On My Side:

Needs and Strategies to End Youth Homelessness in Summit County

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1 Executive Summary

This report contains the results of a needs assessment as well as recommendations for a strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness in Summit County, Ohio. The needs assessment was conducted in April and May of 2021 by consulting data from Summit County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), as well as through multiple forms of provider and stakeholder engagement.

The methods used in this research and report are consistent with the latest recommendations of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, which is a federal funding program to prevent and end homelessness through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Likewise, the recommendations of this report are directed toward fundable projects of YHDP. However, no single needs assessment can capture every facet of youth homelessness in a community – if for no other reason than the complex dynamics of ending homelessness are continually changing. Nor can the ongoing effort to bring youth homelessness to a functional zero in Summit County will not be achieved through the addition of a single funding source, and so the practical intention and aim of this report should be taken as a starting point for future conversation in the community rather than as a final word.

In short, this report makes four recommendations based on the current needs as well as the existing strengths and capacities of Summit County's homeless housing and service providers:

1. Increase housing capacity through additional transitional housing that places youth in a communal context with a clearly defined next step. Use this transitional housing as the core, or anchor, of the youth homeless response system by quickly transitioning youth from emergency shelters to transitional housing, and use "mixed model" or "Joint TH/RRH" models to seamlessly move youth into permanent housing.

2. Develop a housing navigator project that uses street outreach trained workers to guide youth through and between all Summit County's housing and services.

3. Implement targeted processed aimed at addressing equity issues and vulnerable subpopulations especially including single men, victims of domestic violence, and youth identifying as LGBTQ+. By targeting these subpopulations – without being exclusive of others – it may be possible to foster greater buy-in by young adults than with the broad and generic target population of "youth" alone.

4. Establish and implement a youth-specific form of evaluating Summit County's homeless response system in an ongoing manner. This process should evaluate a broader spectrum of youth-specific needs, be data driven, and be informed by the local knowledge of providers, community stakeholders, and youth with lived experience of homelessness. This process should then inform community-wide funding and planning decisions and coordinated entry assessments.

These four strategic directions require community discussion, refinement, and buy-in. However, they are also intended to be implemented as a whole, rather than as a "pick and choose" list due to the way they build off of one another. If over the course of further research and discussion, one or more points

are not adopted, the community should then reconsider the needs and strengths that informed that particular recommendation and provide a replacement solution as well.

2 Method

This assessment of Summit County's youth homeless response system entails the following components:

1. **Systematic analysis of 2019 HMIS data:** Due to differences in the way housing and services were provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, data from 2019 were found to be more representative of a "typical year" than data from 2020. Datasets were also pulled from calendar year 2020, and these were helpful in select instances. *Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report come from the 2019 calendar year.*

2. **Equity audit using HMIS and Census data:** An equity audit of Summit County's housing providers was conducted using the same methods available to communities that participate in the HUD's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). These methods involve the use of "intersectional" data that examine not only the number of youth who access and achieve positive outcomes in housing projects, but moreover the demographic characteristics of those individuals. This method helps find situations where certain interventions work better for one subpopulation of youth than others. Such findings can be useful both in determining additional need as well as in identifying potential creative solutions.

3. **Provider Consultation:** The author of this report facilitated a collaborative discussion not only among Summit County's housing and service providers, but also representatives of other systems such as the child welfare system and public housing officials who regularly cooperate on efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. Additionally, the author held one-on-one conversations with several additional providers, and did an on-site visit to several ES, TH, RRH, and outreach locations.

4. **Youth Think Tank:** The author of this report facilitated a "youth think tank," which is a focus-group style session with youth who are currently experiencing homelessness and receiving housing and services from at least one of the county's providers. After introductory discussion of their circumstance and particular experiences, stakeholders were asked questions pertaining to improving access and outcomes in Summit County's housing and services. Importantly, the confidentiality of individual responses was ensured, and no providers were allowed to be present at the think tank. Confidentiality is important during a needs assessment process, because it encourages both positive and critical feedback that individuals may otherwise feel either shy about or that such comments may have negative repercussions on their current level of service.

3 Data

3.1 HMIS Analysis

3.1.1 Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Summit County

For this report, the terms "youth" and "young adults" will be used interchangeably. Moreover, both terms will refer to what the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) refers to as "unaccompanied youth." In HUD's definition, an unaccompanied youth is any person 12 to 24, provided that not one member of that person's household is 25 years or older.

Unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness are provided both services and housing, which HUD funds according to "project type." There are four primary project types that house youth in Summit County:

- Emergency Shelter (ES): Emergency shelters are typically congregate style, crisis housing. Shelters may be larger or smaller in size, but their purpose is to provide immediate housing to homeless persons.
- Transitional Housing (TH): Transitional Housing are projects that provide more intensive services to persons experiencing homelessness as they get prepared for more permanent housing opportunities. While there are many models for TH, it is common for these to be a house or facility with a separate room for each client.
- Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): Rapid Re-Housing is a type of project that places persons experiencing homelessness in their own apartment, but pays the rent for a fixed period of time. After that period of time, the individual will be responsible for their own rent, but will stay living in that same place.
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): Permanent Supportive Housing is a long-term housing solution for persons with a severe mental or physical disability.

Youth experiencing homelessness in Summit County are most commonly served by ES projects. In total, 451 youth were served in 2019 by an emergency shelter, while 74 youth were served in TH, 55 in RRH, and 30 in PSH. Interestingly, youth also make up a larger percentage of all individuals served in ES, while they make up an increasingly smaller portion of persons served in TH, RRH, and PSH.

Some clients are enrolled in more than one housing project. Therefore, it is not possible to simply add up all the numbers of unaccompanied youth in each project type to get the total number. However, using more advanced techniques with HMIS data, it is possible to determine that in 2019, 498 distinct youth were served in a housing project. Note that although there are HMIS projects that provide services only, all youth who were enrolled in these services were also enrolled in a housing project. Therefore, the total number of youth served in a homeless housing or service project in Summit County during the 2019 calendar year is 498 youth.

Out of those 498 youth, 126 were actively parenting. A technical note may be in order regarding the number of parenting youth. In HMIS, someone can only be counted as parenting if their child is enrolled to the project with them. For example, if a mother and her daughter enter into a family shelter, then HMIS data will know that the mother is a parent. However, if the daughter is currently being taken care of by her grandmother, the child welfare system, etc., then HMIS will not be able to recognize that the mother is, in fact, a parent. Therefore, when using HMIS data, "parenting youth" should always be understood as youth who have children living with them in their homeless housing project. Because of

this, the number of youth who are recognized as parenting is larger when services only projects are added (from 52 to 126) into the analysis even though the number of unaccompanied youth does not increase (stays at 498). The reason for this discrepancy is likely because some youth were enrolled to services only projects along with their children, even though they were only enrolled in housing without their children. Therefore, this report will use the number 126 as the number of parenting youth, because those individuals *are* parents, even if their child is not enrolled with them in their housing project.

Figure 1. Number and Percent of Unaccompanied Youth by Project Type

Project Type	All Adult Clients	Unaccompanied Youth 18-24	Parenting Youth, 18-24	Percentage of Unaccompanied Youth
Emergency Shelter (ES)	2137	451	34	21%
Transitional Housing (TH)	577	74	4	13%
Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)	629	55	27	9%
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	557	30	7	5%
Total in Housing Projects Alone (unduplicated)	**3770**	**498**	**52**	**9%**
Total Adult Clients in Housing and/or Services (unduplicated)	**4502**	**498**	**126**	**8%**

3.1.2 System Mapping

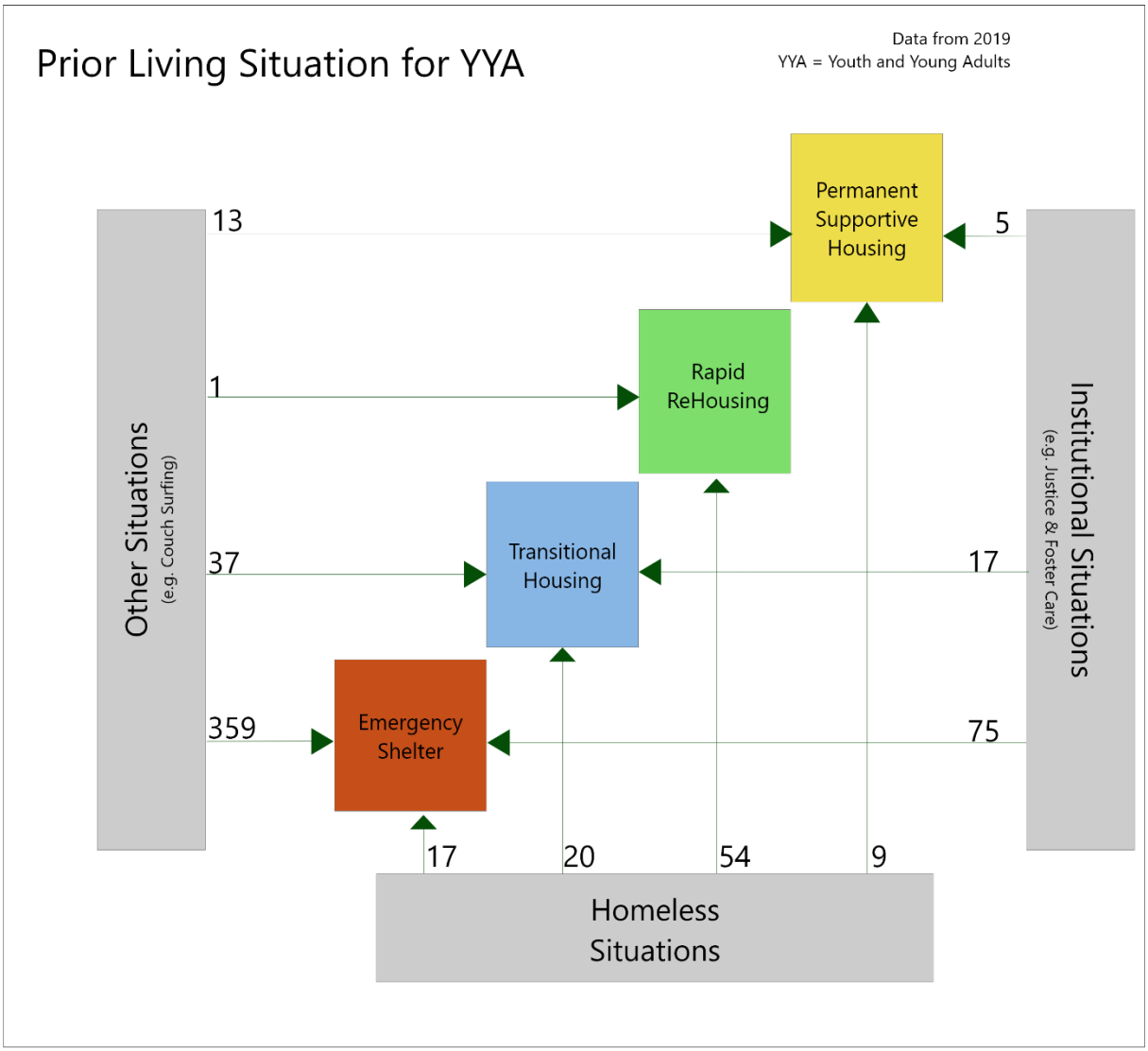
System mapping is a helpful way to determine which types of housing projects work for young people, and which project types may need more attention when it comes to addressing the specific needs of youth. Mapping a system is typically divided into two stages: inflow and outflow. In this case, inflow refers to the ways in which young people first enter into any of the four housing project types for persons experiencing homelessness. In contrast, outflow refers to where youth go after exiting Summit County's continuum of housing projects.

System Inflow (Prior Living Situation)

The best way to determine where youth were prior to entering into one of Summit County's homeless housing projects is to use the Prior Living Situation data in HMIS. In HMIS, Prior Living Situation refers very specifically to where that person slept the night before. For example, take the case of a young person who emancipated from foster care, spent a week couch crashing at their friend's apartment, was put out by their friend and – not having anywhere to stay tonight – walked into an emergency shelter. The correct entry for Prior Living Situation would be "staying or living in a friend's room, apartment or house." While the person might be likely to say either "I just got out of foster care" or "I'm now on the street," the actually spent the night before staying with their friend.

Prior living situations are typically divided into three groups: homeless situations, institutional situations, and other situations. Homeless situations are most often places not meant for human habitation, but also include situations of sheltered homelessness, such as an emergency shelter. Institutional situations include the justice system, foster care, and medical facilities. While other situations do include some instances where the client's prior living situation is unknown or refused, this is an important category because it also includes situations where the individuals was staying with friends or family – more commonly referred to as "couch surfing."

Figure 2. YYA Prior Living Situation System Map



The most striking fact about youth who enter Summit County's homeless housing projects is that the vast majority of these people do not enter from "the streets" or other literally homeless situations. Instead, their prior living situation is most likely to fall in the other or institutional groups. The justice system is by far the largest prior living situation for youth entering housing projects from an institutional setting. Of the 75 youth who entered one of Summit County's emergency shelters in 2019, 51 of them

(68%) had spent the previous night in the justice system. Recall that prior living situation data looks specifically at the night immediately before entry into a project. Therefore, this means that there is a *direct* pathway directly from local juvenile justice, jails, and prisons into Summit County's housing projects. These 51 young people did not have a family or friend to stay with – much less their own home – upon exit, and therefore had no where to turn except to go directly to a shelter.

By contrast, it should be noted here that the impact of the foster care system on youth who were formally a ward of the child welfare system is underrepresented in this particular map. Youth in Summit County typically do not enter the homeless response system directly out of foster care because the child welfare staff who are responsible for assisting emancipated youth find housing work diligently to find other options.

System Outflow (Exit Destinations)

Looking at clients' exit destinations is the primary way to determine whether or not housing projects are succeeding when it comes to finding stable, permanent housing for persons experiencing homelessness. While HMIS has many options for exit destination, they are grouped here into four broad categories:

1. **Mainstream Permanent Housing:** These destinations consist of all permanent housing options that are not funded by a project for homeless persons including market rate housing, housing units subsidized by non-homeless specific funders, and permanent move-in with friends or family.

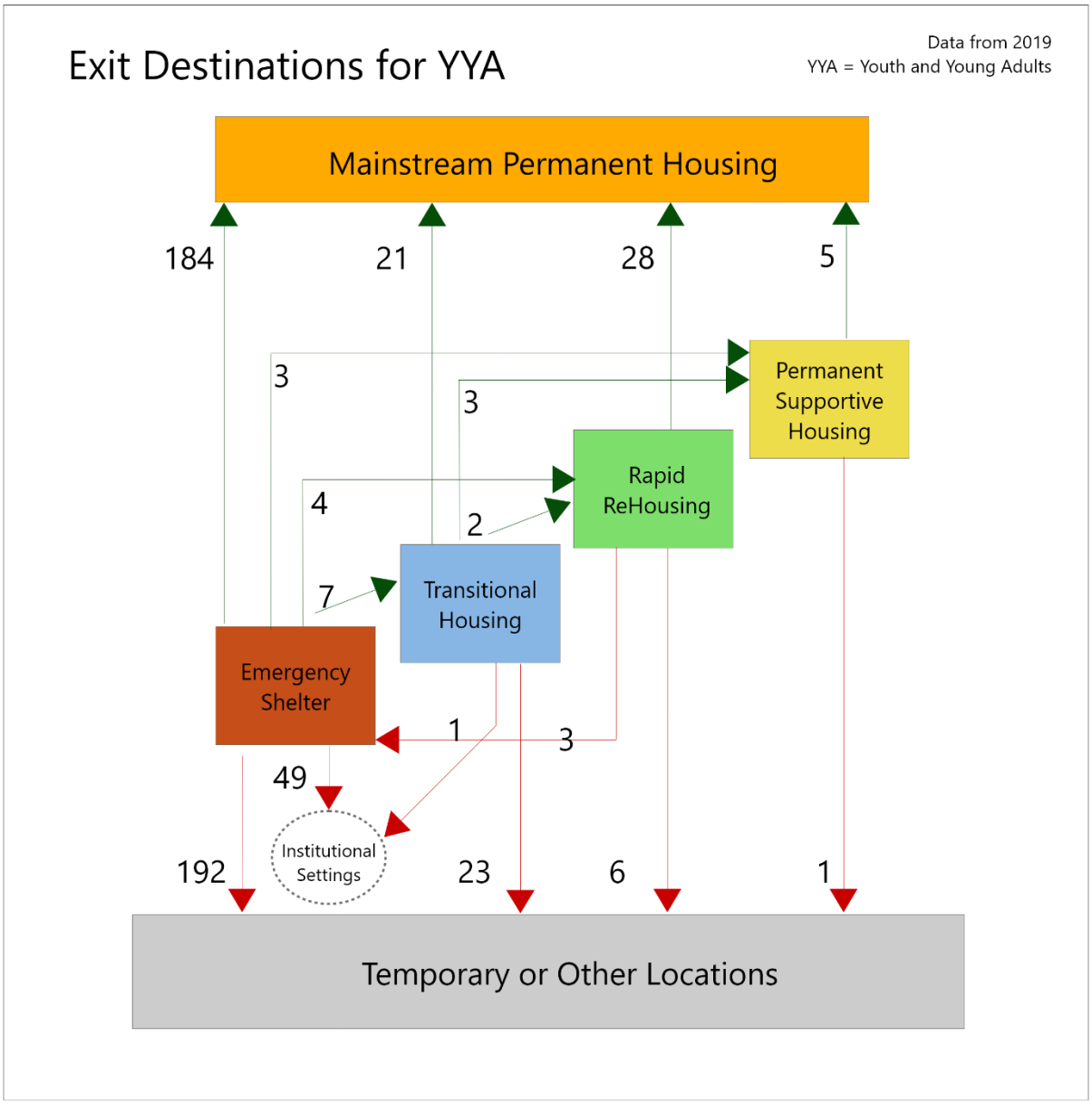
2. **Another Supportive Homelessness Housing Project:** This movement is from one homelessness project to another – such as in a client moving from an Emergency Shelter to Rapid Re-Housing. This system map treats exiting to another housing project with a different logic that HUD's Annual Performance Report in that housing projects are tiered in the order: ES, TH, RRH, and PSH. Any exit destination moving "upward" along that order – such as from ES to TH – is considered a positive move. Any movement "downward" in that order – such as leaving RRH to a shelter – is considered a negative destination.

3. **Institutional Settings:** Institutional settings such as exiting to jail, a medical facility, or the foster care system primarily occur out of ES. While these destinations are marked with a red arrow and cannot be considered positive outcomes, in most cases they should be thought of as having no bearing on the quality of housing provision and treated on a case-by-case basis.

4. **Temporary or Other Locations:** This category includes all exits from a housing project to stay with family or friends in which the family or friends have given the individual a time limit on how long they may stay. This category also includes instances where the client did not know or refused to disclose their exit location, as well as situations where this data point was not collected. While there may be instances where clients moving to these destinations are making positive strides towards permanent housing, destinations recorded as temporary and other/unknown most frequently result in a return to homelessness.

Below is a system map showing where youth went to when they exited Summit County's residential projects.

Figure 3. YYA Exit Destinations System Map



When examining the exit destinations of Summit County's youth, the most striking observation is that over half of all young adults who exit an ES or TH project do so to a temporary or unknown location. This means that only 45% of youth in ES exited to mainstream housing or another housing project, while 43% of youth exited to other or temporary locations (and the remainder to institutional settings). For TH, the numbers are slightly higher: 58% of youth exited to permanent housing or another housing project, while 40% exited to a temporary or other location.

For Emergency Shelter, these permanent housing rates may be artificially lowered by low data quality. The numbers here include data from Haven of Rest, who has only recently begun participation in HMIS and has "Client does not know" marked for all exit destinations. The most likely scenario is that Haven

of Rest has not been collecting exit destination information and does, in fact, succeed in achieving permanent housing outcomes for some percentage of clients. When Haven of Rest's data are removed from this calculation, the exit destinations become as follows:

Figure 4. Exit Destinations without Haven of Rest

Exit Destinations with Haven of Rest Data Removed		
Destination	**Number of YYA**	**Percent of YYA**
Mainstream Permanent Housing	184	55%
Another Homelessness Project	17	5%
Institutional Settings	49	15%
Temporary or Other Destination	85	25%
Total	**335**	

In contrast to these numbers from ES and TH, RRH projects achieved an 85% rate of permanent housing, either through mainstream housing (25 youth), permanent stay with friends and family (3 youth), or another RRH project (4 youth).

3.1.3 System Capacity

Now that we understand the number of youth being served in Summit County's system of housing and service providers (Section 3.1.1) as well how those youth are entering and exiting the system (Section 3.1.2), the next questions will be whether the system should and could serve more young people. This section will start by determining an estimate of the number of unserved youth experiencing homelessness in Summit County. Combined with the knowledge we already have about the number of youth currently being served, this estimate will help determine if and how many youth need housing but are unable to receive it. The second part of this section will examine the bed and unit utilization, which helps determine whether any gap in serving additional youth is a matter of filling existing spots or getting new funding to create more spots.

Estimate of Underserved Youth Experiencing Homelessness

One way of determining the number of YYA who are at-risk of homelessness in our counties is to use national estimates. This method provides a broad estimate. We will then try to use more local methods in an attempt to identify who these youth are and where we might locate them.

The *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America* report conducted by Chapin Hall and Voices of Youth Count offers data that is useful for estimating the number of youth and young adults who are at-risk of homelessness in our region.[1] Using a definition of homelessness that counts "doubled up" youth as homeless, the *Missed Opportunities* report finds that 5.2% of all young adults aged 18-24 experience literal homelessness in a 12-month period, with an additional 4.5% who experience couch surfing. For youth who are 13 to 17, rates of homelessness are lower: 1.3% of these youth experience couch surfing alone, while another 3% were found to experience literal homelessness. For this report,

[1] See https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness/

youth who couch surf only will be considered at-risk of homelessness rather than homeless.[2] For the purposes of this report, these statistics should be used to estimate youth who are at-risk of homelessness because HUD does not define people who are "doubled up" as homeless.

As the authors of the *Missed Opportunities* report discuss elsewhere, these rates are significantly higher than found in any other accessible data, therefore pointing to a "largely hidden" dynamic of homelessness.[3] The experience of this author in strategic planning efforts has found that homelessness providers tend to find the rates of homelessness in the *Missed Opportunities* unrealistic to use for estimation purposes. While this "largely hidden" phenomena may well exist, it is not likely that all those youth will need the explicit attention of homeless housing and service providers. In the absence of more precise information, this report will cut the *Missed Opportunities* rates above in half, in order to provide more realistic estimates.

Using the US Census Bureau's estimates of the population of youth in Summit County and half the rate from the Voices of Youth Count statistics listed above, it is estimated that 1,677 youth are homeless in Summit County each year. Moreover, an additional 1,244 youth are at-risk of homelessness in situations that involve couch surfing and therefore may be counted as homeless by funding agencies and providers outside of HUD.

Figure 5. Estimated Homeless and At-Risk Youth

Estimated Homeless and At-Risk Youth in Summit County			
Age	Population	Homeless	At-Risk
18-24	46,046	1,197	1,036
13-17	32,011	480	208
Total Youth	*78,057*	*1,677*	*1,244*
Total Youth Needing Intervention		**1,291**	**958**

Of these 1,677 youth who may experience some form of homelessness in an annual period, some will be able to find a housing solution with family members or otherwise self-resolve their situation. One national dataset shows that at least 23% of homeless youth typically move in with family or self-resolve prior to placement in an HMIS project.[4] In other words, this 23% of youth do not need intervention from a homelessness provider to resolve their situation, and therefore this 23% of youth – that is, 386

[2] HUD's complex definition of homelessness uses four categories to determine homelessness: literal homelessness, immanent risk of homelessness, homelessness according to other Federal statues, and persons fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence. People who are couch surfing can only be counted in the third category of this definition. Most housing providers are not allowed to serving persons Category 3 with HUD funds. Therefore, this report will limit the definition of homeless to youth who are literally homeless. For more information on HUD's definition of homelessness, see: https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

[3] Morton et al., "Prevalence and Correlates of Youth Homelessness in the United States."

[4] This dataset has been used in two recent Rice et al., "Linking Homelessness Vulnerability Assessments to Housing Placements and Outcomes for Youth"; Chan et al., "Evidence From the Past: AI Decision Aids to Improve Housing Systems for Homeless Youth."

individuals – can be removed from this estimate. The end result is that 1,291 youth who may have a severity of homelessness requiring assistance from a homeless housing or service project.

Section 3.1.1 above showed an unduplicated count of 498 youth served in Summit County's housing projects. This means that as many as 793 youth may be underserved in the county. However, it should also be noted that this report's figure of 498 youth served in homeless housing projects does not account for all possible housing and service options available to young people. Additional services from other agencies (such as efforts from child welfare and public housing officials) likely serve a portion of these youth. Efforts to increase working relationships and data sharing across systems will improve the community's understanding of how many homeless youth remain underserved.

Figure 6. Annual Estimate of Underserved Homeless Youth

Estimate of Annually Underserved Homeless Youth	
Estimate of Homeless Youth Needing Intervention (A)	1291
Youth Served (B)	498
Estimate of Underserved Youth (A – B)	**793**

Bed and Unit Utilization

In addition to knowing how youth enter and exit the system, it is also useful to know how "full" the system is at any point in time. In other words, are there empty beds and/or housing units available? This question is particularly useful to help determine whether additional housing is needed to respond to the 793 underserved youth found in the estimate above.

Housing projects are required to keep an inventory of the number of beds and units they have available (called the Homeless Inventory Count).[5] Four times a year, HMIS data are used to check how the percent of beds and units in inventory are occupied. These numbers are compiled below. Note that for ES, the relevant statistic is the number of beds used. For RRH, beds and units are the same number in Summit County. For TH, the number of beds is different than the number of units in the HIC. However, it is the number of available units that is most useful to determining capacity: if there are unused beds in a family unit, they are effectively unavailable to a new client.

Figure 7. Bed and Unit Utilization, 2019

Bed and Unit Utilization, 2019, All Clients			
	ES Bed	TH Unit	RRH Bed/Unit
Jan	86%	94%	62%
Apr	33%	112%	45%
July	49%	92%	49%
Oct	52%	96%	45%

[5] Summit County's HIC data for 2019 can be found at:
https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_HIC_CoC_OH-506-2019_OH_2019.pdf

From this analysis of Summit County's bed and unit utilization, it appears that the county has a sufficient number of ES and RRH opportunities, but that TH is essentially at capacity year-round. As will be discussed below, the practical reason that RRH units are unused is primarily a result of a difficulty in finding livable apartments and willing landlords.

3.1.4 Equity Analysis

In general, the term equity means that all people are given an equal opportunity for success, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other identifying factor. In this particular context, equity will refer to the ability of youth and young adults to be able to access Summit County's homeless response system and to achieve positive outcomes through it.

In this definition, there are two important parts of achieving equity: Equity in Access, and Equity in Outcomes. Equity in Access refers to the equal ability of all young people to locate and be successfully enrolled in a housing or service project. If any particular group or subpopulation of youth are regularly unable to access a type of housing or service, then there is inequity in access for that project time. On the other hand, Equity in Outcomes refers to the equal ability of all young people to achieve positive outcomes within a given type of housing or service. In other words, Equity in Outcomes looks past the point where youth walk in the front door and looks into whether any particular group or subpopulation regularly exits the project before achieving their goals.

It is important to note that a system may be equitable in terms of access but not in terms of outcomes – and vice versa. Sometimes a particular subpopulation has no trouble finding and enrolling in projects, but then some element of the system does not work for them and they tend to have increased difficulties in achieving positive outcomes. Or conversely, sometimes there are significant barriers for a particular subpopulation of youth to access housing or services, but once enrolled, youth in this subpopulation achieve outcomes at the same rate as everyone else.

Equity in Access

It is a well-known fact that poverty and homelessness do not plague all populations in the United States at the same rate. Instead, systematic forms of oppression force some populations into poverty and homelessness in larger numbers than others. When checking for equity in Summit County's three largest types of youth housing project – ES, TH, and RRH – it is important to understand what these social inequities look like, so that the community has baseline statistics to compare to. For instance, knowing the rate at which people identifying as Black or African-American enter into shelters is not a helpful statistic, unless you also know the overall percentage of Black people who are homeless. In this example, it is not enough to know the percentage of Black people in the county, because Black folks are forced into homelessness at much higher rates than their white counterparts.

Race

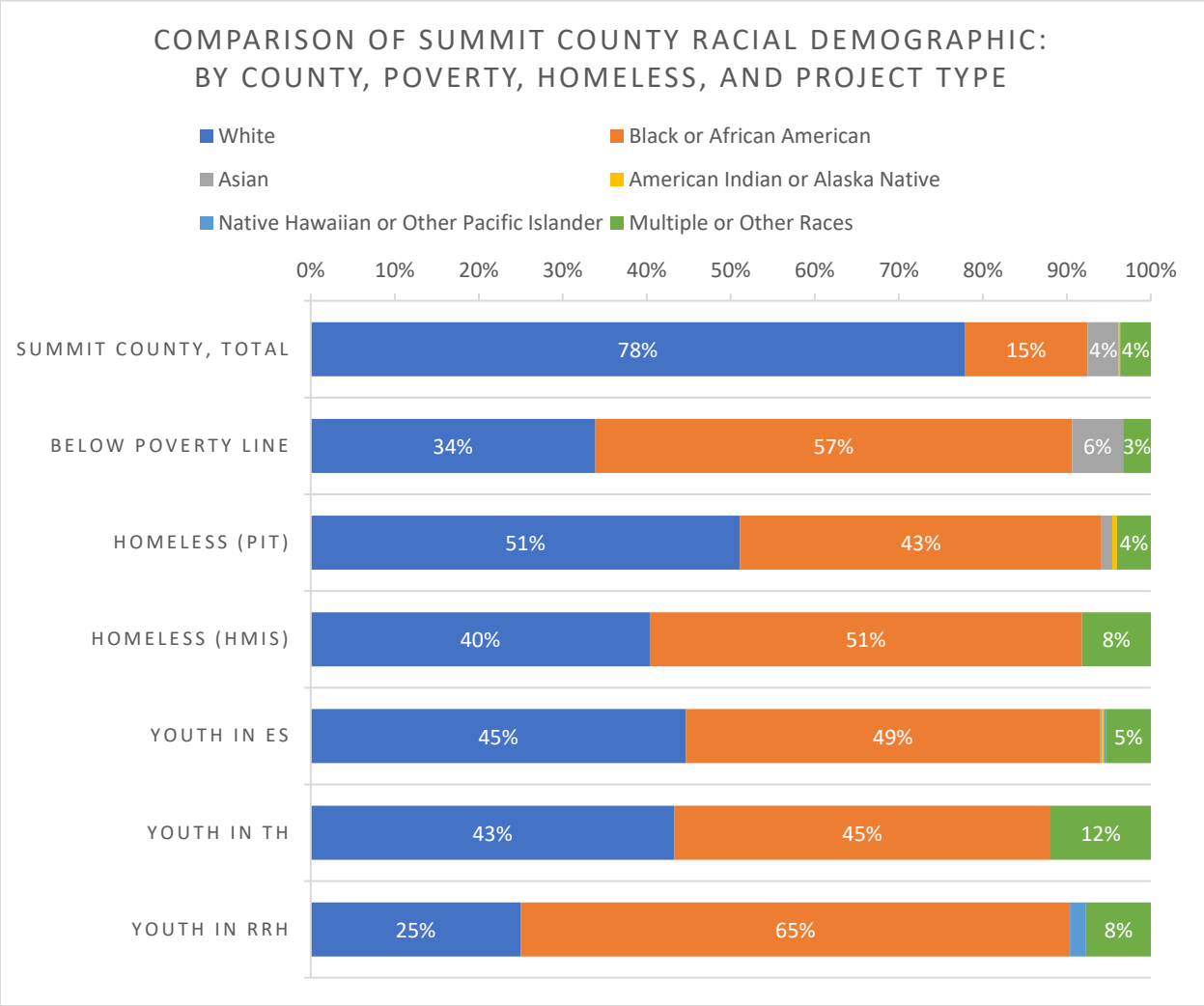
Figure 8 below compares the rates of each US Census racial group in Summit County to the rates that each race falls into poverty, becomes homeless, and is enrolled in ES, TH, or RRH. As in the example above, these charts show that while only 15% of Summit County's population identifies as Black or African-American, 57% of all individuals in poverty are Black, and 51% of all individuals served by a

homeless housing or service project are Black. In other words, residents of Summit County who identify as Black or African-American are severely overrepresented in the county's homeless population. This is a social inequity that is not caused by the county's housing and service providers, but is rather the context in which they serve their clients and address inequity.

Figure 8 also shows how Summit County's ES, TH, and RRH providers are responding to the increased burdens to stable housing faced by the county's Black youth population. Here, we see that Black youth are not facing additional barriers to accessing housing projects when compared to older Black adults. Black youth make up 49% of all youth in ES, 45% of all youth in TH, and 65% of all youth in RRH, which are roughly equivalent rates compared to the overall number of persons experiencing homelessness who identify as Black or African-American in Summit County. In other words, Summit County's housing providers are successfully attaining racial equity in access across all youth populations.

In addition, another racial subpopulation of note is Summit County's relatively small Asian community. While persons identifying as Asian make up only 4% of Summit County's overall population, they make up 6% of the county's individuals below the poverty line. Racial groups who are disproportionally affected by poverty tend to also be disproportionally affected by homelessness. However, very few Asian persons show up in the PIT count (2%) and virtually no Asian individuals show up in HMIS. Likewise, there are virtually no Asian youth in the county's ES, TH, or RRH projects. There are two possible outcomes for this scenario: (1) Despite being disproportionally affected by poverty, the Asian community has formed tight-knit bonds that prevent its members from becoming homeless, or (2) The county's Asian population *does* have individuals experiencing homelessness, but these individuals – both younger and older adults – experience barriers that prevent them from accessing housing and services. This question is impossible to settle from statistics alone, and requires the local knowledge of the county's Asian population. Summit County's providers should engage knowledgeable community leaders from the county's Asian in it's planning processes to help determine why this demographic is overrepresented under the poverty line, but underrepresented in the county's counts of persons experiencing homelessness.

Figure 8. Summit County Racial Equity



Gender and Parenting Status

A deeper dive into how young people access ES, TH, and RRH in Summit County adds several points of nuance to the big picture above by considering gender and parenting status in addition to race. The data for these points can all be found in the Appendix (Section 5.1).

Both male and female youth are served at equal rates in the county's emergency shelters. Of the youth population in ES, 52% are men, while 48% are women, with only .2% of youth identifying as transgender or non-binary. This equality is maintained in TH: 48% of youth in TH are male, and 52% are female. However, in RRH, only 12% of all youth are men – the remaining 88% are women. The reason for this apparent discrepancy in RRH is clearly due to their parenting status. 48% of all youth in RRH are parenting, which means that they have children accompanying them in the RRH project. Additional numbers of young people may have children who are residing with another family member, in foster care, etc. Virtually all parenting youth in RRH are women – only one was male. Moreover, it is worth

noting that young Black women are much more likely to be parenting in an RRH project than young white women. Indeed, 72% of all parenting youth in Summit County's RRH projects are Black women.

Therefore, it is clear that the gender imbalance in Summit County's RRH is because parenting youth are prioritized for housing, rather than because additional barriers are placed on young men. In prioritizing parenting youth, Summit County's housing providers are directly working to address the additional barriers to housing that are faced by parents. Moreover, as we have seen above, prioritizing parenting youth also means working to end the disproportional hardships imposed especially on young Black women. Summit County's prioritization of parenting youth for RRH is therefore commendable and should continue. Nevertheless, the fact that a relatively low percentage of RRH clients are young men points to an overall shortage of RRH. In other words, the issue with gender equity in accessing RRH is likely due to the total number of available RRH units, rather than provider's prioritization.

On this topic, it is also important to highlight the point established by the county's housing providers in Section 3.2.2, that shortages in available RRH units often stem from the availability of units on the market and the willingness of landlords to rent to persons formerly experiencing homelessness. Thus, merely adding funding to traditional RRH programs may not be the best solution for youth. Rather, finding creative solutions to find stable housing for young men may be beneficial. Not only would finding creative alternatives to RRH for young men be beneficial for this population, it would also safeguard the ongoing availability of RRH units for the subpopulations of youth – especially parenting women – who are currently prioritized.

Equity in Outcomes

When considering equity in outcomes, the top priority outcomes for housing and service providers must always be housing and income with which to support stable housing.

Age: Minors vs Youth, 18-24

As already demonstrated in Section 3.1.2, the overall rates of positive housing outcomes for youth in ES are low. Most young people in Summit County's shelters exit to temporary or other locations rather than to permanent housing or another housing project. When given an intersectional analysis, this statistic becomes significantly better for minors, but much more bleak for youth 18-24.

The vast majority of positive housing outcomes for youth in ES are achieved by Safe Landing's programs that specifically serve runaway and homeless youth under 18. Indeed, in 2019, Safe Landing had a combined 79% success rate in terms of exits to permanent housing. Thus, outcomes for Summit County's minors experiencing homelessness are rather high. Unfortunately, this means that positive housing rates for youth ages 18-24 are even lower than the numbers shown in Section 3.1.2. When the high-achieving set of minors are removed from ES data, the end result is that only a mere 13% of all 18-24 year-old youth in shelters successfully exit to permanent housing.

Figure 9. Youth Shelter Exits to Permanent Housing

ES Exits to Permanent Housing: Minors vs Youth, 18-24			
	Exits to Permanent Housing	**Project Leavers**	**Permanent Housing Rate**

Total	182	429	42%
Minor (under 18)	157	236	67%
Youth, 18-24	25	193	13%

Gender

Young men achieve lower rates of permanent housing and income related outcomes in Summit County's ES and TH projects. (RRH projects are not considered here, since so few clients are male.)

As shown in Figure 10 below, male youth exit ES to permanent housing at a rate of 38% as opposed to 47% for female youth. All youth – both male and female – have low rates of increased income or earned income at exit, which should be addressed from the perspective of outcomes overall, rather than as a particular equity concern.

The same trend is more pronounced in TH, where only 21% of young men exit to permanent housing, as opposed to 77% for young women. Likewise, TH projects almost entirely fail to help young men increase or achieve earned income at exit, while TH projects have been moderately successful with young women.

Figure 10. Income Gains for Youth in ES and TH

	Youth in ES				Youth in TH			
	Exit to permanent housing	Increased income	Earned income at exit	All project leavers	Exit to permanent housing	Increased income	Earned income at exit	All project leavers
Male	38%	0%	1%	223	21%	4%	8%	24
Female	47%	4%	15%	205	77%	27%	46%	26

Further analysis shows that this discrepancy between positive outcomes achieved by men and women in TH can be attributed to the fact that two high-performing TH program models in Summit County only served women at the time of this data collection. The first of these program models is Shelter Care's Highlands program, which is dedicated toward serving adolescent girls who are experiencing homelessness and are pregnant or parenting an infant. The second such model is Harmony House's Transitions to Independence program, which uses an innovative "mixed model" approach to housing. At the time these data were recorded, Shelter Care had only exited young women, although this program has since proven effective with young men as well. In the remainder of Summit County's TH projects, young men and women achieved positive outcomes at similar rates.

Thus, this analysis of gender equity in Summit County's ES and TH projects demonstrates the efficacy of two methods: specifically targeting pregnant and parenting youth, and exploring the possibility of using a "mixed model" approach to housing for young people of both genders.

Race

The most significant racial equity findings for Summit County's housing projects showed up in comparison of white youth to youth of color. Note that in Summit County, the category "youth of color" refers predominantly to youth who identify either as Black/African-American or mixed race.

No single project type has comparable rates of exits to permanent housing when comparing white youth to youth of color. Emergency shelters show the closest to comparable rates, with 37% of white youth who leave ES were exiting to permanent housing, while 48% of exiting youth of color did so to permanent housing. Neither rate is particularly high, but it is noteworthy that this rate is somewhat lower for white youth. The same pattern holds more strongly in TH: 39% of exiting white youth went to permanent housing, whereas that same rate was 20% points stronger for youth of color (59%).

However, this pattern flips once RRH data are analyzed. Whereas 100% of white youth exited their project to permanent housing, the same can only be said for 68% of youth of color.

Figure 11. Percent of project leavers with positive outcomes, by race

	ES				TH				RRH			
	Exit to permanent housing	Increased income	Earned income at exit	All project leavers	Exit to permanent housing	Increased income	Earned income at exit	All project leavers	Exit to permanent housing	Increased income	Earned income at exit	All project leavers
White	37%	1%	4%	187	39%	13%	26%	23	100%	10%	70%	10
Youth of Color	48%	3%	10%	235	59%	19%	30%	27	68%	36%	68%	28

Finally, although there is a significant difference in the rate at which white youth and youth of color achieve increased incomes in RRH projects – 10% for white youth and 36% for youth of color – this difference is a matter of overcoming inequity rather than an instance of equity. The reason this is a matter of overcoming inequity is that the earned income rates of white youth and youth of color at exit are comparable. This means that fewer youth of color had earned income at project entry (a social inequality) that were subsequently addressed by the RRH projects.

3.2 Provider Consultation

The community of providers in Summit County who serve youth at-risk or experiencing homelessness were consulted in both group and individual formats. This community of providers includes staff at agencies for whom persons experiencing homelessness are their direct or primary service population, as well as agencies representing sectors such as child welfare or drug and alcohol addiction, who serve a broader population that includes persons at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. The purpose of these consultations was to ascertain:

1. The distinctive characteristics and needs that youth who experience homelessness in Summit County have, especially those needs that may require a different approach or type of housing and/or service;
2. The barriers youth experiencing homelessness currently face in accessing housing and/or services from Summit County's community of providers; and
3. The barriers youth experiencing homelessness face in achieving positive outcomes once they have accessed housing and/or services from Summit County's community of providers.

3.2.1 Needs of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Summit County's housing and service providers discussed the question of what needs youth in their community have that must be addressed in order to attain and maintain permanent housing and an adequate source of income to support that housing. This question is related to the two questions below regarding the barriers youth currently experience when trying to access or achieve positive outcomes in Summit County's housing and service projects. However, this question is distinct in that it focuses on the personal aspects of youth who are at-risk or experiencing homelessness, as opposed to the ways in which the community's homeless response system must adapt to further increase access and positive outcomes to projects that respond to those needs.

Developing the Capacity for Youth Choice

Summit County's community of providers has a clear sense of how important it is that youth have both the *opportunity* and *capacity* to make and follow through on significant decisions that will help them achieve stable, permanent housing. As an opportunity, youth choice simply means that there are different housing and service options available to young people, and that each young person is given an appropriate level of opportunity to choose which option works best for them. While this aspect of youth choice is important when it comes to program design, it is important to note that Summit County's providers understand how important it is to also address the second aspect – youth choice as a *capacity*.

As a capacity, youth choice is a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, it is clear that older youth, especially those who are 18 and older, have a drive towards independence and freedom. They do not want others making choices for them, and housing and services that they have not had the ability to opt into are likely not to succeed. But on the other hand, it is also clear that young people who are at-risk or experiencing homelessness also tend to struggle with the motivation and capacity to make, and stick to, the significant decisions that allow them to attain and maintain permanent housing.

Understanding youth choice as an issue of developing an individual young person's *capacity* to make significant choices gets to a deeper level of understanding need. If youth choice really is a matter of strengthening capacities, then the issue cannot be addressed simply by offering many options. Indeed, without addressing the underlying capacity issue, more choices may not even be beneficial. As one provider put the issue, there are many times in which Summit County is "resource rich" but the ability to successfully serve youth comes down to "a lack of motivation." Identifying this need to develop capacities for youth choice is not a matter of blaming young people for their situation. On the contrary, these providers understand that there are root issues in the social environment and upbringing of these young people that have hindered the development of their capacity for significant decision-making.

Thus, youth choice turns out to be a capacity that is absolutely crucial for attaining and maintaining permanent housing, but also a capacity that needs to be further developed for many young people at-risk or experiencing homelessness. To summarize one provider, there comes a time for each young person – often times precisely as they turn 18 – in which they transition from a climate in which they have never been able to make any of their own choices to a climate in which they must make all their own choices, want to make their own choices, but nevertheless are missing a certain type of know-how to actually make and own those choices.

Summit County's community of providers identified five factors that are in play in the development of youth choice.

First, it is imperative to note that the specific age of each young person is critical to their capacity for youth choice. Although middle-adolescent minors may have a desire for more choice, this desire must be balanced by both a realism regarding their individual maturity level and legal context. After youth turn 18, there is often a period of several years in which their desire to leave highly structured environments (e.g. biological family, a foster care family and system, a juvenile justice system, the K-12 education system, etc.) is in tension with their ongoing need for a certain level of structure. As youth advance into their early twenties, these issues may remain but often become more hidden. For example, providers noted how a history in the foster care system affects youth well beyond their emancipation and the resources more readily available at their emancipation.

Second, providers identified how frequently the need for a more developed capacity for youth choice is directly tied to a lack of good parenting. Several street outreach workers shared how regularly they were treated – and even explicitly called by their clients – as the parents their clients never had. This expression of the need for parenting indicates that navigating the nuances and complexities of building youth choice requires a *personal* – as opposed to only a systemic or programmatic – intervention.

Third, Summit County providers identified a link between low capacities for youth choice and young people having been "systematized" or "institutionalized" by long-term involvement in highly structured systems. Foster care and juvenile justice systems are two such systems, but even routine stays in emergency shelters or other housing services can ultimately limit youth choice. The issue is that when young people are placed in contexts where they are never allowed to make any choices, then it becomes much more difficult to find motivation and confidence in making choices later. Moreover, because young people are intelligent and understand what's happening to them, they come to distrust other systems because of the risk that these other systems will continue to be a detriment to their opportunity and capacity for choice. A final factor identified here is that institutionalization often leads to a particularly high level of distrust for those, such as youth of color, who have been marginalized by the systems in which they grew up.

A fourth issue pertains to specific traumas. As one provider introduced the idea, "making choices is one thing, but doing that with trauma is another." For example, decisions about appropriate housing and services requires assessments. However, assessments require clients to disclose personal information about themselves, and if youth have had trauma associated with past disclosures, then they are less likely to be willing to disclose that information later. While there are many forms of trauma, the experience of identifying as LGBTQ+ and of disclosing domestic violence were directly raised as examples that are known to be under reported and therefore underserved.

Finally, youth choices are particularly influenced by the example of their peers. This fact serves as a reminder housing and service projects need to pay special attention to overall climate and context in which young people are being served. There is a fine line between learning to navigate a system and learning to "game" that system. Attention to this fact serves not only as a warning but also opens up potential pathways into program designs that intentionally include positive peer-to-peer supports on young people's journey to stable, permanent housing.

Mental Health Conditions

Behavioral and mental health conditions were identified as a significant need to be addressed in providing housing and services to youth at-risk and experiencing homelessness. While this is a well-known fact and is often attempted, providers noted how frequently young people will respond to a referral to assessment or therapy that they are "over it." Many youth have not only been previously diagnosed, but in a certain sense over-diagnosed to the point where they have become jaded with the entire process. Moreover, one provider pointed out how children tend to be diagnosed more based on particular behavior related to a specific, acute trauma rather than with an ongoing mental health condition. The combination of these two factors leads to a vicious spiral for those with long-term mental health conditions. Youth in the 18 and older range cannot rely on their childhood diagnoses, but rather need an *adult* diagnosis. Unfortunately, they have often already become worn out by the process and are now uncooperative and unwilling to show up. In the meantime, they do not have a useful diagnosis or documentation to get the specific services they need. Therefore, on need for youth with mental health conditions who are at-risk or experiencing homelessness in Summit County is to be able to reconnect with mental health providers in an adult context that demonstrates to them, from the onset, that they will not be repeating the same process that they are "over."

Life Skills

An additional need noted by many of Summit County's housing and service providers is the need for additional life skills training. One major barrier to attaining and maintaining permanent housing and income is that youth who are at-risk and experiencing homelessness often do not have the experience of and know-how for independent living. Many of the reasons for this gap overlap with those identified above in the section on youth choice especially their transitional age, frequent lack of good parenting, history of being part of a system, and the natural tendency to learn from the habits – good and bad – of other young people around them.

Two themes emerged in the discussion of life skills. One theme was a specific list of skills that ranged from paying bills to navigating work expectations to keeping up one's room or apartment. Another theme was the context in which these skills are best learned by young people. For example, one provider notes how most young people aged 18-24 tend to learn life skills in some form of congregate setting such as college dorms, military service, or a more structured job or apprenticeship. What is helpful about many of these congregate settings is that they often provide an environment that supports young people in their attainment of life skills that seeks a balance between the highly structured contexts of their childhood and being completely cut loose on one's own.

Thus, it is clear that young people at-risk or experiencing homelessness in Summit County not only have the need for increased life skills, but also have the need to learn those skills in a context that provides a level of support that is appropriate for their specific age and background.

Freedom from Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking

A final theme from Summit County's providers was the how often situations of domestic violence and human trafficking remain hidden and underreported. Summit County's providers are well aware that victims of domestic violence and human trafficking of all ages have a strong tendency not to disclose their retaliation due to a fear of retribution, desire for privacy, and other concerns – and that tendency not to disclose abuse and/or trafficking may be strongest among young adults. Moreover, they could identify specific ways in which abusers and/or traffickers would either disrupt their victim's pathway to stable housing through either violence or coercion. But despite these known issues, it remains difficult if not impossible to provide appropriate services to victims when their situation is not disclosed. Indeed, the county's providers were able to describe many events in which such abuse and/or trafficking was discovered too late, or otherwise in a context in which the provider was unable to do anything about the situation.

Therefore, it is clear that youth at-risk and experiencing homelessness need the housing and services they receive to have mechanisms built-in that recognize that they may be victims of domestic violence and/or human trafficking, even though such victimization has not yet been disclosed.

3.2.2 Barriers to Accessing Homeless Housing and Services

Resistance from Landlords

A major barrier to accessing homeless housing and services through the pathways currently available to Summit County's providers is the substantial resistance from local landlords to rent units to youth experiencing homelessness. Because youth are renting units for the first time, they do not have references and can rarely pass credit checks. Moreover, because youth are considered more risky tenants, landlords will often refuse to rent to them. Sometimes landlords will increase rent – cases of up to three times the standard rate have been reported – and other times landlords have said they would rather leave the unit empty than rent to a young person currently experiencing homelessness. Many landlords continue to decline to rent to young people, even when providers exhaust all incentive offers they can make.

Gaps in Supports After Emancipation from Foster Care

Youth who have emancipated from the foster care system are at special risk for homelessness, and Summit County Children Services and Ohio Job and Family Service's Bridges program work hard to assist this population of youth. However, this system is not perfect, and several barriers to finding stable housing for recently emancipated youth remain.

Thanks to detailed records of 104 youth kept by Summit County Children Services in the last three years (2018-2020), we know that 13% of emancipated youth simply "disappear" or are known to have ended up in a homeless situation. Moreover, we know that 34% of recently emancipated youth go to stay with friends, family, or girlfriend/boyfriend after emancipation. These are not necessarily negative situations – for some, this stay will only be a temporary stay on the way into a more permanent situation. For example, sometimes youth choose this option while their application is being submitted to public housing authorities. Other times, however, this situation places the young person at more immanent risk for homelessness as it turns into long-term couch surfing. Although there are no exact figures on this latter pathway, several street outreach workers were able to confirm that emancipated youth will

often become homeless after months to years of such couch surfing or other temporary situations. In total, this means that 47% of emancipated youth leave the foster care system to one of these highly precarious housing destinations. The data for these exit destinations are summarized in Figure 12, below.

Figure 12. Foster Care Exit Destinations

Summit County Children Services Emancipated Youth Exit Destinations					
	2018	2019	2020	3-yr Total	3-yr Average
Friends / Family	13	11	11	35	34%
Unknown	3	5	5	13	13%
Public Housing	7	9	12	28	27%
Other Destination	10	13	5	28	27%
Total	33	38	33	104	100%

This certainly does not mean that all 47% will end up homeless or, conversely, that all youth placed to typically more stable situations have a permanent safeguard against homelessness. Nevertheless, these statistics are a clear indication of structural barriers in play against safe and stable housing for recently emancipated youth. Summit County's providers were able to identify the following barriers:

1. Qualification for Bridges housing: While the Bridges program is responsible for housing approximately 27% of Summit County's former wards of the foster care system right after their emancipation – with even more likely to be served at later dates – this opportunity is far from guaranteed. First, one must qualify for Bridges by having a job or active education enrollment which some youth do not have and some youth lose over time, therefore disqualifying them from ongoing service. Second, Bridges relies upon placements to public housing, and the public housing system requires applicants to be 18 years of age before applying. Thus, emancipating youth cannot apply for public housing until they have already emancipated, which is part of the reason for higher exits to friends and family or – if they do not have such relations – to homeless destinations. While this limbo situation does resolve positively for many, it also introduces one too many hurdles for others.

2. Public Housing limitations: In addition to qualification barriers for Bridges housing, public housing also presents several barriers. In the first place, providers have noted a shortage of one-bedroom apartments that will accept Section 8 vouchers and pass inspection requirements. Additionally, youth who are registered sex offenders or have delinquency or adult criminal records are often unable to find an apartment.

3. Qualifications for federally funded homelessness housing and services: Housing and services funded by HUD or other federal funders requires that clients be homeless in order to qualify. This qualification creates a precarious scenario for emancipating youth. One the one hand, as one provider provocatively stated the issue, emancipating youth frequently *are* homeless from any practical point of view. But on the other hand, emancipating youth do not meet HUD's definition of literal homelessness, and therefore do not quality for these housing and service options.

4. Higher education and housing instability: For those emancipated youth who are pursuing higher education, the ability to live on campus is greatly hindered by the fact that they would typically have no place to stay during vacation when campus housing is closed. This reality requires that youth who would like to pursue higher education find and pay for off-campus housing or accept the risk of living in homeless situations while campus is closed. One provider cites this fact as a factor in the reason that 46% of Summit County's emancipated youth have a high school diploma or GED when or right after they emancipate, but only a handful are able to pursue higher education. Finding solutions to the relatively short-term problem of housing for emancipated youth who wish to pursue higher education may therefore be a pathway to resolving longer-term housing instability.

Gaps in Relations with the Justice System

Connections with the justice system – both juvenile and adult – was identified as an additional area in which several barriers to accessing housing and services remain. Youth with a history in the justice system have a more difficult time finding stable housing options, especially if they have a violent drug offense or a record that identifies them as a sex offender. Another subpopulation that has a difficult time transitioning out of the justice system are youth with family in AMHA public housing. Because their family members are not allowed to let additional people stay with them, the option of temporarily staying with family may not be an option.

While some providers had relationships with specific judges who are able to assist in the reentry process, these relationships and programs were not well-known across all providers. Thus, it is necessary to increase relationships between homeless housing and service providers and the justice system in order to take full advantage of existing resources, as well as to leverage additional support to keep youth exiting the justice system from entering into homeless situations.

3.2.3 Barriers to Achieving Positive Outcomes

Summit County's housing providers understand that each young person has their own unique needs when it comes to finding their pathway to stable, permanent housing. Temporary and permanent housing options are not all the same, and their effectiveness depends on the specific young person in question. Even if a series of interventions manages to place a young person into a permanent housing situation, if it has not been the right pathway for that individual's social, emotional, employment, education, or other needs, then it may well not be a stable situation. Returning to homelessness because of such situations is all too common. Finding the right housing option is therefore an essential piece of the puzzle.

Despite how well known this issue is, Summit County's housing providers were nevertheless able to identify three leading barriers to finding the right housing option for young people. First, the process of determining the right housing project is dependent on assessments. Any assessment is necessarily dependent on the young person disclosing information about themselves, and if they do not trust the system of homeless housing and services then it is more likely that the assessment will not be accurate. The issue here is not necessarily that young people do not trust the housing and service providers giving the assessment but rather, as discussed in Section 3.2.1, that they may have developed a learned

distrust of *all* systems. Providers noted that this issue is particularly evident among youth of color and youth who identify as LGBTQ+.

A second and related issue is that some providers noted the prevalence of domestic violence victimization among young persons, especially young women. This issue is similar in that victims are often hesitant to disclose everything about their situation due to fear of retribution, desire for privacy, and other concerns. This hesitancy to report makes precise statistics impossible; however, one provider estimated that as many as half of young women in their housing programs may be victims of domestic violence. While these victims cannot be blamed for their fears and concerns, these situations can nevertheless deter providers from being able to provide housing options that offer the same level of security and supports that victim service providers are able to offer.

A final issue with finding the right housing option is finding a placement that has the right balance between the supports and social character of congregate settings with the independence of individual housing options. A common concern among housing providers was that lack of transitional housing (TH) for young people in the county. As federal funding for transitional housing has decreased in recent years, providers have had to increasingly rely on emergency shelter (ES) and rapid re-housing (RRH). While these project types do work for some youth, they can be too far for young people in either direction. On the one hand, shelters sometimes do not have the capacity to foster youth independence while, on the other hand, RRH sometimes places youth into independent housing before they are ready for it.

3.3 Youth Think Tank

As part of this needs assessment, Summit County held a "Youth Think Tank" in order to learn from the lived experience of youth who are currently or formerly homeless. Six young adults participated in the think tank session, which was held without any of Summit County's stakeholders present in the room, in order that they could speak freely on all topics. Collectively the think tank participants had a wide range of backgrounds and experience. All youth were currently clients in at least one housing or service project. While most youth were currently being served in an RRH housing project with ongoing case management, they also had experience with Summit County's emergency shelter, transitional housing, and street outreach efforts., including. Demographically, the group contained both men and women, as well as participants who identified as both white and black or African American.

Participants in the think tank were asked questions on two broad topics: barriers to youth accessing the county's housing and services, and barriers to youth achieving housing and income through the county's housing and service projects.

3.3.1 Barriers and Solutions to Accessing Housing and Services

When asked about difficulties in accessing homeless housing and services, the immediate reaction of the youth think tank was that Summit County's system prioritizes youth with families and children as well as youth with disabilities. While they readily acknowledged the benefits of such prioritization, their point was that it is much more difficult for single individuals – especially single men – to access housing and services, since programs were not specifically targeting them. This sentiment was strong, and participants readily agreed with each expression of the general idea that single youth without any "special conditions" were left to navigate the system for themselves.

However, as participants continued to reflect on the issue, their conversation started to take a somewhat different trajectory. One participant observed that the problem may actually have more to do with what young people *know* about Summit County's housing and service options rather than what is may or may not be actually available. More specifically, they identified that what young people at risk or experiencing homelessness do not know about are the housing and service options that are not an emergency shelter. The group of participants was split in terms of the number of youth who had ever stayed in a shelter, but they all agreed that they all had at least a general understanding that the shelters existed and were an option. However, actually going to an emergency shelter was considered to be something of a last resort that felt more like giving up than moving forward.

A summary of this initial conversation among the youth think tank might go as follows: Summit County's youth perceive a lack of housing and service options that do not have qualifications for entering into and will result in stable, permanent housing. This perception is at least as likely to stem from a communications or information gap as a lack of programs.

After settling on this assessment of the barriers hindering youth access to Summit County's housing and service programs, the think tank considered the question of how to overcome this gap. Since each of the participants had managed to access appropriate housing and/or services to help resolve their homelessness, the question quickly became: how did they come to learn about and get connected to the programs they were in?

Participants' reflections can be summarized by two thoughts: (1) youth need a personal connection made by someone they trust, and (2) as one participant put it, "you need a guy" working *in* the system of housing and service providers who can help navigate *through* the system.

Regarding the sentiment that a personal connection is needed in order to know what housing and service options exist and will work, participants did not seem to feel that this connection had to come from one or another sphere of their life. Several youth suggested stronger connections between the juvenile justice system and the homelessness response system. The fact that participants made this suggestion implies that youth are not entirely jaded or distrustful of more formal or institutional referrals. However, a second line of discussion revolved around more informal community contacts. One participant succinctly described how it what made a difference for him was not a referral from another agency or institution, but rather that "the black community did it for me." The one exception to personal referrals was social media. While it is uncertain whether or not a strong social media presence could be primary source for information and trust-building, it is clear that young people frequently rely on social media to form and validate opinions on whether or not a program is reliable.

When taken as a whole, the net result of this conversation was that both formal/institutional referrals as well as informal/community connections are necessary. While referrals from agencies or institutions to a homelessness housing or service provider help increase knowledge of these programs and will often make a successful connection, sometimes youth still need encouragement from their personal networks to trust that such programs will truly benefit them. Additionally, young people will search for a social media presence to help validate a referral and build enough trust to reach out to the program.

With respect to the second point (i.e. "you need a guy"), what became apparent was the need that youth have a need for a stable, trusted adult in their life. In fact, when asked what had been the greatest help to them in their journey towards a stable home, they universally agreed it was their respective "guys" – who participants could not identify with terms such as "street outreach worker" or

"case manager" but only by name. Some even joked that the solution to homelessness was a cloning machine that could make more of their outreach workers.

From an external perspective listening in on the participant's discussion of their "guys," it is possible to make the distinction that participants were not specifically referring to a type of job or job title. Participants had clearly worked with multiple outreach workers and case managers, but not all of them were "their guy." In fact, at one point and without prompting, participants tried to determine if there was something distinctive about what their guys did. Some had heard the term "case worker" or "case manager" and tried to figure out if that's what their guys were by comparing what they did to what other case managers did and were unable to name what it was.

However, from an external perspective, it was obvious that what participants were trying to name was the way in which their "guys" used street outreach skills throughout their connection to the homeless response system and placement into housing projects. Even though their guys also carried out case management and housing tasks, what made the difference was the way in which they evidently offer space, time, and attention in order to build the youth's trust and buy-in. While from an objective perspective it is clear that all other housing and service interventions offered to these participants had been in their best interests, these youth nevertheless needed a sustained personal connection who they could *feel* was, as one participant put it, "on my side."

One final point on this topic that participants noted that a way to increase access to permanent housing projects was to have their "guys" work across agencies. While participants were not able to use project type language or give a full account of Summit County's various housing and service providers worked together, they did indicate that they felt that a sort of gap existed between, on the one hand, the emergency shelters and, on the other hand, transitional housing and rapid re-housing projects. A sentiment that was particularly strong among the youth who had been in and out of various shelters was that they wished they had known that their respective transitional housing or rapid re-housing program had existed. Moreover, they specifically recommended that there be some sort of "guy" like they had now who would go to the shelters, talk directly to young people there, and then remain working with them in the future.

3.3.2 Barriers and Solutions to Positive Outcomes

The second topic of conversation for the youth think tank was on barriers and solutions to achieving stable, permanent housing once getting connected to appropriate housing and services. Results of this discussion are shorter, since two of the participant conversations do not need much attention. One of these conversations essentially repeated the topic above regarding having needing "a guy" to help navigate through the system. This idea came up again in conversation because it was evident to the participants that in order for a housing project to succeed, it needed to be the right one. And, as they saw the issue, having the right personal connection to and through that program was the best way to ensure that it was a good fit. Thus, it is important to note that the think tank participants did note the importance of finding a housing solution that was the right fit, but they were not able to identify barriers or solutions to finding the right housing fit other than those mentioned already.

A second barrier to finding success in housing projects pertains to the social life of youth. One participant was willing to admit how lonely it was for them living in an apartment away from anyone they knew. As this participant put the issue, "A place to stay is good, but that's about all we have to do."

This participant, who was currently living in an RRH subsidized apartment, was clearly thankful to have their apartment. However, without easy transportation, actually having a full life that included friends and social interactions made the experience harder to want to maintain. All other youth participants who were or had been in similar situations readily agreed. Others added that this situation is particularly difficult for youth who are underemployed or unemployed.

4 Synthesis and Recommendations

This section synthesizes the findings in analysis above into four topic areas: housing, supporting services, addressing equity and youth subpopulations, and evaluating youth outcomes. Each subsection begins with a description of one or more needs that were identified in this report, and then matches those needs with one or more existing strengths that Summit County's providers have demonstrated. It is important that new developments build upon existing strengths, rather than start from scratch. Finally, each subsection ends with a general recommendation for the community to discuss and decide if it is correct and can be implemented.

New solutions work best when they build on a strength the community already has and can be linked with an appropriate funding opportunity. In this case, the recommended funding opportunity is HUD's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), which is currently accepting community-level applications. The fact that Summit County has already conducted this needs assessment increases its chance of being awarded funds. YHDP requires that CoCs apply for funding, and then develop a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) after being awarded funds. The CCP requires that a community's providers work together to develop a cohesive plan that works across agencies and systems to create the best solutions for young people. If awarded YHDP funds, the CCP process would be an excellent opportunity for Summit County's community of providers and stakeholders to discuss these recommendations.

4.1 Housing

4.1.1 Housing Needs: Appropriateness and Capacity of ES, TH, and RRH

Need 1: ES has capacity, but is not the right fit for youth

Although there is additional capacity in Summit County's emergency shelters, the housing outcomes demonstrated by shelters do not demonstrate that this is the best project type for all youth to achieve permanent housing in. Another way to look at the benefit of ES is to say that, while shelters are well suited for helping youth and young adults to *access* Summit County's homeless response system, they are not always the best setting for youth to achieve positive housing and income gains. While on the one hand, emergency shelters are a necessary staple to any homeless response system. They are often the front door to housing services, and as the youth think tank articulated, they are the only places that most youth experiencing homelessness would even know to turn. The System Inflow map in Section 3.1.2 demonstrates how shelters are the first housing projects that most youth enter. However, the data also show that specialized shelters that target specific subpopulations of youth such as parenting

and pregnant adolescents, the rates of positive housing and increased income for youth in ES are extremely low. Exits to permanent housing are as low as 13%, and income gains are virtually nonexistent.

Therefore, Summit County needs to develop a coordinated effort that quickly identifies and moves youth out of ES settings and into housing and services that are specifically tailored to the needs of young people. Shelters will always remain a welcoming front door and cannot be removed from the overall picture; however, stronger connections between the shelters and housing projects more tailored to youth-specific needs should be pursued in order to secure higher rates of positive housing outcomes and income gains.

Need 2: Shortage of youth-specific TH

Summit County currently faces a shortage of TH options for youth, and this shortage is likely to be exacerbated if more youth are rapidly transferred out of ES in response to the first need listed above. Currently, youth make up 21% of all clients in ES, but only 13% of clients in TH. The problem is related to capacity. Simply put, Summit County is currently utilizing all of its TH year-round, but available funding has restricted efforts to fund new TH projects. YHDP as well as private sources of funding should be pursued to fill this gap.

Need 3: RRH struggles with a limited housing market

Similar to the issue listed above with TH, only 9% of all Summit County's clients in RRH are youth. The fact that youth are underrepresented in RRH projects is largely driven by the fact that even when funding is available, the housing market is tight and landlords are often disinclined to rent to formerly homeless youth. Increased rental amounts and other landlord incentives are often used, but often do not work. While RRH will continue to play an important role in Summit County's set of solutions for youth, and more effective solutions with landlords may be developed over time, providers have already tried most possibilities allowed by this project type. Therefore, the current level of RRH should be maintained and efforts to increase utilization rates should continue; however, additional RRH targeted to youth should not be added to Summit County's portfolio of options at the present time.

4.1.2 Housing Strength: TH with a positive communal element and clear "next step"

Summit County's most successful transitional housing for youth has been projects that have at least two features in common. The first is a more clearly defined "next step." For example, when this next step isn't for a specific subpopulation (e.g. pregnant youth), the "mixed model" approach to housing has proven successful in achieving positive outcomes for youth because this approach has a built-in mechanism to transition youth from a full-funded TH arrangement to a partially-supported RRH-style arrangement while they continue preparing for mainstream housing. Having a concrete option as a next step helps young adults focus and build the necessary skills for moving on.

Moreover, Summit County's more successful TH projects have made sure to support youth not only with professional staff support, but also with a positive peer network. As the youth think tank confirmed, one often overlooked struggle with RRH housing is that it isolates young people from one another and

the positive peer network they need. Thus, while the "more intensive case management" aspect that is popularly associated with TH should not be overlooked, the fact that intentional efforts can be made to turn the more congregate setting of TH into a community or peer network is perhaps even more highly valued by youth experiencing homelessness.

Thus, while Summit County TH providers may or may not wish to pursue the specific "mixed model" approach to TH, they should be sure to incorporate elements of community building and laying out clear next steps for their youth clients.

4.1.3 Housing Recommendation: Fund Joint TH/RRH; quickly transition youth from ES

As discussed above, Summit County has TH models that work when youth are supported by a community of their peers and have a clear next step in their journey to permanent housing. While TH provides the right level of support and an environment in which young people can build up their income, credit, and capacity to make and sustain positive choices, funding opportunities for TH have been the barrier. With YHDP funding available for TH, Summit County could create several new TH options that provide the necessary youth-specific level of support.

Summit County should investigate and pursue one of two forms of TH. One form is "traditional" TH, including models where the agency signs a master lease for an entire house or facility, and then subleases the units to youth clients.[6] With some funding streams, it may be possible to allow youth to changeover from subleasing as TH to leasing as RRH when possible. However, another model that may make this crossover easier is the Joint TH/RRH component type available through YHDP, which allows more flexible transitions. Summit County's model should be informed in part by the existing "mixed model" housing of Harmony House, which offers a working example of how TH can achieve strong outcomes for youth through a congregate, or communal, setting as well as establishing clear-yet-flexible next steps.

With an increase in TH (or Joint TH/RRH) established, Summit County should then use its housing navigators, coordinated entry, and provider collaboration to quickly transition youth who enter the system through ES into TH units as quickly as possible.

4.2 Supportive Services

[6] Note that distinction is sometimes made within the YHDP sphere between long-term or traditional TH and "crisis" or "rapid response" TH. The so-called crisis TH has come into existence largely because YHDP does not fund emergency shelter projects, yet many communities need to rapidly increase their access points for young people. However, the recommendation in this report is that Summit County pursue the more traditional TH model. Rather than replacing ES with crisis TH as the immediate front door to the homeless response system, the model proposed here is intended to continue using ES as the main access point for young adults.

4.2.1 Supportive Service Need: Normal case management is not enough support for youth

Youth succeed in achieving stable, permanent housing when they not only have access to the right housing and services, but when they are able to develop the capacity to make and sustain positive choices. Due to substantial trauma, a learned distrust of systems, and the effects of over-institutionalization, low capacity for youth choice is a common issue for youth experiencing homelessness in Summit County. This capacity cannot be encouraged in youth simply by making housing options available.

In the first place, life skills training is an important piece of the puzzle. Young people need to acquire the skills that will allow them to upkeep a housing unit, pay bills, find and hold stable income, and otherwise gain the life skills that have not been taught to them.

But an arguably even more important part of the puzzle is having a reliable and trustworthy adult contact who youth feel is on their side and stays with them throughout their journey to help navigate the complex system of housing and services available. This *personal* level support is the critical solution to fighting the effects of over-institutionalization. Summit County already has many working examples of such support, but these examples need to be widened in scope and availability. For youth, success in this endeavor will mean that each young person will feel like they have "a guy" (see Section 3.3.1). For many providers, it may feel like they are providing what they consider to be good parenting. But regardless of what they are called, it is imperative that Summit County's youth homeless response system expand its services to young people in housing projects beyond case management alone.

4.2.2 Supportive Service Strengths:

Strength 1: Outreach-trained case managers provide a strong model

The relatively high success rates of RRH projects in this community seem to owe much of their success to the fact that many providers combine the attentive and persistent care of street outreach trained staff alongside their efforts to attain housing placements. In this way, these RRH providers are able to tackle the issue of building the capacity for youth choice head on by fulfilling two needs at once. On the one hand, their placement of young people into RRH living situations helps give the freedom and independence that youth are often searching. But on the other hand, these providers understand that the stability and life skills which independence and freedom require are not always easily attained. Therefore, they balance independence with the support of staff who know that building trust and meaningful relationships is as important for housing stability as finding the right apartment. The successes of this balance are shown in the data, in provider assessments, and in the assessment of the youth think tank.

These outreach-trained case managers provide Summit County a strong model for providing a more intensive level of support for youth. However, given the practical limits on being able to expand RRH, it will be necessary to expand this model beyond RRH case managers. Moreover, given the need articulated above to move young people more efficiently across project types (e.g. from ES to TH), these additional workers should be able to easily work between and across agencies in a fluid manner.

Strength 2: Collaborative Provider Network

The quality of Summit County's provider and youth engagement is relatively high. On issues of youth homelessness, providers tend to work cooperatively rather than competitively. Moreover, "youth issues" are not all placed onto just one or two providers, even though the county has providers who are specifically dedicated to serving youth experiencing homelessness. This level of coordination among providers is a major asset, as preventing and ending youth homelessness is truly a cooperative effort.

4.2.3 Supportive Service Recommendation: Develop a youth housing navigator project that works across agencies

A top priority for Summit County's homeless youth response system should be the development of a housing navigator project in which specially trained navigators assist young people through whatever combination of projects and agencies make up their pathway to permanent housing. Some features of this housing navigator project include the following.

First, navigators should be familiar with the operations and physical spaces of all Summit County providers who serve youth. Moreover, all Summit County providers should welcome and invite housing navigators to work with them. The navigator project must be a collaborative effort, and navigators should never be seen as competition to housing projects and case managers. Safe and stable housing for young people is a win for everyone, and "the credit" for achieving positive outcomes can and should be shared.

Second, housing navigators should be trained with the specialized skill set of street outreach workers. Navigators do not need to take the place of case managers when it comes to developing a case plan, finding housing, and referring youth to appropriate services. Rather, navigators should be focused on building trust, getting buy-in from youth, and following up with youth to make sure that they are doing everything necessary on their end to ensure their case plan is successfully implemented.

Third, navigators should be assigned to youth all the way to and through their move-in to mainstream permanent housing. In the language of HUD's Supportive Service Only component type, the navigator project should be a "services only with housing outcomes" project. This means that navigators do not stop working with clients once they are safely residing in a TH or RRH project. Even if it is appropriate to check-in less frequently, it is important for navigators to maintain a calendar of all important dates for their clients and check in appropriately to ensure that everything is going well.

Finally, navigators should make a special effort to be physically present in emergency shelters to begin building relationships with youth as soon as they enter. Because the shelters are crucial access points for youth, it is important that someone will regularly be present who can help build trust and explain that there are successful options available besides – as many youth perceive the case – being "stuck in a shelter." The role of the navigator in this scenario is not to establish a case plan or even conduct an assessment, although the navigators may ultimately wear multiple hats. Rather, the goal is to ensure that youth know from Day 1 that they have someone who is on their side in their journey through the homeless response system.

4.3 Addressing Equity and Youth Subpopulations

4.3.1 Equity and Subpopulations Needs

Low outcomes for single men

In general, female youth achieve higher rates of permanent housing and income gains than male youth. This is because young women have more opportunities specifically tailored to their needs. These opportunities for young women should be continued and expanded as necessary. However, the same opportunities do not exist in sufficient numbers for young men. As the youth think tank confirmed, the perception and reality among many single, non-parenting youth – and especially young men – is that they are not prioritized and not likely to succeed in the county's homeless response system unless they get lucky.

Opportunities missing to target Domestic Violence and LGBTQ+ issues

A collective, systematic conversation about how domestic violence and LGBTQ+ issues was not discovered over the course of research for this report. This does not mean, however, that providers and stakeholders are unaware of the importance of these two issues – anecdotally, the opposite appears to be the case. The issue of the prevalence of domestic violence was raised during the provider meeting (see Section 3.2.1) and met with widespread agreement, and a need to explore the issue of LGBTQ+ engagement was raised as a side-conversation during agency visits. Thus, it is clear that providers and stakeholders *know* the additional barriers that victims and LGBTQ+ identified youth face. What is missing is not a level of knowledge or concern. Rather, what appears missing are opportunities for housing and service providers who have not been specially funded or given the space to discuss these issues the funding and space to bring them to the forefront.

Service gap for youth emancipating from foster care

Youth who are emancipating or have recently emancipated from the foster care system are particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. While Children Services, Bridges, and public housing staff work diligently to place as many emancipating youth as possible into qualifying programs, many youth remain unable to be successfully placed (see Section 4.3.1). Although there are many combinations of factors that create barriers to accessing housing through one or another programs, one thing stays the same for all emancipating youth: they are at high, immanent risk of homelessness.

Being at immanent risk of homelessness is the second category used in HUD's definition of homelessness. However, individuals and families facing so-called "Category 2 homelessness" are not typically eligible for housing under HUD-funded programs. However, special funding opportunities such as YHDP do allow projects to serve this population of youth.

4.3.2 Strength: Specialized housing and services to important subpopulations

Summit County's network of homelessness providers should count among its strengths the fact that it has housing and services specifically focused on pregnant and parenting youth as well as runaway

minors. These subpopulations have unique needs, and the fact that Summit County has housing and service projects with proven results in meeting those needs means that the community can build upon what it has, rather than start from scratch.

In other words, Summit County's community of providers has demonstrated success with being able to target and achieve high rates of housing outcomes for specific subpopulations. This is a valuable strategy that requires coordination and cooperation. Thus, when expanding the housing and service options available for youth in the county, Summit County is well positioned not only to provide options for "youth" – which is, in fact, the name for a highly diverse population – but moreover to target specific subpopulations of youth and coordinate housing and services accordingly.

4.3.3 Recommendation: Target specific youth subpopulations, not just "youth"

In order to most effectively serve "youth" with increased housing and service opportunities, Summit County's providers should be sure to have intentional conversations about the following subpopulations:

1. Single young men are the lowest achievers of permanent housing and increased income, and there is a perception among young adults in the community that this population is not prioritized. As housing navigator, TH, and other new projects are developed, providers should add young men into the list of subpopulations that receive special attention when it comes to programming and branding. The term "branding" is used here to remind providers that specialized opportunities need to not only exist in the community – they must also be seen and known by the community if they are to get the necessary buy-in from young adults.

2. Summit County should specifically examine the needs of its LGBTQ+ community. Because sexual orientation is not an HMIS data point for most providers, and because homeless youth are often reluctant to share their identity as LGBTQ+, it is difficult to determine the extent to which Summit County's homeless response system needs to address the prejudices against this particular subpopulation. Nevertheless, because LGBTQ+ youth are known to experience higher rates of homelessness and distinct forms of trauma, Summit County should specifically research this issue locally.

3. Several youth providers mentioned the extent to which victims of domestic violence and sexual assault enter homelessness but do not disclose their victimization. In response to this known issue, Summit County's providers should meet and discuss this issue specifically, and implement a coordinated response. At least two general options are available:

    a. Providers could pursue means of building trust, such as the housing navigator project, such that youth feel more comfortable disclosing their victimization and transferring to an appropriate victim service provider; and/or
    b. All housing projects – and especially those projects established for young women – could work to develop standards and rules that assume that half of their clients will be undisclosed victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

    Neither option is easy because of the all-pervasive and severely traumatic nature of domestic violence and sexual assault. Nevertheless, it is precisely because of the difficulty and pervasiveness of this issue that it must be explicitly raised and planned for by all providers.

4. In the TH projects described in Section 4.1.3, Summit County should specifically target youth emancipating from the foster care system who are ineligible or unable to qualify for Bridges or other mainstream housing options. In order to target this population, the providers should pursue funding for youth who meet Category 2 of HUD's definition of homelessness – i.e. youth who are at immanent risk of homelessness. The YHDP Notice of Funding Opportunity (Appendix A, II.D.2) states that individuals qualifying as homeless under Category 2 of the homeless definition are eligible for funding. In designing this TH project, Summit County's homelessness providers should pay close attention to the definition of Category 2 homelessness and work closely with Summit County Children Services to develop a system for referring emancipating youth to the TH project during appropriate time window where they qualify as being at immanent risk of homelessness. The goal is to prevent any gap – such as time homeless or couch surfing – between the emancipating youth's residence in foster care and residence in the TH project.

5. Summit County should continue existing methods of tackling the issue of racial equity. The topic of racial equity is – rightly – a high priority among YHDP projects, and should not be ignored in the pursuit and implementation of any YHDP or other funding. However, this assessment has found that, at least at a surface level, Summit County's homeless providers are adept in targeting subpopulations of youth and are skilled in addressing inequities stemming from racial discrimination. These strengths should not be overlooked or trivialized. Youth and community stakeholders should continue to be consulted on issues of racial equity to ensure that these efforts are maintained and that less obvious issues do not exist. Nevertheless, this report finds that Summit County's youth homeless response system is relatively well equipped to respond to systemic racial injustices.

4.4 Evaluating Youth Outcomes

4.4.1 Need: Lack of income gains and youth-specific outcomes

Youth experiencing homelessness need a stable source of income in order to maintain stable housing. However, the rates at which youth exit the homeless system without having increased their income to a sufficient level are low. RRH is the only project type consistently demonstrating adequate rates of increased and earned income at exit. By expanding efforts to increase income – whether through cash income or benefits – Summit County's youth will be more likely to be able to stabilize in mainstream housing rather than return to couch surfing and homelessness.

Additionally, the extent to which other outcomes that support the safe and stable housing of young persons is difficult to determine – much less regularly evaluate – at the present time. Note that an absence of ways to measure outcomes does not necessarily mean that these outcomes are not being achieved. Nevertheless, the ability of a community to set clear goals and measure progress to meet them is almost always a surefire way to increase real outcomes.

National efforts currently exist to promote goals such as the following in order to promote the safe and stable housing of youth:

- Education attainment
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Permanent connections with peers and positive role models
- Family engagement

Measuring and determining specific outcomes for these goals remains challenging, and national discussions to determine best practices are only still emerging. Summit County's providers should engage these conversations to be at the forefront of preventing and ending youth homelessness = both in terms of funding opportunities as well as – and more importantly – in terms of ensuring that real outcomes are being achieved.

4.4.2 Strengths: An emerging Coordinated Entry system with HMIS support

When providers were asked about what they thought the best feature of their system was, the overwhelming top response was their new coordinated entry system. A related matter is that Summit County has an HMIS lead agency with the capacity and willingness to conduct data analysis work with a youth and equity focus. This combination of a well-working CE system with HMIS technical support can be a powerful asset. Although the most obvious feature of CE is often the ability to assess and refer clients, many such systems get bogged down over time because of the technical difficulties required to make data-driven decisions year after year. This difficulty is particularly evident when addressing the youth sphere, because even though the relevant data on youth clients exists in HMIS, those data are frequently difficult to access and understand. Because Summit County has both a Coordinated Entry system and competent HMIS staff, this community has all the resources necessary to further develop a robust, CE system that is supported by the kind of thoughtful, data-driven resources that will allow providers to make quick and accurate assessments and referrals.

Strength 2: An emerging Youth Action Board

Summit County has been developing a Youth Action Board (YAB) and held a youth think tank that will continue to bring the voice of youth with current and past lived experience to the forefront. Cultivating an authentic and informed YAB is a work that takes communities a substantive amount of time. The challenges of building trust and stability, as well as empowering youth to speak from their experience will continue to take time. These challenges cannot be overcome simply because a funder requires the presence of a YAB. Therefore, it is to Summit County's benefit that these challenges are already being tackled, and that the steps to build an increasingly active and well-informed YAB are already underway.

4.4.3 Recommendation: Build a robust youth system evaluation to inform planning and coordinated entry

Safe and stable housing for youth is about more than just housing. It is also about ensuring that they have an appropriate level of income, education, social and emotional wellbeing. Moreover, the achievement of this holistic set of outcomes needs to be equitable – meaning that no particular subpopulation of youth systemically fails to achieve these outcomes. In order to ensure that this holistic set of outcomes is being met, a more robust means of evaluating the homeless response system is needed. Fortunately, Summit County has an HMIS lead organization that is willing and able to assist on

technical and analytic issues, a collaborative continuum of providers and community stakeholders that are willing and able to bring valuable experience to this process, and a rapidly developing coordinated entry system that is able to inform and help implement the fruits of such evaluations. Specific measures to implement include:

a. Developing a Continuous Quality Improvement Team that is comprised of HMIS experts, providers, and youth stakeholders to regularly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the youth homeless response system
b. Create specific outcome measures to evaluate the efficacy of each type of housing and service project
c. Collect and become familiar with additional HMIS data points that are specific to the needs of youth. Specifically, projects funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) are required to collect additional HMIS data on youth regarding sexual orientation, education status, social and emotional wellbeing, and other youth-specific needs. Collecting and using these data are optional for non-RHY funded projects. However, special expertise is required to learn how to collect and use these data points. Opportunities to learn this expertise is available through participation in YHDP for willing communities.
d. Use the findings of these evaluations in community planning processes and to inform coordinated entry processes such as case conferencing and assessment.

5 Appendix

5.1 Equity Data

Figure 13. Poverty Levels by Race, Ethnicity, Age

	Summit County			National Avg.
	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
Population for whom poverty status is determined	530656	76061	14.3%	*12.3%*
RACE				
White	413113	42118	10.2%	*10.3%*
Black or African American alone	77666	25138	32.4%	*21.2%*
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	921	N[1]	N	*23.0%*
Asian alone	19719	4513	22.9%	*9.6%*
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	104	N	N	*16.5%*

Some other race alone	3240	N	N	*18.3%*
Two or more races	15893	2443	21.2%	*15.2%*
ETHNICITY				
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	12076	2443	20.2%	*17.2%*
UNACCOMPANIED INDIVIDUALS, 18-24[2]				
18 to 24 years (US avg = 48.4%)	12675	6038	47.6%	*46.8%*

1 An 'N' entry in the estimate and margin of error columns indicates that data for this geographic area cannot be displayed because the number of sample cases is too small

[2]Name changed from the US Census' term "unrelated individuals," this demographic refers people of any age who are not living with any other family members