Housing Inventory Counts (HICs). The one exception to this is NW Michigan, which also had a proportion of beds for families but the lowest percentage of youth in its HMIS with children, in part, because NW Michigan served a larger proportion of youth in prevention services than the other YHDP CoCs (presented below). Additional information about youth's household composition is presented in exhibit A-5 in appendix A.

The average age of children in households was approximately 2 to 3 years old, though across sites children ranged in age from newborns to nearly 13 years of age.[15] Across the sites, the number of children ranged from one to six; however, fewer than 40 percent of parenting households had more than one child.

Fewer than 3 percent of youth in all sites enrolled with another non-child household member, most often a spouse or partner, except in Santa Cruz, Ohio BOS, and Kentucky BOS, where significantly greater percentages of youth (9–11 percent) had another household member. These three sites also had among the highest rates of youth with children, suggesting that services in these CoCs were more likely to serve youth-headed families than services in other CoCs. (More information about the household composition of these youth can be found in appendix A).

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[14]Unaccompanied youth heads of household were considered to be parenting youth, or "with children," when at least one of their HMIS enrollments during 2017 included a household member denoted as "child."

[15]Any "child" household members 13 years of age or older at the start of their first enrollment during 2017 were considered to be entry errors (due to the unlikelihood that a young adult 24 years or younger would have a child older than 12 years old) and their age was denoted as "missing" during average age calculations.

Exhibit 7-5. **Household Composition of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems during Calendar Year 2017**

% Enrolled with
Spouse/Partner or
Other Family Member

Site	enrolled w/ children	enrolled w/o children	% Enrolled with Spouse/Partner or Other Family Member
YHDP HMIS Site Total	14%	86%	(3%)
Connecticut BOS	4%	96%	(1%)
Seattle/King County	10%	90%	(2%)
Cincinnati/Hamilton County	27%	73%	(3%)
Ohio BOS	29%	71%	(11%)
San Francisco	9%	91%	(2%)
Austin/Travis County	18%	82%	(3%)
Anchorage	6%	94%	(1%)
Kentucky BOS	22%	78%	(10%)
NW Michigan	5%	95%	(3%)
Santa Cruz	20%	80%	(9%)

% of youth

■ enrolled w/ children ■ enrolled w/o children
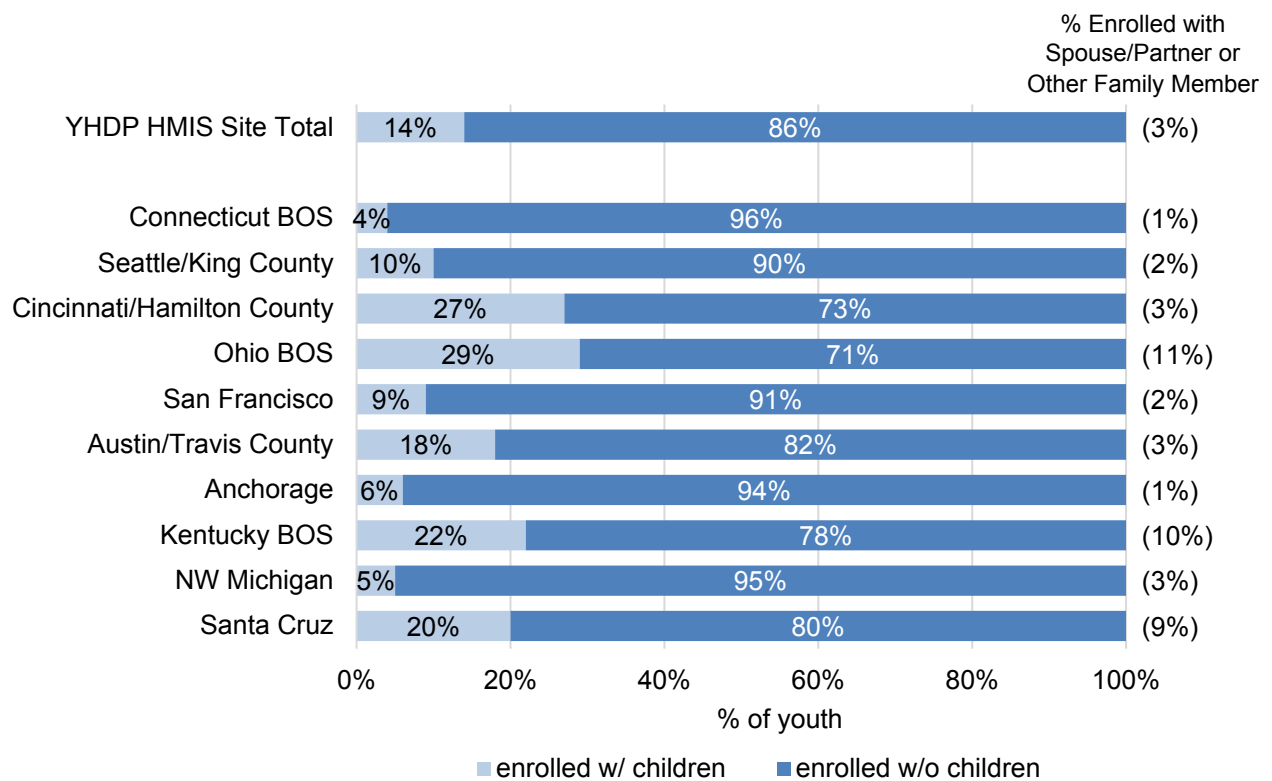
BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Disabling Conditions. The HMIS reports data on the percentage of youth that have disabling conditions, including chronic mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, and substance abuse problems (such as, drugs and/or alcohol). Rates of disabling conditions were high across YHDP sites, with more than one-fourth of youth across sites reportedly experiencing one or more conditions (see exhibit 7-6). Youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County reported significantly lower rates of having one or more of these conditions than youth in other sites; youth in NW Michigan, Austin/Travis County, and Ohio BOS reported the highest rates.

Exhibit 7-6. **Percent of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017 Reporting One or More Disabling Conditions**

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] San Francisco did not provide the percent of youth reporting one or more conditions. Based on reported data for individual conditions, the expected range is 13–20 percent, the minimum of which is presented here.
Source: 2017 HMIS

As exhibit 7-7 shows, mental health conditions were the most common type of condition reported among youth. Rates of mental health conditions were highest in NW Michigan, Austin/Travis County, and Ohio BOS where more than 30 percent of youth reported experiencing them. Substance abuse problems were reported among 11 percent of youth overall, with individual sites' rates ranging between 6 percent in San Francisco to 19 percent in Kentucky BOS and Santa Cruz. Rates of physical health problems were relatively low across YHDP sites, with only 7 percent of youth overall and fewer than 12 percent of youth in any individual site reporting a chronic health condition. Rates of disabling conditions among youth in these CoCs appear to be unrelated to the types of assistance youth receive; however, these sites may have specific programs that specifically target youth with mental health or substance abuse issues.

Family Violence. HMIS also tracks youth experience with family violence. Across the sites, 16 percent of youth reported experiencing family violence, with rates in NW Michigan, Austin/Travis County, and Santa Cruz significantly higher than in other sites.

Exhibit 7-7. Disabling Conditions and Family Violence Reported by Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

Characteristics	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	**18,387**	**896**	**1,131**	**2,985**	**4,959**	**748**	**175**	**1,828**	**1,306**	**122**	**4,237**
One or more disabling conditions	28%	27%	39%	18%	23%	28%	43%	38%	13%	23%	37%
Mental health condition	23%	20%	34%	14%	19%	12%	39%	33%	13%	–	29%
Chronic health condition	7%	3%	12%	5%	7%	2%	11%	3%	1%	9%	11%
Substance abuse problem	11%	15%	11%	9%	9%	19%	9%	10%	6%	19%	14%
Family violence history	16%	22%	36%	6%	12%	14%	41%	23%	3%	30%	17%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System.

[1] San Francisco did not provide aggregate numbers for the percent of youth reporting at least one condition. Based on reported data for individual conditions, the expected range is 13–20 percent, the minimum of which is presented here.

[2] Santa Cruz's HMIS did not include mental health information.

Source: 2017 HMIS

Income. Exhibit 7-8 presents the percentage of youth in each site's HMIS reporting income from earned and non-earned sources at the start of their first enrollment in 2017. Fifteen percent of youth in all sites reported receiving monthly income from any source, though there is high variability across sites. Youth in NW Michigan (42 percent) and Ohio BOS (35 percent) were significantly more likely to report receiving income, whereas youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County (5 percent) and Connecticut BOS (6 percent) were the least likely to report receiving income. In all sites, the primary source of income is earned income; however, other sources include Social Security Income, Social Security Disability Income, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefits. Across sites, the percentage of youth with income does not appear to be related to the demographic composition or the types of assistance youth received.
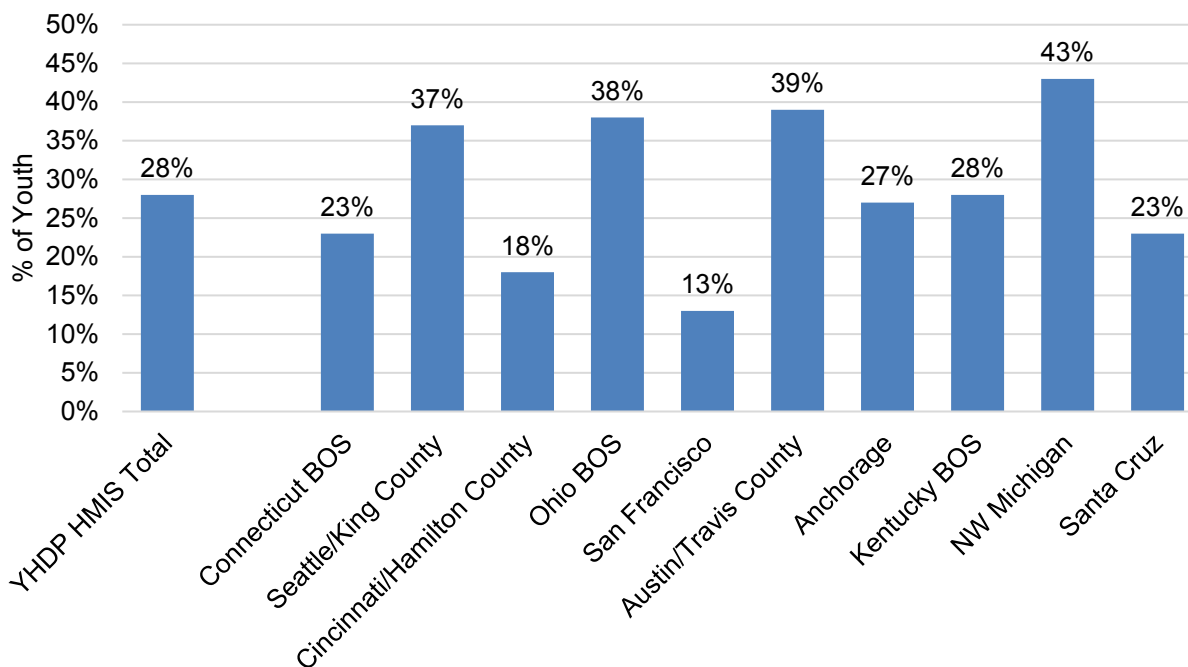
Exhibit 7-8.   **Income of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017**
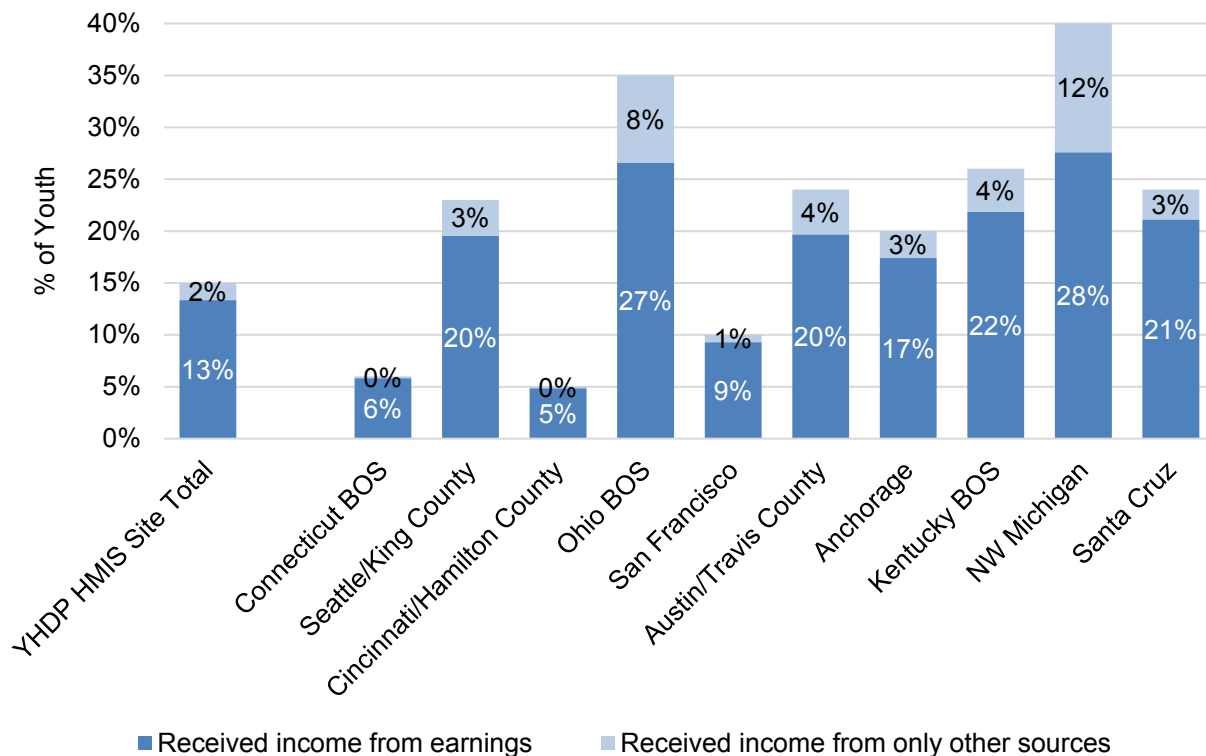
BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Exhibit 7-9 shows the relationship between the average monthly amount of income received by youth, among those reporting an income, and rates of fair market rent in their CoCs. Among youth with income, the average monthly amount was $904 across the sites, below the average fair market rent rate of $1,095. In 6 of the 10 YHDP sites (Connecticut BOS, Seattle/King County, Austin/Travis County, NW Michigan, and Santa Cruz), the average monthly income, among youth who reported any income, was below the area's 2017 one-bedroom fair market rent, demonstrating the inability of youth to afford rent in their CoCs. San Francisco did not report an average amount of income among youth in its HMIS, though it is likely that it is also below the fair market rent of $2,499. In the remaining three sites, youths' reported incomes were between $40 and $300 higher than the fair market rent, indicating that even in those sites where youth with income may be able to cover the cost of a one-bedroom apartment, they would be severely rent burdened.[16]

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[16]HUD defines severe rent burden as paying more than 50 percent of one's income on rent.

Exhibit 7-9.   Comparison of Average Monthly Income and Fair Market Rent
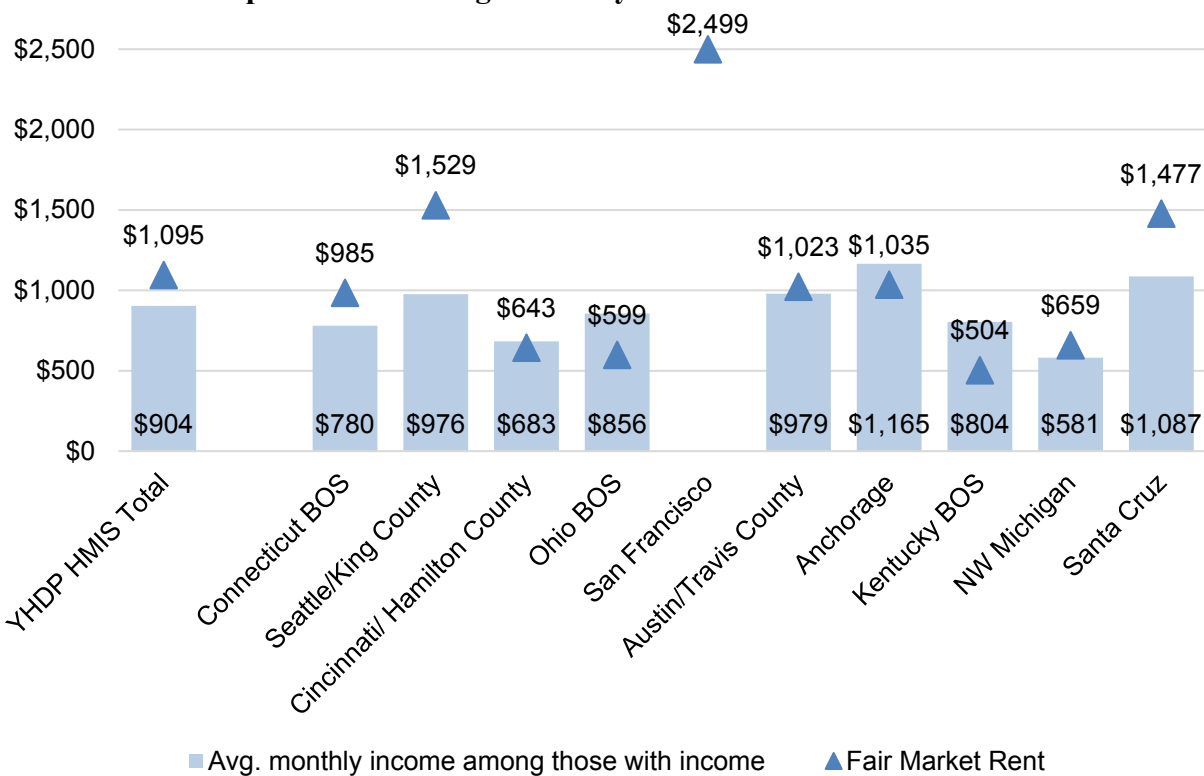
Avg. monthly income among those with income ▲ Fair Market Rent

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Sources: 2017 HMIS; 2017 HUD Fair Market Rent

Youth in Anchorage and Santa Cruz reported the highest monthly income amounts, on average, with $1,165 and $1,087, respectively. Average monthly incomes were lowest in NW Michigan with $581, despite higher rates of earned income. As NW Michigan also included more minors than all other sites, this suggests that these youth may have been employed part-time in low-wage positions. Earning the minimum wage of $8.90/hour, youth who earned the average monthly income in NW Michigan would be working about 16 hours per week.

Benefits. The most common non-cash benefit types collected across YHDP sites were Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and TANF (including TANF transportation or TANF childcare services) As exhibit 7-10 reveals, 18 percent of youth in the 10 YHDP CoCs reported receiving one or more of these benefits and in all sites, SNAP was the most common benefit received. Youth in Ohio BOS and Santa Cruz were significantly more likely to report receiving at least one of these benefits than youth in other sites, with more than 40 percent. In contrast, youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County were the least likely to report receiving any of these benefits, with fewer than 3 percent of youth reportedly receiving one or more of these benefits. Across sites, youth with children are significantly more like to receive these benefits than youth without children (42 percent compared with 14 percent). While eligibility for WIC and TANF is typically limited to households with children, SNAP, the most commonly received benefit, is more widely available to low-income individuals. Rates of benefit receipt among youth with children in presented in exhibit A-7 in appendix A.

Exhibit 7-10. **Benefits Receipt Among Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017**

Characteristics	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco[1]	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	**18,387**	**896**	**1,131**	**2,985**	**4,959**	**748**	**175**	**1,828**	**1,306**	**122**	**4,237**
Received one or more benefits	18%	13%	22%	3%	10%	32%	15%	40%	–	45%	27%
Received SNAP	16%	13%	21%	3%	9%	32%	15%	38%	1%	43%	26%
Received WIC	<1%	1%	3%	<1%	2%	2%	2%	6%	–	5%	2%
Received TANF	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	–	2%	1%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. WIC = Women, Infants, and Children. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] San Francisco did not provide the percent of youth that received SNAP, WIC, or TANF.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Services and Housing Assistance Received among Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Type of Services Received

Exhibit 7-11 shows the HUD-funded services youth received in the 10 round one YHDP CoCs in 2017. It is possible that some youth had begun to receive services prior to the start of the year or that they continued to have system contact after 2017. We include in our analysis any program enrollments by youth that either started during the 2017 or started before January 1, 2017 but extended into 2017. Program enrollments include programs that primarily serve adult and family populations as well as youth-specific programs. We were not able to include any services or housing assistance provided to unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in these sites by other organizations that do not report data to HMIS, such as faith-based or privately funded organizations.

Coordinated Entry. Across the five sites that included coordinated entry data in their HMISs in 2017, 41 percent of youth received coordinated entry. The majority of youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County and Connecticut BOS received coordinated entry—the most common service received among youth in these sites. Just over one-half of youth in Austin/Travis County received coordinated entry, while rates are significantly lower in

Anchorage and San Francisco, where coordinated entry systems were in earlier stages of development. Coordinated entry systems were not yet implemented in Kentucky BOS or Santa Cruz in 2017 and in three other sites—Ohio BOS, NW Michigan, and Seattle/King County—coordinated entry was in place, but not linked to HMIS. HUD does not require CoCs to use their HMIS as part of their coordinated entry process.

Exhibit 7-11. Services Received by Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

| HMIS Program	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	18,387	896	1,131	2,985	4,959	748	175	1,828	1,306	122	4,237
Coordinated entry[1]	41%	20%	53%	81%	85%	–	–	–	5%	–	–
Homelessness prevention	5%	1%	5%	7%	1%	6%	32%	8%	7%	2%	6%
Street outreach	13%	1%	21%	8%	7%	3%	5%	4%	49%	8%	19%
Day shelter	6%	0%	21%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%
Services only or other services	13%	6%	5%	4%	6%	44%	64%	3%	0%	52%	33%
Emergency shelter	36%	86%	32%	32%	14%	39%	53%	59%	30%	34%	46%
Transitional housing	6%	10%	5%	2%	3%	5%	6%	9%	9%	6%	11%
Rapid Re-housing	7%	1%	7%	7%	3%	11%	1%	20%	5%	24%	7%
Permanent housing (only or with services)	1%	<1%	2%	0%	<1%	0%	1%	<1%	<1%	0%	3%
Permanent supportive housing	3%	1%	<1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	11%	<1%	0%	2%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] Coordinated entry systems were not yet implemented in Kentucky BOS or Santa Cruz during 2017; coordinated entry was in place in Ohio BOS, NW Michigan, and Seattle/King County, but it was not linked to HMIS.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Prevention. Five percent of youth overall, and fewer than 10 percent of youth in any CoC received prevention services, except in NW Michigan, where one-third of youth received

them. In NW Michigan, the site that served the largest proportion of minors, 71 percent of minors received prevention services. NW Michigan is the one CoC where prevention services were widely available to youth ages 12–20 through its main youth provider. In other sites, prior to the demonstration, prevention services for youth were largely provided to youth transitioning from child welfare and may not have been provided by programs that participate in HMIS. Additionally, it is possible that some prevention assistance is recorded as "services only" (noted below) if it did not include financial assistance. Across the CoCs, about 3 percent of youth only received prevention services.

Street Outreach. Street outreach was common among youth in only three CoCs. Receipt of street outreach services was highest in San Francisco, where one-half of all youth received street outreach. In Austin/Travis County and Seattle/King County, one-fifth of youth received outreach. Across the sites, 5 percent of youth received only street outreach assistance indicating that most youth who connect with street outreach also received additional assistance.

Day Shelter. Day shelter was common among youth in only two sites (Austin/Travis County and Seattle/King County). In fact, no youth in the remaining sites received day shelter, with the exception of 1 percent of youth in Connecticut BOS.

Services Only/Other Services. In most sites, "services only" and "other services" programs in HMIS typically indicated receipt of case management. As exhibit 7-11 indicates, these services were common in four sites; over one-half of youth in Santa Cruz and approximately 30 percent of youth in Seattle/King County and Kentucky BOS received services only. Another 16 percent of youth in Kentucky BOS received other services along with almost two-thirds of youth in NW Michigan. Among the remaining CoCs, fewer than 4 percent of youth received these services.

Emergency Shelter. Second to coordinated entry, emergency shelter was the most common type of service received by youth in all sites except San Francisco (which provides a higher proportion of street outreach) and Santa Cruz (which provides a higher proportion of services only). More than one-third of youth in all sites received emergency shelter, with the highest rate of receipt in Anchorage (with 86 percent). In other sites, rate of receipt of emergency shelter varied from 14 percent in Connecticut BOS to 59 percent in Ohio BOS.

Transitional Housing. At baseline, transitional housing was one of the most common types of youth-specific housing assistance available in the YHDP CoCs, available in seven CoCs, with the number of units ranging from less than 20 in Connecticut BOS to more than 300 in Seattle/King County (see exhibit 5-11). Across the sites, however, only 6 percent of youth received transitional housing in 2017. This service was received by approximately 10 percent of youth in Anchorage, Ohio BOS, San Francisco, and Seattle/King County and smaller percentages in the remaining sites. With a total of 746 units of youth-specific transitional housing across the CoCs, this indicates that approximately 1.5 youth were served for each available transitional housing unit in 2017. Youth in these sites were also eligible for and served by transitional housing for family and adult populations, suggesting that youth's rate of receipt of transitional housing was not determined by the capacity of youth-specific assistance in these sites.

Rapid Re-Housing. Similarly, across sites 7 percent of youth received rapid re-housing in 2017. Youth in Santa Cruz (at 24 percent) and Ohio BOS (at 20 percent) were significantly more likely to receive rapid re-housing than youth in other CoCs. Interestingly, neither of these two sites had youth-specific rapid re-housing in 2017, indicating that in these two sites youth were served by rapid re-housing programs for adults and families. The five sites that had youth-specific rapid re-housing in 2017 (Austin/Travis County, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Connecticut BOS, San Francisco, and Seattle/King County), each served between 3 and 7 percent of youth, for a ratio of approximately three youth per available youth-specific rapid re-housing unit.

Permanent Housing. Prior to the demonstration, youth-specific permanent supportive housing or other permanent housing was available in six of the CoCs, with the number of units highest in San Francisco and Seattle/King County. Despite reported rates of disabling conditions (for example, mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, substance abuse problems) greater than 20 percent across sites (see exhibit 7-7), according to HMIS, fewer than 4 percent of youth in any site received permanent housing or permanent supportive housing, with the exception of Ohio BOS, where 11 percent received this assistance. This discrepancy is likely because it is difficult for youth to document their eligibility for the assistance including homelessness status and disability status. Additionally, because this is long-term assistance, sites have limited numbers of permanent housing or permanent supportive housing units available in any 1 year.

Length of Stay

Exhibit 7-12 indicates the average length of stay in shelter and housing programs among youth that exited each program in 2017. Lengths of stay were calculated using the program move-in date (which could have been prior to 2017) and the program end date. Across the sites, youth spent, on average, 57 days in shelter, though the lengths of stay differ dramatically across sites. In Anchorage, the site with the highest rate of emergency shelter use, youth spent the lowest amount of time in shelter, with an average of 17 days. In Seattle/King County, youth reported the longest time spent in emergency shelter, with an average stay of 105 days, or nearly 4 months. Among youth who exited transitional housing in 2017, the average length of stay was 208 days or almost 7 months. Youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County spent an average of 99 days in transitional housing while youth in San Francisco spent 516 days or about 17 months. Lengths of stay in shelter and transitional housing are not correlated with fair market rent in these CoCs and may instead be determined by the other available types of assistance for which youth are eligible upon exit.

Exhibit 7-12. Average Length of Stay (in Days) in Shelter and Housing Programs Among Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems (Who Exited in Calendar Year 2017)[1]

HMIS Program	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	**17,081[1]**	**896**	**1,131**	**2,985**	**4,959**	**748**	**175**	**1,828**	**1,306**	**122**	**4,237**
Emergency shelter	(N=5,732) 57	(N=756) 17	(N=330) 58	(N=892) 32	(N=576) 74	(N=285) 31	(N=88) 31	(N=1,027) 28	(N=392) 40	(N=38) 28	(N=1,740) 105
Transitional housing	(N=601) 208	(N=51) 151	(N=30) 363	(N=25) 99	(N=64) 183	(N=30) 154	(N=10) 161	(N=118) 138	(N=118) 184	(N=3) 516	(N=270) 253
Rapid Re-housing	(N=536) 173	(N=1) 107	(N=42) 168	(N=103) 299	(N=1) 354	(N=47) 165	–	(N=238) 99	(N=65) 143	–	(N=104) 220
Permanent housing (only or with services)	(N=26) 308	–	–	–	(N=1) 150	–	–	–	(N=3) 103	–	(N=25) 314
Permanent supportive housing	(N=110) 636	(N=3) 275	–	–	(N=11) 321	(N=6) 695	(N=4) 566	(N=58) 821	(N=7) 174	–	(N=28) 412

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

[1] San Francisco's length of stay calculations are not limited to youth who exited programs during 2017, and are limited to stays within the 2017 calendar year. YHDP site totals are thus calculated without San Francisco's estimates.

Note: Sample sizes are shown in parentheses.

Source: 2017 HMIS

Lengths of stay in rapid re-housing and permanent housing (only or with services) were 272 days and 286 days, respectively, or about 9 months. Average lengths of stay in permanent supportive housing across sites were 608 days, or more than 20 months. It is important to note, however, that numerous sites did not have any youth exit these programs during 2017, so these averages are based on small sample sizes.

Exits to Permanent Housing

Exhibit 7-13 presents the rates of exit to permanent housing from a range of program types, consistent with the HEARTH measures. These programs include street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and any type of permanent housing (including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing). Across sites, an average of 32 percent of youth who participated in one of these programs exited to permanent housing. In Connecticut BOS and San Francisco, however, the rate of exit to permanent housing was significantly lower than other sites, at only 4 percent. Rates were highest in Ohio BOS, where nearly two-thirds of youth exited to permanent housing from any of the four enrollment types, which may be due to the cost of housing in these rural counties.

Exhibit 7-13. Rates of Exit to Permanent Housing Among Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

HMIS Program Exits	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	**18,387**	**896**	**1,131**	**2,985**	**4,959**	**748**	**175**	**1,828**	**1,306**	**122**	**4,237**
% Exit to PH from any street outreach, shelter, or housing program types	(10,371)	(835)	(646)	(1,163)	(1,212)	(426)	(107)	(1,665)	(1,215)	(71)	(3,031)
	32%	18%	28%	51%	4%	43%	56%	62%	4%	24%	32%
% exit from street outreach	(2,392)	(13)	(243)	(230)	(353)	(22)	(9)	(64)	(640)	(10)	(808)
	6%	0%	9%	34%	2%	5%	56%	11%	0%	10%	4%
'% exit from emergency shelter	(6,578)	(770)	(361)	(941)	(684)	(295)	(93)	(1,072)	(392)	(41)	(1,929)
	30%	15%	25%	46%	4%	33%	51%	57%	11%	12%	27%
% exit from transitional housing	(1,106)	(87)	(52)	(50)	(124)	(35)	(11)	(158)	(118)	(7)	(464)
	47%	37%	63%	36%	10%	69%	45%	79%	5%	57%	57%
% exit from permanent housing	(1,849)	(14)	(102)	(271)	(210)	(94)	(7)	(559)	(78)	(29)	(485)
	51%	14%	61%	48%	8%	77%	86%	72%	<1%	31%	50%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Note: Sample sizes are included in parentheses.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Across the sites, rates of exit to permanent housing were lowest from street outreach, with only 6 percent of youth who received street outreach exiting to permanent housing; however, there was great variation between the sites. More than one-half of youth in NW Michigan exited from street outreach to permanent housing; in contrast, no youth did so in Anchorage or San Francisco.

About one-third of youth exited from emergency shelter to permanent housing; this rate also varied significantly across sites. Over one-half of youth in NW Michigan and Ohio BOS and nearly one-half of youth in Cincinnati/Hamilton County exited to permanent housing following an emergency shelter enrollment. It is possible that the high rates of exit to permanent housing from shelter in these CoCs is related to the characteristics of the youth served in these sites. NW Michigan serves a high portion of minors and Ohio BOS serves a high portion of parenting youth. It is possible that in these CoCs there are resources available for these subpopulations to assist them with finding permanent housing.

Almost one-half of all youth served by transitional housing exited to permanent housing. Exits to permanent housing from transitional housing were highest of all program exit rates across six sites. In Ohio BOS, nearly 80 percent of youth who had been enrolled in a transitional housing program subsequently exited to permanent housing. The rate of youth who exited to permanent housing from transitional housing enrollments was over 60 percent at an additional four sites (Austin/Travis County, Kentucky BOS, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County). The rate

was particularly low in San Francisco, where only 5 percent of youth exited from transitional housing to permanent housing, which may be due to the high cost of rents in the city making permanent housing on their own out of reach for many youth.

Rates of exit to permanent housing from permanent housing programs (including rapid re-housing, permanent housing only or with services, and permanent supportive housing) were highest across the sites at 51 percent. Exits to permanent housing from all permanent housing program types were common in Ohio BOS, Kentucky BOS, and NW Michigan, where over 70 percent of youth who had been in those programs exited to permanent housing. While many permanent housing programs do not expect clients to exit, the majority of permanent housing enrollments for youth in this analysis were comprised of rapid re-housing, which typically provides time-limited support from which youth are expected to exit.

Implications

This analysis of HMIS data will be conducted again in 2020 to determine whether the demonstration results in changes in the size and composition of the youth population experiencing homelessness, the type of services and housing assistance youth received, housing outcomes including their average length of stay in the system, and rates of exit to permanent housing. It will be critical for the evaluation to consider how changes in the services available in these CoCs may affect changes in these outcomes.

Systems improvements to identify and engage youth and serve them more efficiently may result in increases in the numbers of youth served whether or not the size of that population is changing. For example, implementing stronger outreach efforts or more youth-friendly coordinated entry systems may increase the number of youth served. Similarly, improvements in the quality or completeness of the HMIS data may affect estimates of the number of youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness without reflecting actual changes in the size of those groups. In addition to tracking the YHDP-funded programs the sites are implementing, the evaluation also collects data on changes in other housing and services offered within the CoCs not funded by the demonstration. Moreover, throughout the evaluation, Westat regularly discusses any possible changes to sites' data collection and management processes with local HMIS administrators. These additional data will help us to better understand the changes we see over time in the population of youth served by the systems.

Section VIII: Findings—Comparison with Peer Continuums of Care and All Other Continuums of Care

> ### *Key Findings*
>
> *The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) evaluation includes two groups of sites not funded through the demonstration to compare and contrast with the 10 sites receiving YHDP round one funding. Having comparisons should help elucidate the role YHDP plays in shaping coordinated community responses in round one sites and their outcomes on the population of youth experiencing homelessness.*
>
> *The two comparison groups include three peer Continuums of Care (CoCs) matched to one or more of the YHDP sites and all other CoCs nationally. In this report, the focus is on understanding the baseline structure and service and housing status of the community responses in the sites in these two groups, and the characteristics, housing and services received, and outcomes of the youth population experiencing homelessness.*
>
> ***Community Response to Youth Homelessness.*** *CoCs in the two comparison groups were less likely than the YHDP CoCs to have developed community responses to youth homelessness. All three peer communities had youth-specific planning and implementation groups as part of the CoC governance; however, none had youth-specific strategic plans in place, and none were actively including youth in CoC decisionmaking at the time. Among all CoCs nationally, 30 percent reported having youth-specific governance structures in place; nearly one-half had strategic plans in place, and 35 percent included youth in the CoC governance. As observed with the YHDP sites, the degree of cross-sector collaboration that existed between the three peer CoCs and other mainstream providers that serve youth experiencing homelessness varied, though all sites reported strong or growing partnerships with child welfare around the housing needs of foster care youth.*
>
> ***Baseline Youth Homeless Service Systems.*** *The peer sites were intentionally selected to include one high (Sonoma County), one medium (Memphis), and one early development (Colorado Balance of State [BOS]) system at baseline. The data on other all CoCs nationally suggests that the YHDP sites are generally reflective of the overall distribution of sites, with less than one-fourth of CoCs having highly developed youth service systems, 40 percent having medium developed systems, and 37 percent being in the early stages of development.*
>
> *The baseline status of various components of youth homeless systems of the peer CoCs and all CoCs in the country was similar to those of the YHDP CoCs. Across all groups, at baseline, services commonly in place included coordinated entry, outreach services, and family and natural support services, education and employment services that served youth with at least seven of the 10 YHDP sites, two of the three peer sites, and three-fourths of all other CoCs having these services implemented.*
>
> ***Description of the Population of Youth Served at Baseline.*** *Overall, the characteristics of youth served in the three peer CoCs were comparable to those of youth served in the YHDP*

> *CoCs with a few exceptions. They were similar ages, had comparable rates of disabling conditions and experience with family violence, and earned comparable incomes. Youth in the peer sites were more likely to be male, more likely to identify as White and Hispanic, and less likely to have children (except in Memphis, where the majority of youth served were female, identified as Black, and had children).*
>
> *Whereas the rates of receipt of shelter and housing services in the three peer CoCs were comparable, in most cases, to the YHDP CoCs, youth in the peer sites were less likely to receive coordinated entry, and more likely to receive street outreach than youth in the demonstration sites. The average lengths of stay across shelter and housing types was significantly shorter in the three peer CoCs than in the 10 YHDP CoCs, for all types of assistance except permanent supportive housing; yet they two groups had comparable rates of exit to permanent housing.*

The YHDP evaluation aims to understand the role YHDP plays in shaping coordinated community responses in round one sites and their outcomes on the population of youth experiencing homelessness. Two comparison groups are included in the evaluation to isolate the role that demonstration plays in contributing to these changes and outcomes.

The first comparison is a set of three peer CoCs—Sonoma County, Memphis, and Colorado BOS—selected as matches to one or more demonstration sites in terms of baseline status of their youth homeless systems, geography, urban versus rural status, the size of the youth homeless population, and other key characteristics. The three peer sites include two urban CoCs and one rural CoC. The second comparison involves all other CoCs nationally involved in a web survey administered in early 2019. Data on this comparison group provides an understanding of how the systems in the YHDP communities fit within a national context.[17]

This section provides an overview of the youth homeless services systems for both comparison groups and a comparison with the YHDP sites, an overview of youth outcomes for the three peer sites, and a comparison of the data with the YHDP sites.

Overview of the Peer Continuums of Care

Exhibit 8-1 provides an overview of the three peer sites, including their geographic context and population size, economic context, availability of existing resources to address youth homelessness, and other factors.

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[17]The baseline web survey was administered between January and March 2019, after the YHDP CoCs had completed their coordinated community plans and developed and begun implementing their YHDP-funded projects. Thus, at the time of the survey, the status of the YHDP CoCs' youth homeless systems had likely already been influenced by the demonstration. Moreover, HUD had funded an additional 11 CoCs in a second round (in 2018) and 23 CoCs in a third round (in 2019) of the demonstration. Our analyses of change over time will examine whether these CoCs are similar to all non-funded CoCs or whether they have different patterns of change that may be attributable to the YHDP funding or technical assistance.

Exhibit 8-1.   Overview of Peer Sites

Site Characteristic	Sonoma County (High Development)	Memphis (Medium Development)	Colorado BOS (Early Development)
Geographic Context and Population Size			
Geographic Area	Entire CoC: Sonoma County	Portion of the CoC: city of Memphis	Portion of the CoC: 33 rural counties
Urban/Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural
Overall Youth Population Size (Ages 15–24)	59,172	97,114	737,528
# of Youth Experiencing Homelessness on One Night in January (2018 PIT Count)	515	79	299
# of Unduplicated Youth (14–24) Receiving Services (2017 HMIS Count)	528	213	700
Economic Context			
Summary	• Tight housing market • Moderate cost of housing • Low unemployment • Medium wages	• High housing availability • Low cost of housing • Medium unemployment • Low wages	• Medium housing market • Moderate cost of housing • Low unemployment • Medium wages
Rental Vacancy Rate	3.0%	7.7%	5.3%
1 Bedroom Fair Market Housing Rate	$1,420	$705	$806
Unemployment Rate	2.7%	4.2%	3.3%
Minimum Wage	$11.00	$7.30	$10.20
Contextual Challenges and Existing Resources			
Homeless Service Providers	Multiple youth-specific providers	Multiple providers, none youth-specific	Few providers, one youth-specific
Reported Challenges	High cost of living; services concentrated in Santa Rosa, transient population	Primarily faith-based shelter system; adult-oriented services, racial and economic segregation by neighborhood, lack of transportation	No existing youth-specific homeless providers; geographic isolation; lack of transportation

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. PIT = Point-In-Time.
[1] Rental vacancy rates for BOS sites represent state-level estimates from the U.S. Census Bureaus' 2018 Housing Vacancies and Homeownership statistics; all other sites reflect estimates from the largest metropolitan statistical area within the site's geographical region, except for NW Michigan and Santa Cruz, whose rental vacancies estimates reflect the state-level rates.
Sources: 2017 American Community Survey; 2018 PIT; 2017 HMIS

Geography and Population Size

Sonoma County. Sonoma County, selected as a high development peer site, is situated northwest of San Francisco. It has an overall youth population of 59,172. As measured by the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) count, the CoC had 515 youth experiencing homelessness in 2018, 86 percent of whom were unsheltered (see exhibit 8-2). The data show that, despite its high rates of unsheltered homelessness, Sonoma County served 528 youth through its homeless services systems, a comparable number of youth as in its homeless youth population.

Exhibit 8-2.   Sheltered and Unsheltered Youth Experiencing Homelessness
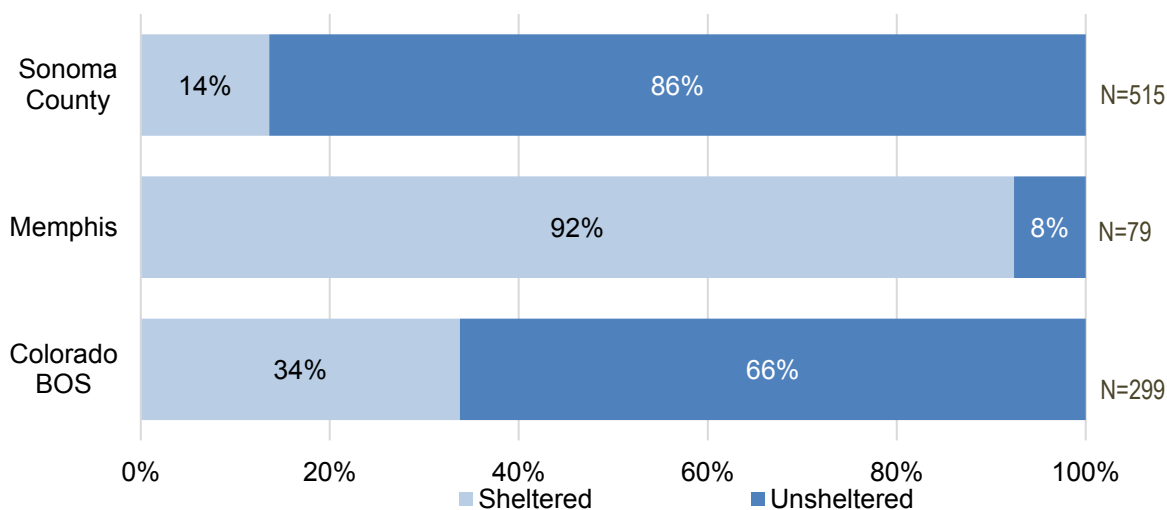
BOS = Balance of State.
Source: 2018 Point In Time Count

Of the three peer CoCs, Sonoma County has the largest population of youth experiencing homelessness. It also served a lower number of youth relative to its homeless population than the other two sites, which served more youth than are in their homeless populations. Exhibit 8-3 presents the number of youth served in the HMIS in 2017 in each of the three peer sites.

As compared with the YHDP sites, Sonoma County is most comparable to Santa Cruz and San Francisco, both in terms of population size (with youth populations of 50,566 and 80,131, respectively) and in terms of the proportion of unsheltered youth (92 and 78 percent, respectively).

Memphis. Memphis, selected as a medium development peer site, has just under 100,000 youth residents and is an urban community spread out over a wide geographic area and surrounded primarily by rural areas. It had a population of 79 youth experiencing homelessness in 2018, 8 percent of whom were unsheltered. Memphis served 213 youth in HUD-funded programs in 2017, more than twice as many as its homeless youth population.

Among the peer sites, Memphis has the smallest population of homeless youth and the smallest proportion of unsheltered youth. It serves more youth relative to the number of youth experiencing homelessness than the other two peer sites.

As compared with the YHDP sites, Memphis is most comparable in geography, population size, and proportion of unsheltered youth to Cincinnati/Hamilton County (an urban area surrounded by rural areas with a youth population of 106,575). It is also comparable in its population size to Austin/Travis County (with a youth population of 155,209) and in its proportion of unsheltered youth to Anchorage (at 3 percent).

Exhibit 8-3. **Number of Youth in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017**
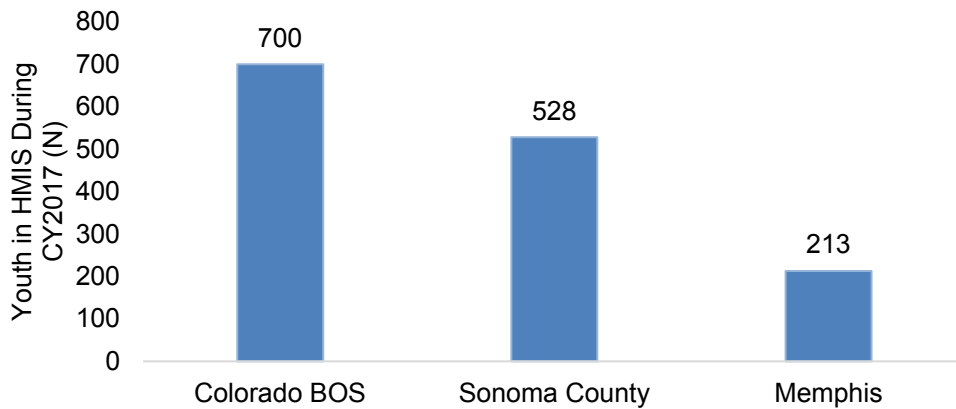
BOS = Balance of State. CY = calendar year. HMIS = Homeless Information Management System.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Colorado BOS. Colorado BOS, a peer site in the early stage of development, has an overall youth population of 737,528. Although the CoC covers 68 counties in the state, the evaluation comparison will be aligned with the CoC's YHDP application and thus limited to a portion of the CoC that includes 33 counties. The CoC is largely rural, and it is reportedly difficult to plan and administer services in a region lacking city centers and with a limited number of social service providers. Colorado BOS included 299 youth in its PIT count, 66 percent of whom were unsheltered. The CoC served more than twice as many youth in HUD-funded programs in 2017 than it counted in the 2018 PIT count.

Among the peer sites, Colorado BOS is similar to Sonoma County in the high proportion of youth experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered, but similar to Memphis in that it provides HUD-funded services to a larger number of youth that experience homelessness. Colorado BOS also served the largest number of youth of the three peer sites in the 2017 HMIS.

As compared with the YHDP sites, Colorado BOS is most similar in population size to Ohio BOS with a youth population of 925,499 and is larger than the other two BOS CoCs—Kentucky BOS and Connecticut BOS (with youth populations of 436,939 and 493,215, respectively). It has a larger proportion of unsheltered youth than other comparable sites. Its rates are higher than those of three YHDP BOS CoCs, where the proportion of unsheltered youth ranges from 17 percent (Ohio BOS) to 30 percent (Kentucky BOS), as well as the other four rural YHDP CoCs, which range from 3 percent (Anchorage) to 30 percent (Kentucky BOS). Exhibit A-2 in appendix A presents the population size for each peer CoC as well as the percentage of the youth population present in HMIS.

Economic Context

Sonoma County, like other West Coast cities, is faced with a tight rental market and rising rental costs. With a fair market housing rate of more than $1,400 for a one-bedroom apartment, a 3.0 percent vacancy rate, and a low unemployment rate, Sonoma County has one of the tightest housing markets of the CoCs in this evaluation, and on this dimension, is most like other West Coast cities in the evaluation: Seattle/King County, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz. Recently, the region has experienced natural disasters that have further impacted the cost and availability of housing across the county, including the Tubbs Fire in October 2017 that destroyed 5,200 homes, and flooding in February 2019 that damaged over 1,700 homes. Interviewees noted that both events contributed to an increased demand for housing, a decrease in rental vacancies, and rising housing costs that may disproportionally affect youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Housing is somewhat more affordable and available in Memphis, and most comparable to NW Michigan, Ohio BOS, and Cincinnati/Hamilton County. It has a 7.7 percent rental vacancy rate, and a fair market housing rate of $705 per month. Stakeholders reported there is significant racial and economic segregation between neighborhoods in the city thus limiting where youth live. Memphis's unemployment rate is 4.2 percent. It is the headquarters for FedEx, which provides employment opportunities working in warehouses for many people with limited levels of education. Interviewees, however, reported youth who may be experiencing homelessness face difficulties accepting these jobs, including limited public transportation routes operating in the evening hours, emergency shelters not available for youth who work at night and need to sleep during the day, and, for youth who are parenting, inability to secure overnight child care.

Colorado BOS has a somewhat stronger economy than the four rural YHDP CoCs; it has lower rates of rental vacancies (at 5.3 percent) and unemployment (at 3.3 percent) and a higher fair market housing rate (at $806) and minimum wage (at $10.20) than the four rural YHDP CoCs. Interviewees reported that the availability of affordable housing is affected by different issues across the state. In some locations that are becoming retirement or resort destinations, housing affordability is becoming an issue with increasing rental prices and decreasing vacancies. In other largely remote areas, interviewees reported that the available affordable housing is not up-to-code and therefore cannot be paid for through HUD vouchers.

Other Challenges

Similar to the YHDP CoCs, the three peer CoCs face other challenges that affect the population of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. For example, interviewees reported that Sonoma County is often a destination for youth drawn to the area for work harvesting marijuana. When the harvest season is over, the youth may remain without other employment or housing opportunities. Additionally, they reported that while the county covers a large geographic region, services are concentrated in Santa Rosa, where they are largely inaccessible to people who live in more remote parts of the county due to limited public transportation.

In Memphis, interviewees reported that having two mayors (one for the city of Memphis and one for Shelby County) elected for 4-year terms on alternating 2-year cycles provides a challenge to getting political support for homelessness initiatives. Additionally, interviewees

noted that most social and health services are clustered in the downtown and mid-town areas, while the need for those services is more widely distributed across the city. They reported public transportation does a poor job of connecting the places where services are located, where employment opportunities are located, and where people live.

Interviewees in Colorado BOS indicated that the CoC includes many rural frontier areas with few services and little to no public transportation available between them and roads that become impassible at certain times of the year preventing youth from accessing the services they need.

Existing Youth Resources

The three peer CoCs reflect the variability of the YHDP CoCs in terms of their existing youth resources. Sonoma County has multiple youth-specific providers and a history of working on youth homelessness for several decades. In contrast, Memphis has multiple homeless service providers but none that specifically serve youth, and the CoC has only recently begun to focus on youth as a unique population. Similarly, Colorado BOS has few homeless services providers not located in Denver or Colorado Springs, two urban areas represented by their own CoCs, and only one youth-specific provider in the 33 counties that represent the BOS region in this evaluation.

Overview of Community Response to Youth Homelessness

Below we present an overview of the community response to youth homelessness in the three peer CoCs and all other CoCs nationally, as measured through a web-based survey.

Planning and Governance

As a result of the demonstration planning process, at baseline, the YHDP CoCs all had both youth-specific governance structures and youth-specific strategic plans in place, and they all engaged youth in the governance of the CoC. The three peer CoCs also all had youth-specific planning and implementation groups in place; however, only one site had developed a strategic plan and that plan focused on all populations, not specifically on youth. All CoCs nationally were less likely than YHDP CoCs or peer CoCs to have youth-specific governance structures, yet they were more likely to have strategic plans than the peer CoCs.

Peer CoCs. Exhibit 8-4 provides an overview of the governance structure of the three peer CoCs. In Sonoma County, the CoC is led by the Sonoma County Community Development Commission. At the time of the site visit, the CoC was undergoing a reorganization to include more representation of elected officials on the CoC board. Sonoma County had not engaged in a formal strategic planning process around youth homelessness; however, it did have a CoC committee called the Homeless Youth Task Force that provided a forum for discussion on youth-specific issues. The task force began before 2015 and included representation from youth as well as youth-focused agencies and service providers. In the past, the task force had been involved in

the PIT count and youth-needs assessments. At the time of the visit, the task force had not met in several months and appeared to be at least temporarily inactive.

Exhibit 8-4.   Overview of Governance Structure for the Peer Continuums of Care

Peer CoC	CoC Lead Agency	Planning and Implementation Group	Strategic Plan
Sonoma County	Sonoma County Community Development Commission	Homeless Youth Task Force	N/A
Memphis	Community Alliance for the Homeless	Youth Committee	Mayors Committee to End Homelessness Action Plan (not youth-specific)
Colorado BOS	Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	Rural Collaborative for Runaway and Homeless Youth	Outlined strategic goals and objectives

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuums of Care. N/A = data not available.

Memphis's CoC is led by the Community Alliance for the Homeless, a nonprofit entity that provides planning, technical assistance, and service coordination to public and private agencies that are working to end homelessness in Memphis and Shelby County. The Alliance convenes the Homeless Consortium, a voluntary association that includes housing and service providers, local government, churches and faith-based organizations, mental health organizations, affordable housing developers, educational systems, medical providers, and advocates. The CoC's four-member youth committee works to identify and develop strategies to help youth experiencing homelessness access housing and services. The CoC does not have a youth-specific strategic plan. In 2011, the Mayor's Committee to End Homelessness in Memphis adopted an action plan that addressed all populations including youth, but stakeholders indicated that the plan did not guide current activities or decisions for youth.

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless leads the Colorado BOS CoC. It partners with the Colorado Rural Collaborative for Runaway and Homeless Youth to lead the work on rural youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness in the state. The Coalition is a nonprofit agency providing housing, integrated health care, and supportive services to individuals and families who are homeless in Colorado. In 2008, the Rural Collaborative was established through a 5-year Family and Youth Service Bureau demonstration grant focused on rural youth homelessness and, since that time, has partnered with the Colorado BOS CoC lead agency in doing this work. By the time of the site visit, Colorado BOS had not developed strategic planning for ending homelessness, however, it had developed a set of strategic goals and objectives that cover all populations.

All Other CoCs. As exhibit 8-5 shows, 30 percent of other CoCs reported having a governance structure specific to the homeless housing and service systems for youth, suggesting this is less common across the country than it is in the YHDP or peer CoCs. Among these, the vast majority (93 percent) report directly to the CoC board (not shown in table). For the

remaining 7 percent, the governance structure for youth homeless services was independent of the CoC board but shared information and collaborated with the CoC board.

Exhibit 8-5.   Comparison of Baseline Youth Homeless Service Systems

Governance Component	YHDP CoCs[1] (N=10)	Peer CoCs (N=3)	Other CoCs (N=305)
Youth-specific governance structure	100%	3	30%
Youth-specific strategic plan	100%	0	17%
Strategic plan that includes youth and other populations	N/A	1	39%
Youth participate in CoC governance	100%	1	35%

CoC = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] As a result of the YHDP planning process, all of the YHDP CoCs had these elements in place.
Source: 2019 Survey of CoCs conducted for the YHDP Evaluation

Only 17 percent of other CoCs reported having a strategic plan for addressing homelessness that was specific for youth and young adults, but a greater percentage (39 percent) had a plan that includes youth and young adults along with other populations. An additional 9 percent of other CoCs indicated that a strategic plan for youth was in progress at the time these data were collected.

Youth Engagement

Exhibit 8-6 details the role youth played in peer CoCs. Two of the three peer CoCs had established roles for youth in the governance of the CoC, and all three had engaged youth in the development of the YHDP applications; however, these CoCs struggled to engage and sustain youth involvement. Fewer of all other CoCs had established roles for youth in their CoCs.

Exhibit 8-6.   Youth Engagement in the Peer Continuums of Care

Peer CoC	Youth Role in CoC	Youth Role in YHDP Applications
Sonoma County	Position(s) on Homeless Youth Task Force Position for youth member on CoC board (unfilled)	YAB formed for YHDP applications
Memphis	Position on Youth Committee Position for youth member on CoC board (unfilled)	YAB formed for YHDP applications
Colorado BOS	No role in CoC governance	Sought youth input for YHDP applications from existing youth boards for other systems

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuum of Care. YAB = Youth Advisory Board. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Peer CoCs. Both Sonoma County and Memphis had a dedicated position for a youth with lived experience on their CoC boards, yet in both sites, this position was unfilled at the time of our site visits. Funding to support youth engagement activities was identified as a challenge in

both sites, and Memphis noted that identifying youth interested in serving on the board remained challenging even after offering payment for youth participation in CoC meetings.

All three peer sites worked with youth to provide input during the YHDP application process; however, they, like the YHDP CoCs, struggled to engage youth in their systems on an ongoing basis. Sonoma County formed a YAB as part of the first YHDP application process, then re-created a six-member new YAB for the second application that was active at the time of the site visit. Memphis also established a YAB for the first application, drawing on three youth who were involved with the advisory board for a LGBTQ organization that assisted youth experiencing homelessness. The YAB, however, dissolved soon after the application was submitted because it lacked an ongoing role in the CoC. Colorado BOS did not create a YAB for the COC, but it did leverage existing YABs for other systems, such as youth who have been involved in child welfare and juvenile justice, to provide input into its YHDP application.

All Other CoCs. Among other CoCs in the country, 35 percent reportedly actively included youth who have experienced homelessness in the decisionmaking process for their CoC. Twenty-four percent of CoCs had formal YABs, 12 percent included one or two individuals in CoC decisionmaking, and in 9 percent of CoCs, youth were involved in another way, such as through participation in youth counts; focus groups, surveys, and other information sharing; and other community events.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

As with the YHDP CoCs, the peer CoCs and all other CoCs had some collaboration with other youth-serving agencies, primarily child welfare and education systems. The YHDP CoCs had higher rates of cross-sector collaboration than the peer CoCs or all other CoCs, which is likely due, in part, to YHDP's encouragement to include these agencies as partners throughout the community planning process.

Exhibit 8-7.   Cross-Sector Collaboration for Peer Continuums of Care

Peer CoC	Child Welfare	Juvenile Justice	Education	Health Care	Behavioral Health
Sonoma County	●	⊙	○		
Memphis	●		○		⊙
Colorado BOS	●		⊙	○	○

BOS = Balance of State. CoC = Continuum of Care.
○ Agency representative serves on CoC/participates in system planning.
⊙ Agency representative serves on CoC/participates in planning and agency provides services or housing.
● Agency representative serves on CoC/participates in planning, agency provides services or housing, and agency shares data or blends funding.
Note: Blank cells indicate no evidence of collaboration.

Peer CoCs. The degree of cross-sector collaboration that existed between the three peer CoCs and other mainstream providers that serve youth experiencing homelessness varied across the three sites (see exhibit 8-7). All three sites had strong collaborations with child welfare agencies and some level of collaboration with education agencies. Sites varied in their

relationship with juvenile justice, healthcare, and behavioral health systems, but none were characterized as strong.

In Sonoma County, much like in many of the YHDP CoCs, collaboration was strongest with child welfare, with whom the CoC had a history of strong collaboration as part of a Sonoma County Coalition for Foster Youth. Through this coalition, the two sectors routinely meet to coordinate services and housing for youth exiting child welfare, and share data. The CoC also collaborated with education agencies, but the collaboration was largely limited to the education agencies serving on the CoC board and participating in governance. Representatives from the CoC also noted coordinating with youth-specific probation staff in the juvenile justice system to meet the needs of exiting youth.

Memphis also had a strong relationship with the local child welfare agency; the two systems have worked closely together since 2013 on an initiative to house child-welfare involved families experiencing homelessness. They routinely met and shared data. At the time of the site visit, with the receipt of a number of Family Unification Program vouchers, this collaboration had recently expanded to include youth aging out of foster care who were at risk of homelessness. Memphis also had strong partnerships with two behavioral health organizations that provided outreach and case management to homeless individuals in the community. Representatives from these organizations regularly participated in weekly housing placement meetings with the CoC leads. Representatives from Shelby County schools also participated in planning for the CoC; however, the CoC reported no collaboration with juvenile justice or health care systems.

Interviewees in Colorado BOS indicated the CoC engaged in collaboration with multiple other youth-serving agencies; however, they indicated that this collaboration was challenged, in part because the CoC is so geographically large and diverse. As observed with the YHDP sites, however, stakeholders in Colorado note that the YHDP application process, despite not resulting in funding, was a helpful tool in bringing agencies across sectors together to strategize about youth homelessness. State-level collaboration, without a special impetus, tends to focus on urban areas rather than rural communities. The state's recent efforts to address the needs of youth exiting foster care, however, has facilitated a growing partnership between Colorado BOS and the Department of Child Welfare. The two organizations are collaborating on a legislatively mandated Former Foster Care Steering Committee, which shares the goal of serving youth in care and at imminent risk for homelessness as well as those out of care who are actively homeless. Statute amendments from the state also have formalized data sharing policies so that providers have access to foster records for youth who come into contact with the homelessness service system. Colorado BOS indicated it had limited coordination with the education system, primarily receiving referrals to the homelessness system from the school districts. Representatives from healthcare and behavioral healthcare systems participate in the governance of the CoC. Stakeholders did not discuss any collaborative efforts between homeless services and the juvenile justice system.

All Other CoCs. Among all CoCs, the majority reported coordinating with child welfare, education, and behavioral health services (see exhibit 8-8). As with the YHDP CoCs, most commonly, the coordination involved representatives of these agencies serving as members of

the CoC and participating in planning for the youth homeless system. Less common were more active forms of coordination, such as blending funding and providing services and housing.

Less than one-half of other CoCs reported coordinating with the healthcare and juvenile justice systems. CoCs noted that coordination could be a challenge due to different definitions of homelessness, restrictions on how funding can be spent, and difficulty in sharing confidential data across systems.

Exhibit 8-8. Coordination with Other Systems

Types of Systems	YHDP CoCs (N=10)	Peer CoCs (N=3)	Other CoCs (N=305)
CoC coordinates with			
Child welfare	100%	2	66%
Education	90%	3	87%
Juvenile justice	80%	0	37%
Behavioral health services	70%	1	67%
Healthcare system	40%	0	39%

CoC = Continuum of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2019 Survey of CoCs conducted for the YHDP Evaluation

Components and Status of Youth Homeless Service Systems

Level of Baseline System Development

As exhibit 8-9 indicates, the distribution of peer CoCs and all other CoCs along the level of development of their baseline systems was similar to the distribution of the YHDP CoCs. The peer sites were intentionally selected to include one high, one medium, and one early development system at baseline. Among other CoCs, less than one-fourth of CoCs had highly developed youth service systems that include outreach, coordinated entry, housing and services for youth. Forty percent among other CoCs had medium developed systems with outreach and coordinated entry for youth in place, and either youth-specific housing or services and 37 percent were in the early stages of development, without outreach and coordinated entry for youth fully implemented. Below, we discuss the components of these baseline systems in greater detail.

Exhibit 8-9. Comparison of Level of Baseline System Development

Status of Systems	YHDP CoCs (N=10)	Peer CoCs (N=3)	Other CoCs (N=305)
High development	30%	1	23%
Medium development	30%	1	40%
Early development	40%	1	37%

CoCs = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2019 survey of CoCs conducted for the YHDP evaluation

Summary of Baseline Status

The baseline status of various components of youth homeless systems of the peer CoCs and all CoCs in the country was similar to those of the YHDP CoCs (see exhibit 8-10). Across all groups, at baseline, services commonly in place included coordinated entry, outreach services, and family and natural support services, education and employment services that served youth with at least 7 of the 10 YHDP sites, two of the three peer sites, and three-fourths of all other CoCs having these services implemented. Across the three groups, diversion services were among the least likely to be implemented prior to the demonstration. The 10 YHDP CoCs and 3 peer CoCs were more likely to have shelter, transitional housing, and other housing for youth implemented than other CoCs.

Exhibit 8-10. Comparison of Youth Homeless Service System Components

Service	YHDP CoCs (N=10)	Peer CoCs (N=3)	Other CoCs (N=305)
Prevention	70%	3	61%
Diversion	50%	1	49%
Outreach	70%	2	76%
Coordinated entry	80%	2	74%
Navigation services	70%	1	76%
Family and natural support services	80%	3	76%
Shelter	80%	3	60%
Transitional Housing	80%	3	66%
Other Housing	80%	2	65%
Employment assistance	100%	3	78%

CoCs = Continuums of Care. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] The order of services is presented from the highest percent reporting fully or partially implemented to lowest, followed by shelter and housing services.
Source: 2019 survey of CoCs conducted for the YHDP Evaluation

Sonoma County. At baseline, Sonoma County had in place outreach services, coordinated entry, housing for youth, and other services tailored for youth. Youth could receive outreach services from a youth-specific provider through a Homeless Outreach and Services Team (HOST) program, funded by the City of Santa Rosa. Services included helping youth obtain identification, fill out employment applications, get new clothes, find housing, and meet their educational goals. Additionally, there were two youth-specific drop-in centers in the county where youth could access assistance, including one for minors. Sonoma County operated coordinated entry for all populations with youth-specific access points provided by youth providers.

Sonoma County included in its portfolio 31 youth-specific shelter beds as well as transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing for youth.

Additional services available included a range of prevention and diversion services, including the Upstream Investments Initiative, operated by the Human Services Department that promoted evidence-informed practices and prevention-oriented strategies throughout the county's services, specific prevention services for youth in foster care. A diversion script was

used in coordinated entry and outreach, and diversion case management services for youth were available from one youth provider.

Two new state-wide initiatives will increase the resources available for youth in Sonoma. Sonoma County received a $12 million Homelessness Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) grant from the State of California. Interviewees report about $200,000 of this will be used specifically for youth prevention activities. Sonoma County will invest additional resources in diversion, outreach, shelter, and housing for all populations, including youth. Additionally, the county received a $3.5 million state grant under the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention (HHAP) program. The county plans to use the funding, along with other sources, to continue the operation of programs and initiatives funded through HEAP.

Memphis. In Memphis, street outreach was available for all populations, as was a drop-in center where youth could access assistance with identification, hygiene products, bus passes, computers, case management, and a temporary address. Memphis operated two coordinated entry systems, one for families with children and one for individuals. Youth, 18 years and older, could be assessed and access services from either system.

At baseline, there were few crisis housing and permanent housing resources for youth. Faith-based providers operated an emergency shelter for all populations, and, according to stakeholders, was not youth-friendly, especially for LGBTQ youth. At the time of our visit, our emergency shelter beds were allocated for minors and a youth provider was about to break ground on a facility that would include six shelter units for LGBTQ youth as well as a drop-in center. Additionally, there were three units of rapid re-housing for LGBTQ youth with plans to expand to additional units.

Prevention assistance, including case management and financial assistance that could be used for housing, was largely limited to youth exiting foster care though Tennessee's Extended Foster Care program. Employment services were available through WIOA services, and mental health and substance abuse services were available for youth through two large mainstream providers.

Colorado BOS. At the time of our visit, coordinated entry was in the planning stage for all populations. The CoC was exploring regional approaches to coordinated entry that would allow people to receive assistance in the communities in which they present. There were limited outreach services available throughout the CoC, including street outreach and school-based outreach in some counties. Similarly, there were drop-in centers throughout the CoC, but few for youth outside of large urban areas, such as Denver.

There were few crisis housing and permanent housing options for youth in the CoC. Across the 56 counties, there were only 22 emergency shelter beds for youth, 26 units of transitional housing for youth, and two units of rapid re-housing for youth. The Rural Collaborative for Runaway and Homeless Youth was developing a host homes program for child-welfare involved youth who were at risk of homelessness.

Prevention and case management services were largely limited to standard exit planning assistance provided to youth transitioning out of child welfare. Some youth-specific employment and behavioral health services were available throughout the CoC.

All Other CoCs. As exhibit 8-10 indicates, the vast majority of CoCs (95 percent) reported having at least one service area for youth implemented. Three-fourths of CoCs reported that each of the following components are in place for youth: coordinated entry, outreach, case management or navigation services, family and natural support services, and education and employment. Prevention and diversion for youth were the least likely to be in place.

Description of the Population of Youth Served at Baseline

Characteristics of Youth Served

Exhibit 8-11 shows the characteristics of youth ages 14–24 served by HUD-funded programs in 2017 in the three peer CoCs and compares the cross-site average for the peer CoCs to that of the YHDP CoCs. Overall, the characteristics of youth served in the three peer CoCs were comparable to those of youth served in the YHDP CoCs with a few exceptions. The average age of youth in the peer sites, ranged between 21 and 22 years of age, on average, though Colorado BOS did serve fewer minors than the other two sites. Both Sonoma and Colorado BOS served a higher proportion of males than females, which was true in only one of the YHDP sites. In Memphis, females were disproportionately likely to be served, making up 85 percent of the youth served.

Exhibit 8-11. Characteristics of Youth in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

Characteristics	YHDP Site Total	Peer Site Total	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
HMIS (N)	**18,387**	**1,441**	**528**	**213**	**700**
Age					
Minors (<18 years of age)	9%	5%	9%	9%	<1%
18+ years of age	91%	95%	91%	91%	99%
Average age (in years)	21	21	21	22	21
Gender					
Male	42%	47%	50%	12%	56%
Female	56%	51%	47%	85%	43%
Transgender/gender non-conforming	1%	1%	3%	2%	<1%
Unreported	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	0%
Race					
White	38%	60%	57%	3%	80%
Black	33%	20%	8%	94%	6%
AI/AN	3%	8%	12%	0%	8%
Asian	1%	1%	3%	0%	<1%
Hawaiian/PI	1%	1%	<1%	0%	<1%
Multiracial	7%	8%	17%	1%	4%
Unreported/Other	17%	2%	2%	1%	2%
% Hispanic	15%	26%	32%	1%	29%
Household characteristics					
% enrolled with children	21%	14%	6%	71%	17%
% enrolled with spouse/partner	4%	4%	2%	2%	6%
% enrolled with other household member	1%	1%	<1%	5%	<1%
Disabling conditions and family violence					
% w/ mental health condition	23%	24%	41%	–	12%
% w/ chronic health condition	7%	10%	16%	–	6%
% w/ substance abuse problem	11%	12%	24%	–	3%
% w/ family violence history	16%	20%	29%	–	14%
Income and benefits					
% with income from earnings	13%	16%	23%	–	11%
% with income only from other source	2%	11%	10%	–	11%
Average income (for those with income)	$904	$930	$1,096	–	$736
Received SNAP, WIC, or TANF	18%	30%	27%	–	32%

AI = American Indian. AN = Alaska Native. BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. PI = Pacific Islander. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 HMIS.

The three peer sites served a higher proportion of youth identifying as White than the YHDP sites, with the majority of youth in Sonoma County and Colorado BOS identifying as White. Yet, as with YHDP sites, youth identifying as Black and American Indian/Alaska Native were disproportionately represented in HMIS. Black youth made up the vast majority of youth in Memphis. Approximately one-third of youth in Sonoma County and Colorado BOS identified as Hispanic, more than most YHDP sites except Austin/Travis County and Santa Cruz. Exhibit A-4 in appendix A presents the population characteristics in the peer CoCs according to ACS.

The household composition of youth in the three peer sites varied. The percent of youth with children in Sonoma County and Colorado BOS were comparable to those observed across the YHDP sites, while 71 percent of youth in Memphis enrolled in the system with children. Memphis's homeless services did not include many resources for youth; most of the housing assistance that was available is for homeless families. Additional information about youth's household composition is presented in exhibit A-6 in appendix A.

Compared with youth in the YHDP sites, youth in the three peer sites have comparable rates of disabling conditions and experience with family violence. Mental health conditions were especially prevalent in Sonoma County and more commonly reported than among all other sites, with 40 percent of youth reporting a condition. Memphis was unable to extract data about the rates of disabling conditions from its HMIS for this analysis.[18]

Youth in Colorado BOS and Sonoma County reported receiving comparable rates of income to youth in six of the YHDP sites, with 22 percent and 33 percent of youth having income, respectively. Youth with income in Sonoma County reported a similar average monthly total income ($1,096) to youth in Anchorage, Austin/Travis County, Santa Cruz, and Seattle/King County. Youth with income in Colorado BOS reported similar average incomes ($736) to youth in Connecticut BOS and Cincinnati/Hamilton County. In both sites, the income received by youth was less than the fair market rent (see exhibit 8-12). Receipt of non-cash benefits in Colorado BOS and Sonoma County were comparable to the five YHDP CoCs reporting the highest rates of receipt, with more than one-fourth of youth receiving benefits. Memphis was unable to extract data about income and benefit receipt from its HMIS for this analysis. Rates of benefit receipt among youth with children in presented in exhibit A-8 in appendix A.

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[18]Memphis changed HMIS vendors during the evaluation period. Following the migration of files to the new platform, information about clients' income, benefits, disabling conditions (for example, mental health conditions), and domestic violence history was no longer linked to unique client identifications. Memphis's HMIS administrator was pursuing a resolution to this situation that would allow us to include these data in future analyses.

Exhibit 8-12. Comparison of Average Monthly Income and Fair Market Rent
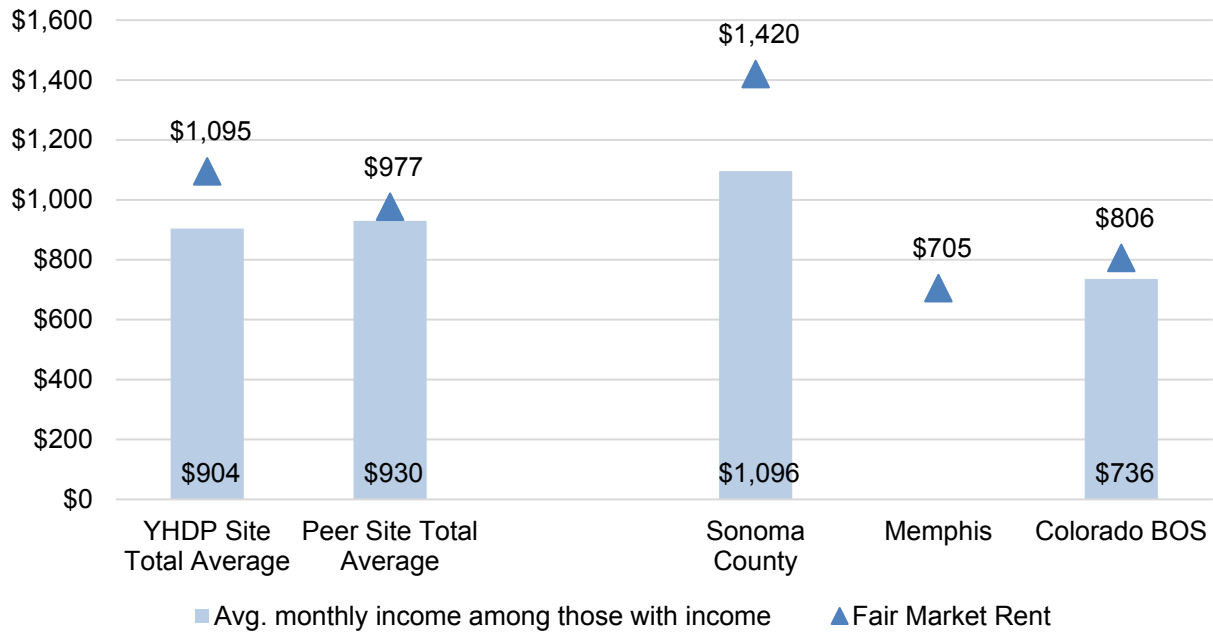
BOS = Balance of State. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Note: Memphis was unable to extract data about the rates of disabling conditions from its HMIS for this analysis.
Sources: 2017 Homeless Management Information System; 2017 HUD Fair Market Rent.

Service Receipt among Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Type of Services Received. Exhibit 8-13 presents the rate of receipt of services and housing among youth in the three peer CoCs. Among the two sites that had implemented coordinated entry prior to 2018, enrollment was significantly lower than in the YHDP sites, with 13 percent of youth in Sonoma County and 9 percent of youth in Memphis receiving it.

Exhibit 8-13. Services Received by Youth in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

HMIS Program	YHDP Site Total	Peer Site Total	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
HMIS (N)	18,387	1,441	528	213	700
Coordinated entry	41%	12%	13%	8%	–
Homelessness prevention	5%	6%	6%	4%	7%
Street outreach	13%	22%	35%	0%	20%
Day shelter	6%	2%	5%	0%	0%
Services only or other services	13%	30%	28%	18%	36%
Emergency shelter	36%	37%	37%	42%	36%
Transitional housing	6%	6%	7%	15%	3%
Rapid Re-housing	7%	10%	5%	47%	2%
Permanent housing (only or with services)	1%	2%	6%	0%	<1%
Permanent supportive housing	3%	2%	4%	5%	<1%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Information Management System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Receipt of prevention services and day shelter in the three peer CoCs was comparable to the rate of receipt in the YHDP CoCs; however, receipt of street outreach and services only were significantly more common in the peer sites than in the YHDP sites. More than one-third of youth in Sonoma received street outreach in 2017. This was significantly more than across all YHDP sites, with the exception of San Francisco. Twenty percent of youth in Colorado BOS received street outreach. Utilization of services only in all three peer sites was higher than in most of the YHDP sites, except Santa Cruz.

The rates of receipt of shelter and housing services in the three peer CoCs were comparable, in most cases, to the YHDP CoCs. About one-third of youth in the peer sites received emergency shelter, similar to the YHDP sites. Youth in Colorado BOS and Sonoma County also had similar rates of receipt of transitional housing and permanent housing/permanent supportive housing. Youth in Memphis, however, were more likely to receive transitional housing and rapid re-housing than youth in the YHDP sites or in the other peer sites.

Length of Stay. The average lengths of stay across shelter and housing types was significantly shorter in the three peer CoCs than in the 10 YHDP CoCs, for all types of assistance except permanent supportive housing (see exhibit 8-14). Youth at the peer sites stayed in emergency shelter an average of 42 days, as compared with 57 days for YHDP sites, though the three peer sites differ significantly from one another. Lengths of stay in rapid re-housing ranged from 98 days (or 3 months) in Memphis to 137 days (or 4.5 months) in Colorado BOS. Stays in transitional housing were, on average, about 53 days shorter in the peer sites than in the YHDP sites. Youth stays in permanent housing and permanent supportive housing averaged 129 days

and 792 days. Due to very low sample sizes, caution should be made in drawing conclusions from these numbers.

Exhibit 8-14. Average Length of Stay (in Days) in Shelter and Housing Programs Among Youth in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

HMIS Program	YHDP Site Total	Peer Site Total	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
HMIS (N)	17,081[1]	741[1]	528	213	700
Emergency shelter	(N=5,732) 57	(N=269) 42	(N=186) 48	(N=83) 27	(N=252) 87
Transitional housing	(N=601) 208	(N=40) 155	(N=19) 206	(N=21) 108	(N=21) 195
Rapid Re-housing	(N=536) 173	(N=76) 99	(N=4) 125	(N=72) 98	(N=14) 137
Permanent housing (only or with services)	(N=26) 308	(N=3) 129	(N=3) 129	–	(N=1) 364
Permanent supportive housing	(N=110) 636	(N=5) 792	(N=4) 874	(N=1) 468	(N=1) 46

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] Because Colorado BOS provided aggregate data, the length of stay calculations are not limited to youth who exited programs during 2017. Therefore, the cross-site averages exclude Colorado's estimates.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Exits to Permanent Housing. The rates of exit to permanent housing among youth served in the three peer CoCs were also similar to that of the demonstration CoCs (see exhibit 8-15). Across the sites, only 7 percent of youth exited to permanent housing from street outreach (as compared with 6 percent among the YHDP CoCs). One-fourth of youth exited from emergency shelter to permanent housing, but as in the YHDP CoCs, this rate varied significantly across sites. About one-half of youth in Memphis exited to permanent housing from shelter, compared with 28 percent of youth in Sonoma County and only 15 percent of youth in Colorado BOS.

One-half of the youth served by transitional housing exited to permanent housing, similar to the YHDP CoCs, with nearly all youth served in Colorado BOS and fewer than one-third of youth in Sonoma County doing so. Finally, rates of exit to permanent housing from permanent housing programs were higher among the three peer CoCs at 66 percent than among the demonstration CoCs at 51 percent.

Exhibit 8-15. Rates of Exit to Permanent Housing Among Youth in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

HMIS Program Exits	YHDP Site Total	Peer Site Total	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
HMIS (N)	**18,387**	**1,441**	**528**	**213**	**700**
% Exit to PH from any street outreach, shelter, or housing program types	(N=10,371) 32%	(N=976) 27-30%	(N=366) 32%	(N=183) 59%	(N=427) 9-17%
% exit from street outreach	(N=2,392) 6%	(N=323) 7%	(N=183) 13%	–	(N=140) 0%
'% exit from emergency shelter	(N=6,578) 30%	(N=537) 25%	(N=195) 28%	(N=90) 47%	(N=252) 15%
% exit from transitional housing	(N=1,106) 47%	(N=91) 47%	(N=38) 29%	(N=32) 41%	(N=21) 91%
% exit from permanent housing	(N=1,849) 51%	(N=202) 66%	(N=77) 42%	(N=111) 83%	(N=14) 72%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. PH = public housing.
   YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] Rate of exit from any street outreach, shelter, or housing program types was unavailable for Colorado BOS, thus we calculated a range of the minimum to maximum possible exit rates.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Implications

The comparisons presented here offer some implications for the evaluation. As shown, the 10 YHDP CoCs were comparable to the 3 matched peer CoCs and all other CoCs in terms of their status of their baseline systems. Thus, an examination of changes over time in these two comparison groups will provide insight into the role played by the YHDP demonstration in changing the youth homeless service systems in the 10 demonstration communities. In fact, there is some evidence that the demonstration has already had an effect on the governance and planning of the funded CoCs. At the time of this data collection, the YHDP CoCs were more likely than other CoCs to have youth-specific planning and implementation groups in place, to involve youth in the governance of the CoC, and to collaborate with other youth-serving systems, such as child welfare and juvenile justice—components that were required by the demonstration. It will be important for the evaluation to consider whether CoCs that are participating in subsequent rounds of the YHDP are similar to all un-funded CoCs or whether they have different patterns of change that may be attributable to the YHDP funding or technical assistance.

There are also some key ways that the comparison groups are distinct from the YHDP CoCs. For example, Colorado BOS's area of focus covers a much larger geographic territory than the YHDP CoCs, including 33 rural counties in the state. Additionally, Memphis's baseline

system serves a higher proportion of families than the YHDP CoCs, so the youth in its HMIS are disproportionately likely to be female and to have children. Our analyses will track these differences and consider the ways that they may influence the changes we find over time.

Section IX: Summary of Baseline Findings and Implications for the Evaluation

This section summarizes the key baseline findings from the cross-site evaluation of round one of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) and discusses the implications for the evaluation of YHDP's implementation and outcomes. The evaluation examines 10 sites with diverse settings and with youth homelessness systems that range in level of development. In doing so, it offers a learning opportunity to identify how these systems can be shaped most effectively to prevent and end youth homelessness.

Baseline Findings

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Sites Have Diverse Settings, but Youth Experience Common Challenges

For round one of the demonstration, HUD awarded funds to 10 Continuums of Care (CoCs) to develop and implement coordinated community approaches to preventing and ending youth homelessness. The sites include a diverse set of CoCs in terms of their geography, urban versus rural status, the size of the youth homeless population, economic climate, and other aspects of the setting that are key to understanding differences in implementation and outcome. Sites range from densely populated urban areas with high costs of housing and low unemployment (as in San Francisco and Seattle/King County) to economically depressed, geographically remote sites with small populations spread over large areas (as in Kentucky Balance of State [BOS] and Ohio BOS). The number of youth experiencing homelessness in each CoC, as measured by the sites' Point In Time (PIT) counts, ranges from as few as 18 in NW Michigan to close to 1,500 in San Francisco and Seattle/King County.

Despite having very different economic climates, youth across sites face similar challenges. The lack of affordable housing is a challenge in almost all sites—including both sites with high rents and low vacancies and those that are more affordable but which lack housing stock. Interviewees reported that finding employment is challenging for youth both in the economically depressed sites and in the sites with more robust economies. Youth in focus groups in both settings relayed a sense of hopelessness that their situations will ever be different.

Despite these differences in setting, youth across all sites (both YHDP round one sites and three peer sites matched to the round one sites on their level of system development) identified similar factors that contributed to their homelessness. Family conflict and tumultuous home environments were among the most common causes of youth's homelessness cited. Some youth indicated their families rejected them because they were pregnant or because they identified as LGBTQ. In focus groups, some youth cited family financial issues, mental health and substance abuse problems, and overall poverty as contributors to their homelessness. The role that family factors play in contributing to youth homelessness suggests that efforts to

prevent youth homelessness warrant integration of early intervention with families into sites' coordinated responses when possible.

These contextual factors are important to consider because they affect not only what YHDP project sites are implementing but also what they will be able to achieve during the demonstration. As the demonstration progresses, it will be key to understand how these differences in baseline status affect each site's implementation of systems change and outcomes.

Planning, Structure, and Technical Assistance Helped Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Sites Develop Youth-Focused Governance Structures

The foundation of YHDP is a coordinated community plan, which CoCs developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from local government, youth and non-youth homeless services providers, behavioral health providers, child welfare agencies, school districts, and youth with lived experience. YHDP was the impetus for most sites to form youth-specific planning and implementation groups and develop youth-specific strategic plans. Some sites have indicated they plan to maintain their new youth-focused governance structures following the demonstration, while others plan to dissolve the new bodies and incorporate youth efforts into the larger CoC body of work. One area for the evaluation to track will be whether this latter group of sites sustains a focus on youth or whether sites that maintain a separate, dedicated group fare better in maintaining a youth focus over time.

Technical assistance providers played a central role in helping sites develop their plans, determine which projects to include, develop policies and procedures around projects, and understand HUD regulations (such as, which projects could be funded) and apply for waivers, as needed. They also played an important role in helping sites with other challenges they were facing, such as outlining policies and procedures around new youth projects (like rapid re-housing and host homes), developing youth governance structures and engaging youth in the process, and identifying partners in other sectors with whom to collaborate.

Many CoCs experienced difficulties convening a community of partners to develop and govern the plan as required by YHDP. Some lead agencies, particularly youth-providers designated to lead the effort, initially operated as if they would receive all of the funding and have sole authority on how to spend it. Other sites, led by the CoC lead agency, struggled with how to incorporate providers into the process. Interviewees from sites with a large number of youth providers reportedly encountered initial challenges in determining the role that providers should play in developing the plans and selecting projects to be funded. In some sites, early in the planning process, providers believed they were excluded from the process, and in others, community planning participants felt providers were advocating for projects that would benefit their own agencies rather that what was best for the CoC as a whole.

Many sites also struggled with knowing how to engage community partners from other sectors, either because they had difficulty identifying who to engage from partner agencies or persuading those identified to commit the time and energy to a lengthy planning process without additional funding support or other resources. Working with mainstream agencies was generally limited to representatives from those agencies serving on the CoC or participating in planning.

Education agencies were the exception in that they also coordinated services (for example, outreach and prevention) with the homeless system in seven sites—likely due to having McKinney-Vento support. Blending funding or sharing data across systems were less common, in part, due to policies that restrict this kind of collaboration.

Over time, however, all YHDP CoCs reported coordinating with other sectors, including child welfare, education, and a range of other agencies. Stronger collaboration occurred with agencies that either have identified housing stability as an issue for the youth they serve (for example, child welfare and behavioral health agencies), have designated staff to address those issues (for example, McKinney-Vento liaisons in schools), or have a history of engaging in collaboration with the CoC prior to the demonstration. All CoCs outlined plans to increase cross-sector collaboration in their coordinated community plans. A few CoCs are using YHDP funds for specific projects that encourage collaboration through interagency teams. The evaluation will track whether these teams strengthen cross-sector collaboration during the demonstration, sustain collaboration once the demonstration has ended, or spur other interagency work in the community.

Youth engagement in planning and decisionmaking, required as part of the demonstration, increased in the YHDP sites to a greater degree than in peer sites and sites nationally. The process of engagement, however, faced challenges in almost every site and limited the initial effectiveness of the youth advisory boards (YABs). Many of the CoCs had previously engaged youth in advisory boards, advocacy efforts, and decisionmaking in limited roles; however, none of the sites included youth in decisionmaking for the CoC as a whole. Almost all CoCs struggled with recruiting, engaging, and sustaining YABs. In some sites, youth did not have an adequate background on how services and housing worked and consequently were unable to contribute to the planning discussions. In other sites, YABs initially lacked adequate structure or leadership. Engaging with youth was further challenged in the more rural sites, due to the difficulty of finding ways for members to regularly meet together because of vast distances and limited public transportation.

Over time and with technical assistance from both the site-specific providers and True Colors United, the YHDP sites learned that creating a meaningful role for youth required more deliberate preparation, structure, and support. Two sites contracted with external agencies with expertise working with youth experiencing homelessness to manage the YAB, including providing background information on the system to youth and helping them to set priorities for their work. Other sites relied on community volunteers, CoC lead agency staff, and providers to help the YAB members identify and fill specific leadership roles within YABs, arrange meeting times and locations, and set meeting agendas. With this type of support, YABs reportedly became more involved and integrated in the planning process and often played a significant role in determining what projects to include and how to implement them.

Sites reported that both the longer- and shorter-term technical assistance they received was helpful in increasing their capacity to develop and implement coordinated community plans. Multiple sites, however, noted that having more on-site or local technical assistance from providers familiar with their CoCs would have been helpful and that it would have been more helpful to receive the short-term technical assistance earlier in the planning process.

At baseline, the sites' ability to use data to guide decisionmaking was quite variable. Some sites had well-developed Homeless Management Information Systems (HMISs), had engaged in concerted efforts to improve their youth PIT counts, and have participated in other initiatives, such as Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count, to better understand the size, characteristics, and needs of youth in their communities. Other sites' ability to use HMIS or PIT data to guide decisionmaking was more limited because there were few HUD-funded or Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) providers within their CoCs entering data into HMIS and their annual PIT counts yielded low numbers of youth who were literally homeless. Limited data sharing with other sectors also made it challenging for CoCs to accurately identify the number of youth in those systems experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The sites all received technical assistance from The Partnership Center to improve their data systems and to modify their HMIS systems to capture and report data on new YHDP programs; however, these efforts were in the early stages at the time of the evaluation's baseline data collection. All sites additionally proposed continuous quality improvement plans targeting their data systems and use of data to monitor the implementation of YHDP projects. It is too soon to determine whether the more data-developed sites be better-positioned than less data-developed sites to use data-driven decisionmaking to apply mid-course corrections in the implementation of their coordinated community plans.

Sites' Baseline Level of System Development Influences How They Approach the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

The CoCs ranged considerably in the extent to which they had systems components in place prior to the demonstration to serve youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Three sites had highly developed systems at baseline, with a range of services and supports tailored for youth and prior histories of participating in youth homelessness initiatives. Three sites had medium-developed systems with some core components in place, but generally with few services tailored specifically for youth. The remaining four sites were in the early stages of development prior to the demonstration, having fewer services available and, generally, few providers focused on youth.

All sites are investing in a range of interventions to build stronger systems of services and housing for youth, but the type and number of other YHDP-funded services being implemented largely depends on the sites' baseline level of development. More highly developed systems with fully-implemented coordinated entry systems and youth-specific outreach, housing, and services are using the demonstration resources to refine their systems. These sites are investing not only in housing, but in diversion assistance to limit the number of youth entering the homeless service system, as well as navigation services to connect youth to the housing and resources they need.

In contrast, systems with fewer service components in place at baseline tend to be implementing a wider range of projects. These sites are using YHDP funds to invest in permanent housing and navigation services, but also to enhance their coordinated entry systems with youth-specific processes and procedures, develop or enhance outreach programs for youth and establish drop-in locations where youth can be engaged in services.

Regardless of their baseline level of system development, however, all 10 sites are using YHDP funds to increase access to housing for youth. All 10 sites are expanding upon existing rapid re-housing or developing new rapid re-housing projects, often with timelines for rental assistance and case management that are longer than those typically used with adult populations. Five sites also are implementing host home projects; in some sites these are for specific populations with a high need for housing, while in other sites, where lack of available housing stock is a problem, they are available to all youth. Two sites are using YHDP funds to create blended transitional housing/rapid re-housing programs in which youth can move from transitional housing to permanent housing with rental assistance and case management support. Another site is using all of its YHDP housing funds for a progressive engagement approach in which the amount of rental assistance provided is initially small but increases if and when additional assistance is needed.

Few sites have YHDP-funded projects to increase access to mainstream services, despite the fact that the coordination with mainstream service systems was limited across all sites at baseline. A few sites aimed to increase youth's access to mainstream services through referrals through coordinated entry, diversion, and systems navigators, but these are not supported with YHDP funds, and the mechanisms through which this will be accomplished have not been clearly specified. No site is using YHDP funds for employment projects, and only one site is proposing a funded behavioral health intervention.

All YHDP sites faced challenges in serving youth at baseline, regardless of their level of systems development. Interviewees indicated that they struggled with identifying and engaging youth in services, while youth reported they did not know what type of assistance was available or where to go to get it. Where coordinated entry systems were in place, providers reported that they were not always youth-friendly. Coordinated entry assessment tools reportedly did not capture the relevant information needed to serve youth or prioritized homeless youth over those who were in other dangerous situations, including unsafe doubled up situations at risk of sexual abuse, violence, sex trafficking, substance abuse, and other dangers. The CoCs struggled with the lack of youth-specific shelter and housing resources to offer youth needing assistance; adult shelters were not safe and welcoming, and youth were often not eligible or prioritized for adult housing programs. Moreover, the HMIS data indicate that emergency shelter was the primary method of serving youth across the sites, yet less than one-third of youth exited from emergency shelter to permanent housing, suggesting that these interventions need to be more effectively paired with housing. Higher rates of youth exited from transitional housing, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, or other permanent housing to permanent housing; however, in all sites, small percentages of youth received those types of assistance. Additionally, there were limited mainstream services aimed specifically at youth to address employment or behavioral health needs. Finally, sites faced challenges in serving minors because there are often state-level restrictions on the types of assistance minors could receive.

Continuums of Care Without Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Support Are Similar at Baseline to Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Sites Before Implementation, Except in Governance and Youth Involvement

Data on the two comparison groups, the three peer sites, and the national comparison of all CoCs will help inform understanding of the role of YHDP in improving the planning, implementation, and outcomes of systems designed to prevent and end youth homelessness.

The data from this initial round of data collection suggest that the early planning focus of YHDP on developing governance structure and engaging youth in the process has led to stronger youth-specific and youth-engaged governance structures than would have occurred without the YHDP. All three peer CoCs had youth-specific committees or workgroups in place, but only one (Memphis) had developed a strategic plan for addressing homelessness, and that was for all populations, not specifically for youth. Similarly, 30 percent of other CoCs reported having a governance structure for youth in place, and approximately 50 percent had a strategic plan for addressing homelessness that was specific to youth or included them along with other populations.

Additionally, all three peer CoCs worked with youth to provide input during the YHDP application process, but, at the time of the site visits, none of the peer CoCs had an active YAB despite an interest in integrating youth into their governance. Among other CoCs in the country, 35 percent reportedly actively included youth who have experienced homelessness in the decisionmaking process for their CoC.

The baseline data also indicate that the YHDP systems are similar to those in the three peer sites and all CoCs. This baseline comparability between the comparison groups and the YHDP sites is important as it allows the evaluation to have a stronger basis for understanding the role that YHDP has in facilitating implementation of coordinated responses to and effecting changes in youth homelessness.

The three peer CoCs were intentionally selected to include sites that represented different stages of development. These sites were similar to the YHDP sites in each stage of development, although each also had important differences that need to be considered in the evaluation.

- At baseline, Sonoma County, which was selected as a high-development site, had outreach services for youth in place, coordinated entry for all populations including youth-specific access points, youth-specific shelter and housing, and other services, including prevention and diversion, case management/navigation, and family intervention services tailored for youth.

- In Memphis, which was selected as a medium-development site, youth largely accessed services through programs that were aimed at adults or all populations. Memphis operated street outreach services and coordinated entry for all populations. The majority of shelter and housing resources available were for adult or family populations, reflected in the proportion of youth with children in the 2017 HMIS. Prevention assistance was limited to youth exiting foster care. Additionally, employment services and behavioral health services were available for youth through mainstream providers that served all populations.

- At baseline, the Colorado BOS was in the early stages of development. Coordinated entry was being developed for all populations, and there were limited outreach services and few shelter and housing resources for youth. Other services, such as prevention and case management, were largely available only for specific populations of youth such as those exiting child welfare. Interviewees indicated it was difficult to plan and administer services in such a large rural region lacking city centers and with a limited number of social service providers.

The YHDP CoCs were also similar to all other CoCs in the country in terms of the system components most and least developed. Across all other CoCs, most indicated they had either fully or partially implemented coordinated entry for youth, youth-specific outreach, case management or navigation services, family and natural support services, and education and employment services for youth. Prevention and diversion for youth were least likely to be in place. In at least one-half of the CoCs, however, none of the service components were fully implemented for youth. Compared with the YHDP CoCs, a smaller percentage of all other CoCs nationally had shelter, transitional housing, or other types of housing for youth implemented.

As with the YHDP CoCs, the degree of cross-sector collaboration that existed within the CoCs in the three peer sites and nationally varied considerably. The 10 YHDP CoCs had higher rates of coordination with child welfare and juvenile justice, as well as education and behavioral health services than the peer CoCs or all other CoCs; this difference is likely due, in part, to the demonstration program, which encouraged such partnerships throughout the community planning process.

Across CoCs, the majority reported coordinating with child welfare, education, and behavioral health services. Coordination most commonly involved representatives of these systems serving as members of the CoC and participating in planning for the youth homeless system. Less common were more active forms of collaboration, such as blending funding and providing services and housing. Coordination with the healthcare and juvenile justice systems was less common in all sites than coordination with the child welfare, education, and behavioral health agencies. CoCs noted that coordination with mainstream systems can be a challenge due to different definitions of homelessness, restrictions on how funding can be spent, and difficulty in sharing confidential data across systems.

As noted, these two points of comparison—the peer sites and the data on all CoCs nationally—will provide an opportunity to compare patterns of change in the YHDP CoCs over the course of the demonstration to other CoCs not receiving the YHDP resources. They may also provide an opportunity to understand strategies other CoCs develop to prevent and end youth homelessness without additional funding or technical assistance.

Implications for the Evaluation

Importance of Baseline Starting Point

Because the 10 YHDP sites are starting at different points, they have different capacities for change over the course of the demonstration. Systems in the early stages of development have

more room for improvement over time compared with more highly developed systems. If the coordinated community plans are implemented as designed, all 10 of the YHDP sites will be highly developed systems at the end of the demonstration, providing outreach for youth, coordinated entry with youth-specific processes and procedures, youth-specific housing resources, and other services tailored to youth. Therefore, it will be key for the evaluation to use different lenses across sites to measure change over time. In sites in which services and supports did not exist at baseline, the implementation of those systems components will indicate improvement. In systems where services already existed and are being refined, the evaluation will have to consider whether the systems are serving youth better—identifying and engaging more youth, demonstrating greater coordination between providers, and better allocating assistance to level of need, in addition to capturing changes in the size, characteristics, and outcomes of youth receiving assistance. Having peer sites matched to the initial level of system development as well as having groups of CoCs identified at these three different stages of development should help provide a more sensitive gauge for understanding the types of changes that are occurring in this range of sites with and without YHDP involvement.

Documenting Lessons Learned in Systems Development, Service Intervention, and Housing Provision

The sites are serving as laboratories not only for understanding the development and implementation of coordinated youth systems, but also for understanding how specific services may effectively address the needs of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The evaluation provides an opportunity to understand how programs, such as coordinated entry and rapid re-housing, can be effectively tailored for youth. It also offers an opportunity to understand how innovative services, such as diversion, host homes, and systems navigation, work to better serve youth. The evaluation will track the implementation of all YHDP-funded projects, but there are a few projects in particular that may provide insight into how services and housing can be used to serve youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness in CoCs across the country. Examples of these projects include:

- **Diversion.** Seattle/King County is expanding its systemwide capacity for diversion services by providing a pool of diversion funds that can be accessed by partners throughout the CoC, including shelters, outreach teams, day centers, and navigation teams for youth as well as other populations.

- **Outreach.** Ohio BOS is implementing Youth Crisis Response Teams that will move throughout the five-county region, visiting common hot spots, to meet unsheltered youth in need of emergency shelter services. The teams will provide transportation assistance to help youth return to family or friends where they may be able safely stay or assist them in accessing other services that will help end their unsheltered episode. The Youth Crisis Response Teams will also conduct coordinated entry assessments with youth and help them connect to housing resources and supportive services, as needed.

- **Navigation/Case Management.** Anchorage is implementing Permanency Navigators to help youth experiencing homelessness secure safe shelter, find

housing, and eliminate barriers to stability, including accessing behavioral health, education, and employment services. The project includes aftercare to youth once they are placed in housing to support housing stability.

- **Rapid Re-Housing.** Austin/Travis County is implementing a Rapid Re-housing Plus project that combines rental assistance with case management and includes connections to employment services and behavioral health services. The site is using a progressive engagement approach to allocate the amount of assistance provided to youth's individual needs, but unlike other rapid re-housing projects that are typically limited to 24 months, youth in Austin/Travis County may receive up to 36 months of rental assistance and up to 42 months of case management.

- **Host Homes.** Kentucky BOS is implementing a host homes project targeted specifically to school-aged minors who are not able to live at home with their parents or guardians but also do not rise to the level of needing to be in the care of the state child welfare system. This project includes financial assistance for increased utility costs and move-in costs, as well as case management for youth.

- **Behavioral Health Services.** Seattle/King County's Behavioral Health Crisis Response involves behavioral crisis response teams that provide 24/7 mobile outreach with in-home and community supports for up to 8 weeks and stabilization beds where youth with more intensive needs can stay.

Understanding the Influence of Systems Improvements as well as Confounding Factors

Systems improvements to identify and engage youth and serve them more efficiently may result in increases in the numbers of youth served whether or not the size of that population is changing. For example, implementing stronger outreach efforts or more youth-friendly coordinated entry systems may increase the number of youth served. The evaluation is tracking these changes, and analyses will be sensitive to the ways in which systems improvements may impact numbers served, integrating data on any changes in numbers served with information collected on the systems improvements occurring at each site.

Similarly, improvements in the quality or completeness of the HMIS data may affect estimates of the number of youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness without reflecting actual changes in the size of those groups. Throughout the evaluation, Westat regularly discusses any possible changes to sites' data collection and management processes with local HMIS administrators and can consider this in the final analyses.

Finally, broader economic and policy changes may affect the number of youth who become homeless, independent of the systems changes that are implemented. For example, changes in the U.S. and local economies may affect employment opportunities, vacancy rates, and rental costs, which could subsequently affect the number of youth experiencing homelessness and the length of time they remain so. Changes in the policies of other social service systems could also affect the number of youth that experience or are at risk of

homelessness. The evaluation will attempt to capture and explain as many of these potential influences on the rates of youth homelessness as possible, both in the YHDP sites and the comparison sites.

Appendix A

Additional Administrative Data Tables

Appendix A
Additional Administrative Data Tables

Exhibit A-1. Population Size in YHDP CoCs According to 2013–2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Population	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
ACS total population (N)	294,356	1,226,698	808,703	3,588,148	3,361,072	171,324	6,610,710	884,363	275,897	2,188,649
ACS total ages 15-24 (N)	41,288	155,209	106,575	493,215	436,939	18,274	925,499	80,131	50,566	248,388
% of ACS youth in HMIS sample	2%	1%	3%	1%	<1%	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	2%

ACS = American Community Survey. BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System.
Source: 2017 ACS

Exhibit A-2. Population Size in Peer Continuums of Care According to 2013–2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Population	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
ACS total population (N)	504,217	936,961	4,203,301
ACS total ages 15-24 (N)	58,938	127,402	606,453
% of ACS youth in HMIS sample	1%	<1%	<1%

ACS = American Community Survey. BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System.
Source: 2017 ACS

Exhibit A-3. Population Characteristics in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care According to 2013–2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Characteristic	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/ King County
Gender										
Male	54%	51%	51%	51%	52%	53%	51%	49%	50%	51%
Female	46%	49%	49%	49%	48%	47%	49%	51%	50%	49%
Race										
White	64%	75%	68%	77%	92%	95%	94%	47%	77%	66%
Black	5%	8%	26%	10%	4%	1%	2%	5%	1%	6%
AI/AN	7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Asian	9%	6%	2%	4%	1%	1%	1%	34%	5%	17%
Hawaiian/PI	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Multiracial	10%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	5%	5%	6%
Unreported/ Other	2%	7%	1%	5%	1%	<1%	<1%	7%	12%	3%
Hispanic	9%	34%	3%	15%	3%	2%	1%	15%	33%	9%

AI = American Indian. AN = Alaska Native. BOS = Balance of State. PI = Pacific Islander.
Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Exhibit A-4. Population Characteristics in Peer Continuums of Care According to 2013–2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Characteristic	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
Gender			
Male	51%	50%	52%
Female	49%	50%	48%
Race			
White	75%	39%	86%
Black	2%	53%	3%
AI/AN	1%	<1%	1%
Asian	4%	3%	3%
Hawaiian/PI	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multiracial	5%	2%	3%
Unreported/Other	12%	3%	4%
Hispanic	32%	1%	29%

AI = American Indian. AN = Alaska Native. BOS = Balance of State. PI = Pacific Islander.
Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Exhibit A-5. Household Composition of Youth in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

Characteristic	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	18,387	896	1,131	2,985	4,959	748	175	1,828	1,306	122	4,237
% with children	14%	6%	18%	27%	4%	22%	5%	29%	9%	20%	10%
# of children											
Mean	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Range	(1–6)	(1–3)	(1–5)	(1–6)	(1–4)	(1–4)	(1–2)	(1–5)	(1–6)	(1–6)	(1–4)
Age of children (years)											
Mean	4	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3
Range	(0–13)	(0–8)	(0–12)	(0–12)	(0–11)	(0–10)	(1–6)	(0–11)	(1–13)	(0–8)	(0–12)
% with non-child household members	3%	2%	4%	2%	<1%	10%	2%	10%	2%	8%	2%
Spouse/partner	2%	1%	1%	2%	<1%	9%	2%	9%	1%	7%	1%
Other	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	2%	<1%	2%	1%
Age of non-child household members (years)											
Mean	20	16	19	22	21	20	12	20	18	15	17
Range	(0–25)	(1–25)	(0–25)	(3–25)	(2–24)	(2–25)	(2–24)	(0–24)	(2–25)	(1–24)	(0–24)
% with spouse/partner and child	2%	1%	1%	2%	<1%	5%	1%	6%	–	5%	1%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

Source: 2017 HMIS

Exhibit A-6.   Household Composition of Youth in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information Systems During Calendar Year 2017

Characteristic	YHDP Site Total	Peer Site Total	Colorado BOS	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS
HMIS (N)	**18,387**	**1,441**	**700**	**528**	**213**	**700**
% with children	14%	21%	17%	6%	71%	17%
# of children						
Mean	2	2	1	1	2	1
Range	(1–6)	(1–5)	(1–3)	(1–4)	(1–5)	(1–3)
Age of children (years)						
Mean	4	3	3	3	3	3
Range	(0–13)	(0–20)	(0–20)	(0–11)	(0–11)	(0–20)
% with non-child household members	3%	5%	6%	2%	7%	6%
Spouse/partner	2%	4%	6%	2%	2%	6%
Other	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	5%	<1%
Age of non-child household members (years)						
Mean	20	12	–	12	11	–
Range	(0–24)	(<1–25)	(0–20)	(<1–25)	(<1–24)	(0–20)
% with spouse/partner and child	2%	1%	–	1%	1%	–

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
Source: 2017 HMIS

Exhibit A-7. **Benefit Receipt Among Youth with Children in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information System During Calendar Year 2017**

Characteristic	YHDP Site Total	Anchorage	Austin/Travis County	Cincinnati/ Hamilton County	Connecticut BOS	Kentucky BOS	NW Michigan	Ohio BOS	San Francisco[1]	Santa Cruz	Seattle/King County
HMIS (N)	2,437	54	207	791	219	164	8	531	–	24	439
% Received SNAP, WIC, or TANF non-cash benefits	43%	65%	59%	4%	42%	71%	63%	67%	–	71%	63%
SNAP	40%	59%	55%	3%	38%	71%	63%	62%	1%	71%	60%
TANF	2%	13%	1%	<1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	–	13%	7%
WIC	11%	15%	14%	1%	15%	7%	38%	20%	–	13%	17%

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
Note: San Francisco's aggregate statistics did not include benefit information among youth with children.
Source: 2017 HMIS

Exhibit A-8. **Benefit Receipt Among Youth with Children in Peer Continuums of Care Homeless Management Information System During Calendar Year 2017**

Characteristic	YHDP Site Total	Peer Site Total	Sonoma County	Memphis	Colorado BOS[1]
HMIS (N)	2,437	31	31	–	–
% Received SNAP, WIC, or TANF non-cash benefits	43%	68%	68%	–	–
SNAP	40%	58%	58%	–	32%
TANF	2%	10%	10%	–	–
WIC	11%	32%	32%	–	–

BOS = Balance of State. HMIS = Homeless Management Information System. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. YHDP = Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.
[1] Colorado's aggregate statistics did not include benefit information among youth with children.
Source: 2017 HMIS.

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