

# Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

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Akron/Barberton/Summit  
County Continuum of Care  
OH-506



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## Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in and supported our work to develop this community plan to prevent and end youth homelessness. First, we want especially to thank the Youth Advisory Board and supporting YYA for their continued hard work and dedication to this process of developing this Coordinated Community Plan. We would also like to thank the many community youth providers who have been actively supporting and encouraging the YAB in its decision-making process. We would also like to thank the Summit County Continuum of Care staff for their unconditional support and assistance. Finally, thank you to HUD for selecting Summit County Continuum of Care to become a YHDP grant recipient. Joining the national network of YHDP communities brings us closer to a future in which all young people in our community have access to safe and stable housing.



*MARCH 2024 FIELDTRIP TO STAR HOUSE IN COLUMBUS, OHIO*

*Back row (l to r): Joe Rizzo, Executive Director of Shelter Care, Inc; Joseph Scalise, Director of Housing Services, United Way of Summit and Medina Counties, Jeannie Cargill, Independent Living Program of Summit County Children Services; Melody Stardust, member of YAB; Javon Solomon, member of YAB; Breanna Wesson, member of YAB; Brielle Davis, YAB member; Charles Fraise, Bayard Rustin LGBTQ+ Resource Center; Mar-quetta Boddie, Executive Director, Summit County CoC*

*Front Row (l to r): Delaney Jones, Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center; Megan Vermillion, Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center; Nikki Woodley, Director of Street Outreach Services Program, Shelter Care, Inc., Jada Moore, Youth Co-ordinator, Summit County CoC, Krystal Levstek, HMIS Coordinator, United Way of Summit and Medina Counties; Summer Hall, Akron Public School Board member and Cultural Engagement Coordinator -City of Akron; Mylasha King, YAB Chair*

## Definitions

### Acronyms Used in this CCP

BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
CCP	Coordinated Community Plan
CE	Coordinated Entry
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer +
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RFP	Request for Proposal
SCCoC	Summit County Continuum of Care
SCCS	Summit County Childrens Services
TH/RRH	Joint Transitional and Rapid Rehousing
YAB	Youth Advisory Board
YHDP	Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
YYA	Youth and Young Adults



## Mission & Vision Statements

**Mission:** To learn from the lived experiences of the homeless and formerly homeless youth of Summit County in providing guidance and leadership; to advocate for those without a voice in the processes and practices that directly impact youth; to collaborate with others on youth-driven solutions that empower us to exercise our rights, to employ community resources, and to bring issues dealing with youth housing instability and its effects to the public eye.

**Vision:** To prevent and end homelessness amongst youth of all races, ethnicities, gender expressions, and abilities. The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) educates, advocates, and develops partnerships within Summit County in order to inspire the community, uplift youth voices, and directly reach youth experiencing homelessness to provide peer support and system navigation.



## Community History with the Youth Homeless System

Established in 2018, the Youth Advisory Board is comprised of youth and young adults in Summit County who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness. The YAB demonstrates the importance of youth leadership and agency when advocating for better housing and housing rights. The YAB has grown exponentially and promotes equity throughout the community's youth homeless response system for Black, Indigenous, Hispanic (non-white), and LGBTQ youth who are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness than their White, straight, and gender conforming counterparts. This includes identifying barriers that lead to any disparities in subpopulations being served and taking the necessary steps to eliminate these barriers in our community's youth homeless response system.

The Youth Summit workgroup comprised of Summit County Children Services, Project Rise (Akron Public Schools), Summit County Job & Family Services, Shelter Care, Juvenile Court, and many other stakeholders who work with youth was established in 2015 specifically to address local youth homelessness. In 2021 the SCCoC, in collaboration with the Summit County Health Department, contracted with The Partnership Ltd. to conduct a youth risk needs assessment.

The Youth Advisory Board meets twice monthly and includes sessions dedicated to YHDP planning and working sessions with the YHDP technical assistance teams.



## Community Partners

Partner	Organization	Involvement
<b>Youth Advisory Board</b>	Youth Advisory Board (YAB)	YHDP Planning Team, CoC Board, Youth Advisory Board, Education Sub-committee
<b>CoC Lead Agency (HMIS/CE/Youth Summit-Up workgroup)</b>	Summit County Continuum of Care (SCCoC)	YHDP Lead, YHDP Planning Team, Work Groups/Info Sessions, CoC Board, YAB Recruiter/Support
<b>CoC Program Recipient (YAB Recruiter, Housing, Supportive Services, Youth CE, Access, HMIS)</b>	United Way of Summit & Medina County	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter, CoC Board Member, CE Provider, HMIS Provider
<b>CoC Program Recipient (Youth Prevention Programs, Youth Mental Health, Youth Substance Abuse)</b>	Alcohol Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board (ADM), Community Support Services (CSS), Community Health Center (CHC), Shelter Care, Inc. Joanna House II, Ohio Guidestone, Bellefaire, Coleman Health Services, CYOP	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter, CoC Board Member
<b>CoC Program Recipient (LGBTQ+ Youth Provider &amp; Youth Serving Organization)</b>	Community AIDS Network Pride Initiative (CANAPI), Akron AIDS Collaborative (AAC)	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>CoC Program Recipient (Shelter, Youth Programing)</b>	Shelter Care, Inc., Harmony House	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>Human Trafficking</b>	Shelter Care, Inc., Hope and Healing (Battered Women's Shelter) Victims Assistance Program	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter, YAB Board Member

Partner	Organization	Involvement
<b>Public Child Welfare Agency (Local)</b>	Summit County Children Services	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>City Government (Youth Services, Workforce, Violence Prevention Services, Parks &amp; Recreation)</b>	City of Akron Akron Police Department Akron Fire Department	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter, CoC Board Member
<b>WIOA Boards &amp; Employment Agencies</b>	Summit County Job and Family Services	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member
<b>Local &amp; State Educational Agency (LEA &amp; Homeless Youth Liaison)</b>	Project Rise (Akron Public Schools), Towpath Trail High School, I Promise School	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>Local &amp; State Educational Agency</b>	Summit Education Initiative, Out of School Time Network	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>Institution of Higher Education</b>	University of Akron, Stark State Akron	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>Advocacy, Lobbying, Resourcing CoC</b>	YAB, Freedom Bloc, Youth and Young Adult Council (Akron Urban League)	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter
<b>Juvenile Justice</b>	Summit County Juvenile Court	YHDP Planning Team, Youth Summit-Up workgroup, CoC Member, YAB Recruiter/Supporter

## Governance Structure (Decision Making Process)



**Role of the Continuum of Care Board:** The Akron/Barberton Summit County Continuum of Care (CoC) is a collaborative body that promotes community-wide commitment to the goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Summit County. The CoC is designed to carry out responsibilities assigned by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CoC Program and coordinates available resources and stakeholders' efforts. Comprised of elected and appointed positions, the Continuum's Board acts on behalf of the full Continuum to maintain direction and oversight of the mission of the Continuum of Care.

The CoC Board provides high-level leadership and support to the Youth Advisory Board and all YHDP planning and implementation activities. The Board votes to approve the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan and all project applications. The Board formally committed to formalize an ongoing focus on youth homelessness through the creation of the YHDP Planning Committee and Youth Summit-Up Workgroup. Lastly, the CoC Board ensures that other applicable committees review the Coordinated Community Plan on Youth Homelessness, align efforts where applicable, and consult with the Youth Advisory Board.

### **Role of the Youth Advisory Board:**

The YAB designates members to participate in the YHDP planning process, including the project application review process, and to participate in the YHDP Planning Committee. YAB reviews and provides input on all aspects of the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan and votes to approve the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan along with all project applications.



**Role of the YHDP Planning Committee and Youth Summit-Up workgroup:** These groups participate regularly in YHDP monthly planning meetings and technical assistance sessions. They also develop, manage, and implement all required YHDP activities in accordance with required timelines. The committees developed the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan and implementation processes and approved the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan, designating specific members to participate in the project application review process.

***\*YAB members assist with youth-specific grant applications, and the YHDP application was no exception. Once notified of this award, the Youth Coordinator and YAB Chair asked who wanted to be involved with meeting the technical advisors and ultimately with project selection. Members worked alongside CoC staff in drafting RFPs. Members of the Youth Summit Up work group, some CoC staff, and YAB members comprised the YHDP Planning Committee. The committee reviewed project applications and met with all applicants' live video presentations of their prospective projects. This body voted on which projects were selected. When adjustments or changes were made, the voting was done online or in person.***

## COMPENSATION

YAB members are compensated through the YHDP funding at a rate of \$21/hour for participating in project selection and implementation. Youth attending YAB meetings are also compensated at the same rate and are paid through CashApp or with Visa Gift Cards. Youth contract workers are compensated at the same rate of \$21/hour and have signed contracts with deliverables. YAB members can participate in the Lived Experience Committee, receiving a stipend of \$50 for each meeting.

Each YHDP project will have administration dedicated to supporting our YAB. Funding from private foundations such as GAR and other grants (Ohio Department of Health's Youth Homelessness Grant) provide compensation for our youth contractors and for YAB members; these funding sources are renewable and have already provided compensation for our YAB for multiple years.

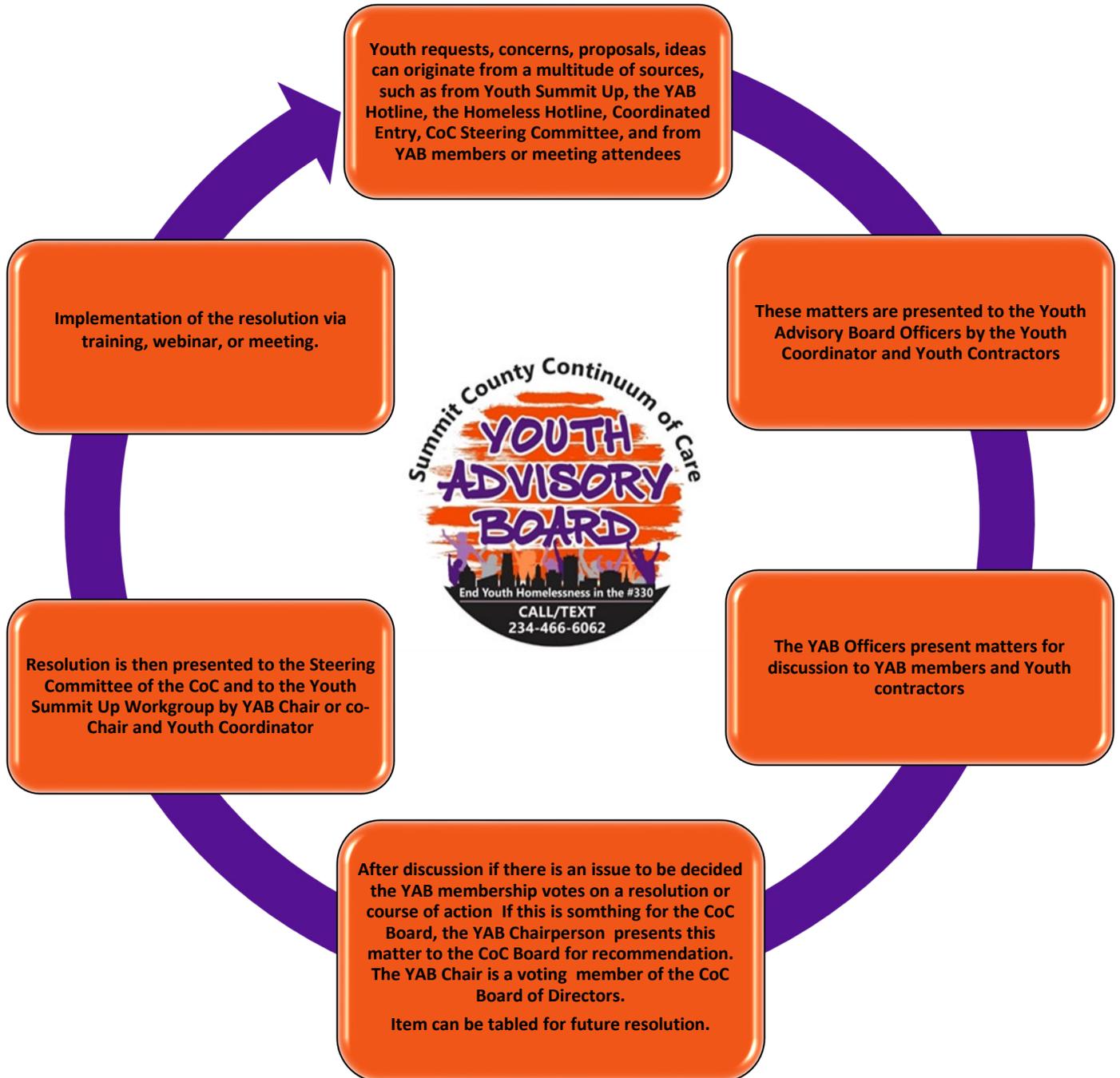
## RECRUITMENT

Our Youth Summit Up workgroup consists of over 30 participating youth service providers that meet monthly and take part in recruiting YAB members. The YAB conducts meetings at various youth specific locations and markets, these meetings and other events via social media and live canvassing. CoC partner agencies also recruit YYAs for YAB membership and distribute marketing materials: the YAB tables at many community events and has "swag" to give away while also collecting telephone numbers and email addresses of potential members. HMIS makes referrals when they do a youth intake, first asking the youth if they would like to be contacted by YAB. Youth staff enter the information in HMIS if referral originates outside of the Homeless Hotline/Coordinated Entry.

The Youth Coordinator and youth contractors make regular onsite visits to the ShelterCare Street Outreach Center, to the CANAPI Lavender Landing residence, the Bayard Rustin LGBTQ+ Resource Center, and to Harmony House residences to recruit for YAB membership. The YAB runs a 24-hour hotline and market that telephone number. A member of YAB or youth staff answer that number and make referrals to providers or simply talk to the caller.

We utilize a map which delineates which local zip codes have the highest concentration of documented people experiencing homelessness and coordinate events to be held or canvassing in those areas. YAB is often invited or invites other organizations to partner in these efforts.

# YAB Decision Making Flow Chart



## Guiding Principles

### **EQUITY**

Equity means that all people are given an equal opportunity for success, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other identifying factors. In this context, equity will refer to the ability of YYA to be able to access Summit County’s homeless response system and to achieve positive outcomes through it. Equity includes ensuring meaningful access to power for those most impacted by homelessness. This also includes identifying who does and does not have the power to make decisions and shift that power balance to ensure equitable access and outcomes.

- Provide Equity trainings to all staff on the historical context and subsequential impact of systemic and institutionalized racism.
- Review outcomes for subpopulations and create measurable goals for addressing inequities.
- Emphasize equity and inclusion in procurement decision-making, including assessing submitted proposals for demonstrated cultural competency as well as evidence of partnerships, programming, and hiring strategies that promote racial and gender equity.
- Create paid opportunities for YYA enrolled in the YHDP funded projects.

### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

HUD believes that the best diversion and intervention strategy is to engage families, whenever appropriate and consented to by YYA, through community partnerships with organizations such as child welfare agencies, schools, youth providers, and other community human services and homeless service providers.

- Youth experiencing homelessness are connected to a strong support system.
- No project requires youth and young adults to speak or interact with their families unless they consent to
- There is an expanded definition of family to focus on each young person and the best “family” for them, including chosen family.
- Organizations work with families from a strength-based perspective

### **HOUSING FIRST**

Housing First is designed to address the needs of YYA by providing them with immediate access to housing that is safe, affordable, and appropriate, and the necessary and age- appropriate supports that focus on health, wellbeing, life skills, engagement in education and employment, and social inclusion without preconditions.

- Housing First practices will be incorporated into all projects developed as part of the YHDP, as well as the overall system response to youth homelessness.
- All YYA are connected to housing that offer voluntary services with a primary focus on moving homeless youth into housing.
- Provide Housing First training to organizations outside the homeless system.
- Ensure there is a common understanding across systems, e.g., child welfare and justice, about what Housing First means for those systems.
- The CoC’s Written Standards were revised in 2022 to include required adherence to Housing First practices across all project types (regardless of funding source).

- Peer mentoring will be available for YYA and especially for those who have experienced trauma.

## **SOCIAL & COMMUNITY INTEGRATION**

The goal of youth homelessness services should be a successful transition to adulthood, including successful integration into a community as a positive, contributing community member. This requires the community to provide socially supportive engagement and the opportunity for youth to participate in meaningful community activities.

- Explore options for shared living models and invest in developing shared living models with YYA input and direction.
- Peer support exists both within programs through youth peer navigator; it also exists outside of programs in a variety of local support groups.

## **UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS**

People who sleep in places not meant for human habitation are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. These locations include encampments, abandoned buildings, cars, etc.

- The YAB and CoC has an active outreach program, dedicated to identifying and engaging YYA.
- CE and Youth Peer Navigators provide targeted assistance to YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness to ensure access to permanent housing.

## **COORDINATED ENTRY**

Coordinated Entry (CE) is a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis are quickly identified, assessed, referred, and connected to housing and services based on their needs in a fair and equitable way.

- The CE System has been redesigned to ensure it is equitable and youth-appropriate regardless of where YYA first accesses the homeless system.
- YAB and YYA feedback will be incorporated in the ongoing evaluation and quality improvement process for CE.
- CE includes implements diversion to prevent YYA from entering shelter.
- Youth Peer Navigators help YYA as they navigate the CE system.

## YOUTH CHOICE

The capacity for self-determination is a critical factor in obtaining positive outcomes for young adults experiencing homelessness. Allowing young adults to exercise self-determination is a youth-centered approach that values their expressed needs and self-awareness. (HUD)

- Ensure we are centering the voices of YYA in decision-making on all levels of the CoC and developing YYA to participate in leadership positions to make certain their input is incorporated.
- Designate YAB members seats on the CoC Board and other decision-making committees.
- A customized plan for success is driven by each young person and supported by providers.
- Changing systems to ensure YYA with lived experience are a valued part of the conversation and compensated for their time and expertise.

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive Youth Development (PYD) focuses on building protective factors for and providing positive influences on youth to help them succeed in the transition to adulthood. PYD approaches focus on strengths, build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships with family and community partners; to strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

- The CoC will require organizations to implement PYD as a key model for any programs that work with YYA.
- There will be training available for youth-serving organizations on implementing Positive Youth Development.
- The CoC will create opportunities for youth to develop skills, including leadership skills, by supporting the YAB to help develop the coordinated community plan, engage in the design and development of specific housing and services projects, and inform the project selection process.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

History of trauma causes significant mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal ideation, attachment issues, and substance abuse disorders. Trauma-informed programs can help to mitigate these adverse outcomes for youth and young adults. All systems that serve youth who have experienced homelessness must understand the basic principles of trauma to serve youth appropriately. Working with youth who have experienced significant trauma can be overwhelming for some organizations, but understanding the importance of promoting intentional healing is critical. So often, youth are overlooked and overshadowed. At the same time, many organizations have policies and guidelines that cause youth to “fail.” Organizations need to establish a balance between power and bring youth to the table to help shape the culture shift. (National Network for Youth)

- Trauma-informed care trainings will be widely promoted and accessed via multiple platforms to ensure staff and other YYA are equipped to support youth experiencing homelessness.
- When trauma-specific services are unavailable within the organization, there should be a trusted, effective referral system to connect individuals with appropriate trauma treatment.
- YHDP funded organizations will be required to implement and use trauma-informed practices.
- Unfavorable exits from programs does not mean YYA are no longer eligible for housing and/or services from YHDP funded programs.

## Statement of Need

*Homeless youth* are defined as youth aged 24 and under who currently reside either in shelters, by couch surfing at someone else's dwelling, or staying at other places not meant for human habitation. Youth aged 17 and under not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian are considered *unaccompanied youth*. If a youth (under age 18, or ages 18-24) is experiencing one of the situations described above and is accompanied by children of their own, they are referred to as *homeless parenting youth*.

The Akron/Barberton Summit County Continuum of Care Needs Assessment conducted in April and May of 2021 utilized 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 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).

Additionally, the SCCoC conducted a more recent analysis utilizing HMIS data from 2020-2023 to get a better understanding of the barriers and needs of YYA at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Based on feedback provided by youth during YAB meetings, events, focus groups and surveys conducted, the most common risk factors for youth homelessness are dysfunctional family dynamics, youth aging out of foster care, family rejection due to sexual orientation, and substance abuse, high local eviction rate, and the lack of affordable housing. According to members of YAB the biggest areas of risk in the current youth homeless system are for youth who suffer from addiction, youth who aged out of foster care without a support system in place, and the need for housing with programs that include wrap around services. The findings from both the Needs Assessment and the data analysis, accompanied by feedback from YYA helped identify where to prioritize resources.

Black YYA are disproportionately represented in youth experiencing homelessness. 44% of the YYA in our analysis identified as Black in Summit County whereas only 16% of the population is made up of Black individuals. DEI training and enhanced services are necessary to fully implement a race equity lens throughout the homeless service system. A new program development is required to create an enhanced homeless system with access to services. We envision a system in which BIPOC YYA experience trust, honesty, and the acknowledgment of historical racial trauma and discriminatory policies. Strategies that are inclusive should acknowledge and address the distinctions between different populations of BIPOC YYA, particularly the experiences of Black and Brown youth.

Youth in the foster care system are vulnerable to becoming separated from educational and employment opportunities, creating a challenging transition when aging out. 47% of YYA in Summit County have public child welfare involvement. Youth making the transition to adulthood from foster care fare severely worse than their same-age peers when looking at housing security rates. Currently there is a deficit of programs that meet the needs of young people aging out of the foster care system. To better prepare foster youth who are aging out, federal policy should focus on programs that teach independent living skills. YYA voices should be centered when making critical decisions that will impact their lives. PYD that promote and prioritize empowerment are critical resources for youth as they transition into adulthood.

Additionally, programs that support foster care alumni in gaining financial literacy, educational and employment opportunities, and housing security are key to ensuring young adults find success in this transition. Multiple youth identified the need for a 24/7 drop-in center and increased emergency housing that are considered "safe spaces." When asked to define what a

safe space means to them, their answers invariably included “somewhere free from violence and drug-use.” Some youth also mentioned the act of being solicited for sex as making spaces “dangerous.” One youth stated that to “stay clean” she slept in her car rather than go back to the local homeless shelter because of the presence of drugs available at that shelter. One youth discussed that she couldn’t have her children with her in-shelter when addressing her substance abuse issues; another mentioned that while they “didn’t have anything against religion” they would have preferred to stay in a more secular setting and “less faith-based” so that they could speak openly about “what you go through on the streets...”. Creating a 24/7 youth specific drop-in center will provide a safe place to seek refuge while dealing with risk factors and challenges that cause homelessness. When a YYA enters the drop-in center, this can be a healthy decision to seek support and to start resolving issues. A highly individualized, wraparound program designed to meet the immediate needs of homeless YYA and can equip them with the tools they need to grow into healthy, independent adults.

The most recent PIT count data identifies that 21 unsheltered were engaged with and surveyed. The Youth PIT Count, unlike the regular one-day PIT count, lasts from M-F of the same week and Youth surveyors go to places such as the Metro Transit and other places that are recognized gathering places for YYA experiencing homelessness. Leads are given to our surveyors and the CoC/CSS Outreach team to identify individuals who are sheltering in their vehicles, outdoors, or in abandoned buildings.

The numbers below reflect the most recent Point-in-Time count in January 2024. We know that this is only a snapshot of a day and is an underestimation based upon data provided by Project Rise/Akron Public School’s program for assisting students experiencing homelessness and from calls received from the public to the CoC office, the 2-1-1 Homeless Hotline, and to the YAB hotline. (see Appendix A). It is our opinion that the overall community is currently not supportive of unsheltered homelessness for YYAs or for adults. We have not had enough shelter beds to eliminate waiting lists and the Director of Homeless Services at one of our largest agencies that provides supportive services to homeless adults has said that he doesn’t “see a need for a youth homeless shelter”.

Young adult homelessness has become a national crisis, with estimates suggesting that as many as one in ten 18- to 25-year-olds experience homelessness annually in the United States (Morton et al., 2018). Despite these numbers, it was not until recent years that youth and young adult homelessness began to receive specific attention. In 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) presented “Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness,” identifying youth as one of the four special populations deserving of attention. As a result of allocating specific funding to solve young adult homelessness, in 2017 the USICH noted an “unprecedented increase in collaboration” among federal agencies and local government to combat youth and young adult homelessness (USICH, 2017). Within this context, communities across the country have worked to expand housing programs to meet the specific and often diverse needs of unstably housed young adults during the critical developmental period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Although many of these programs are supportive housing; this has become an umbrella term that refers to multiple housing models, including Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), or time-unlimited housing with comprehensive wrap-around services (Gilmer, 2016); Transitional Living Programs (TLPs), which are explicitly time limited and may or may not come with comprehensive wrap-around services (Pierce et al., 2018); and Rapid Rehousing (RRH), which typically provides time-limited housing supports in community-based settings with access to fewer supportive services (Di Felice, 2014).

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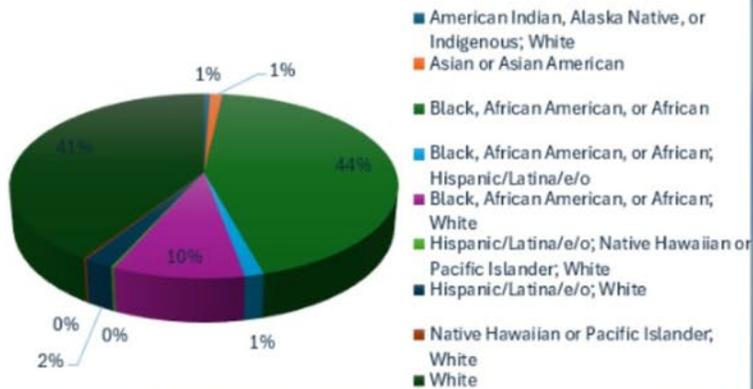
YAB had an opportunity through the Ohio Department of Health's Youth Homelessness grant funding to provide rental assistance to YYAs who were at risk of losing their housing or who needed security deposits and the first month's rent to obtain stable housing. The overwhelming majority of these YYAs were either emancipated youth or youth who had been in foster care at some point. YAB contractors did intakes, connected with landlords, and accompanied the CoC Housing Locator to do inspections of the new units. This initiative provided \$35,000 to 42 YYAs in less than three weeks and served to prevent first-time homelessness and/or recidivism.

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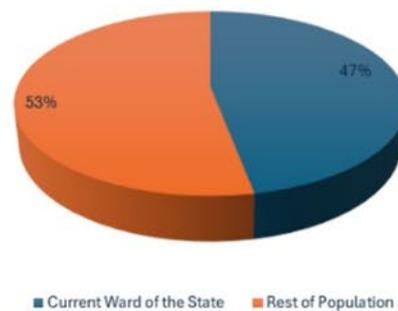
Group	Number of Individuals
Unaccompanied minor experiencing homelessness	498
Unaccompanied Young adult parents experiencing homelessness	*17
Trans gender and non-conforming/non-binary youth and young adults experiencing homelessness	69
YYA fleeing DV, including sex trafficking	5
Unaccompanied youth at risk of homelessness (education)	513
Pregnant or parent YYA at risk of homelessness	285
Employed Homeless youth	24
Young adults exited the foster care system and experiencing homelessness (former ward)	247
<p><i>*This data is from 2024 PIT count which is a snapshot of the population for that given day. Please refer to APPENDIX A.</i></p>	

# IDENTITY DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE YYA POPULATION

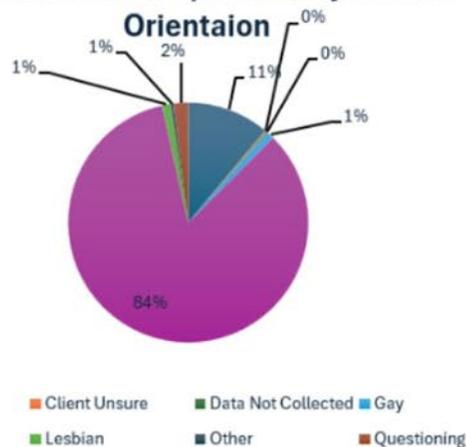
## YYA Population by Race/Ethnicity

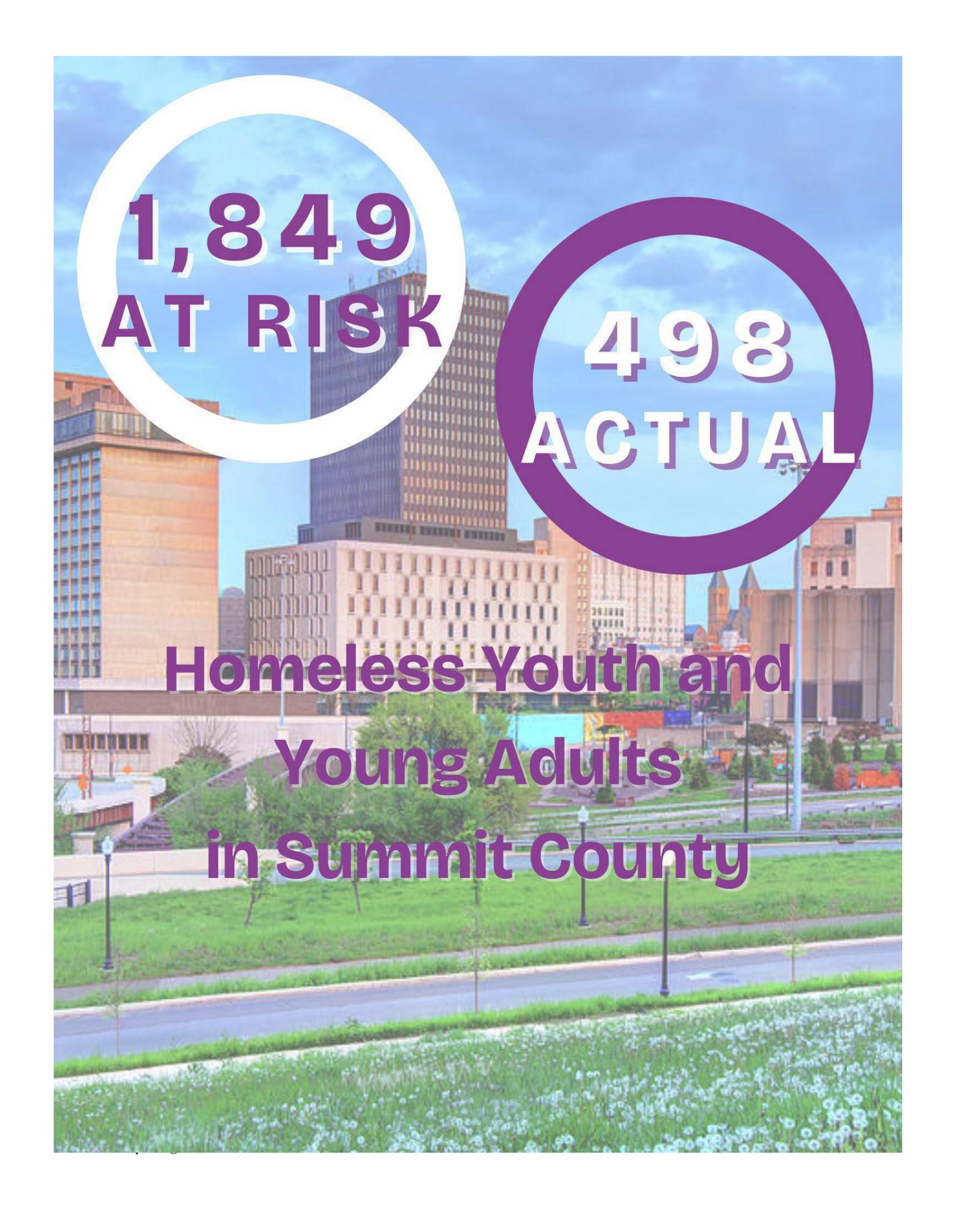


## Homeless YYA That Are Wards of the State (HUD)



## Homeless YYA Population By Sexual Orientation





**1,849  
AT RISK**

**498  
ACTUAL**

**Homeless Youth and  
Young Adults  
in Summit County**

## What do youth and young adults at-risk of or experiencing homelessness need in Summit County?

To better understand the needs of YYA in our community and accompany the quantitative data, the SCCoC held monthly meetings with YAB, YYA currently or formerly experiencing homelessness, youth providers, and local government. During meetings we focused on the needs of YYA ages 24 and under, gaps in the current homeless system, and identified creative and innovative solutions. Meetings also included discussions focused on specific subpopulations of YYA at risk of homelessness and those experiencing homelessness, including the following:

- LGBTQ+ YYA (including gender non-conforming/non-binary YYA)
- Minors
- YYA is involved with other systems, including child welfare, the juvenile justice system, and the education system.
- YYA fleeing domestic violence or trafficking
- Pregnant & parenting YYA
- Undocumented YYA



While there were some unique challenges and needs identified for each subpopulation, many identified needs and potential strategies were similar across all groups. These include transportation, access to services, youth-specific case managers, racism, mental health, education, employment, and the need for a strong “family” support network, however broadly family is defined.

The following section highlights some of the greatest needs and barriers facing different YYA population groups. It is important to note that while we had targeted conversations about each subpopulation group, there is significant overlap between some of the identities and experiences that YYA hold. In the following section the *Action Plan* outlines strategies to start breaking down some of the biggest challenges and barriers for both specific and broader groups.

# YHDP FOUNDATIONS & BEYOND: COORDINATED COMMUNITY PLAN

## USICH YOUTH FRAMEWORK AND THE FOUR CORE OUTCOMES:

- Stable housing, including a safe and reliable place to call home.
- Permanent connections, including ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks.
- Education/employment, including high performance in and completion of educational and training activities, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth; and
- Social-emotional well-being, including development of key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that equip YYAs to succeed across multiple domains of daily life, including school, work, relationships, and community.

## Housing

Young adult homelessness has become a national crisis, with estimates suggesting that as many as one in ten 18- to 25-year-olds experience homelessness annually in the United States ([Morton et al., 2018](#)). Despite these numbers, it was not until recent years that youth and young adult homelessness began to receive specific attention. In 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) presented “Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness,” identifying youth as one of the four special populations deserving of attention. As a result of allocating specific funding to solve young adult homelessness, in 2017 the USICH noted an “unprecedented increase in collaboration” among federal agencies and local government to combat youth and young adult homelessness ([USICH, 2017](#)).

Within this context, communities across the country have worked to expand housing programs to meet the specific and often diverse needs of unstably housed young adults during the critical developmental period of emerging adulthood ([Arnett, 2000](#)). Although many of these programs are supportive housing, this has become an umbrella term that refers to multiple housing models, including Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), or time-unlimited housing with comprehensive wrap-around services ([Gilmer, 2016](#)); Transitional Living Programs (TLPs), which is explicitly time limited and may or may not come with comprehensive wrap-around services ([Pierce et al., 2018](#)); and Rapid Rehousing (RRH), which typically provides time-limited housing supports in community-based settings with access to fewer supportive services ([Di Felice, 2014](#)).

Summit County does not have dedicated emergency youth shelter beds. CoC partner ShelterCare, Inc. operates the following programs for youth under the age of 18:

1. *SHELTER HOME* Shelter Care’s initial program, the Shelter Home Program is a network of long-term group homes designed for a maximum of five youth in each home who have been referred by the child welfare system, the mental health system or the criminal justice system of Summit County and occasionally, another county. Each shelter home is staffed with a married, live-in couple. Typically, youth stay in the residential program for 1-3 years with the goal of family reunification and/or to prepare the youth for independent living.
2. *SAFE LANDING YOUTH SHELTER* Provides emergency and short-term residential services to youth ages 11-17, who are experiencing a crisis. Safe Landing operates as a shift-staff model and has the capacity for 12 youth at a time. Length of stay is based on need.
3. *THE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM* provides planned periods of respite to strengthen and keep struggling families together. This short-term residential program consists of two shelter homes for scheduled respite and crisis stabilization for youth ages 6-17 who are living with their parent/guardian. Respite homes are staffed by married live-in couples.

4. *THE HIGHLANDS TEEN PREGNANCY SHELTER* was established in 2005 and remains the only licensed teen pregnancy shelter in the state of Ohio. The Highlands provides long-term residential care and critical services to homeless and at-risk pregnant or parenting teens, ages 14-18 and their babies. The Highlands program has capacity for five mothers and five babies at a time. Moms and their babies can stay up to three years or until the mom turns 18.

Another partner is Harmony House. Harmony House provides essential services for young adults, aged 18 to 24, facing homelessness. Harmony House offers transitional and rapid re-housing services, having a total of 30 beds over scatter sites, 22 of those being non-emergency beds.

## Education

In terms of academic achievement, students experiencing homelessness are more than twice as likely to be chronically absent than non-homeless students, with greater rates among Black and Native American or Alaska Native students. They are also more likely to change schools multiple times and to be suspended, especially students of color. Youth with an experience of homelessness living in low-income households experience higher rates of co-occurring risks than housed peers from low-income households.

Youth with an experience of homelessness from low-income families experience worse academic and social engagement problems compared to their housed, low-income peers. Youth who are or have experienced homelessness were uniquely associated with poor classroom social engagement, while poor academic engagement was associated with other risk factors.

Both transitory homelessness (experiencing homelessness in one year) and persistent homelessness (experiencing homelessness in two or more years) have statistically significant negative associations with math scores and attendance, though transitory homelessness appeared to have larger negative associations than persistent homelessness.

## Employment

The national unemployment rate is currently at 4.30%, the highest it's been since the COVID-19 pandemic. In Summit County, the rate is 5.3% with homeless youth reporting higher rates of unemployment. While homeless serving agencies usually offer employment services, most homeless youth are disengaged from homeless service agencies, and a limited number of studies have examined employment and other income sources among service- disconnected youth.

Over time employment and legal income from non-survival behaviors increased (e.g., governmental assistance and receiving income from friends and relatives), while income from survival behaviors decreased (e.g., sex work, stealing, selling possessions, selling blood or plasma) once youth are housed. YAB members report going in and out of "situationships", a type of relationship with someone they may/may not truly want to be with to maintain housing. One unemployed pregnant member was recently evicted YAB from housing and while trying to find alternative housing has returned to an abusive partner so that she and her unborn child will "have a roof over their heads".

Findings suggest that employment is linked to housing stability and mental health, as is substance use and income, which suggests that mental health, housing, and substance use treatment services are important components in income stabilization for homeless youth. Homeless youth often identify employment as a top priority. Studies report unemployment rates as high as 75% as compared to 16% among the general population of housed youth ([Ferguson, Xie, & Glynn, 2012](#); [U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016](#)).

A high unemployment rate is a concern because unemployed homeless youth often experience a greater length of time on the streets, using survival behaviors to earn money and report high rates of drug addiction ([Ferguson et al., 2012](#)).

Survival behaviors include prostitution, selling blood or plasma, dealing drugs, stealing, and panhandling (Ferguson, Bender, Thompson, Xie, & Pollio, 2011).

On the other hand, employed youth show higher self-efficacy, positive self-identity, and social competency (Ferguson et al., 2012). Further, landlords usually require a reliable income source, so to exit the streets into independent living situations, youth need income.

Studies indicate that youth living on the streets obtain income through multiple sources. Despite the high likelihood of unemployment, homeless youth can obtain legal income from paid employment, sometimes seeking employment services (Lenz-Rashid, 2006). As homeless youth are often disadvantaged in seeking formal employment due to lack of education and job skills, financial assistance through family, friends, and/or agencies is another legal source of income. However, some youth turn to survival behaviors for income, which can include both legal (e.g., selling possessions, selling blood or plasma) and illegal or legally regulated sources (e.g., panhandling, survival sex, theft, and dealing drugs; Ferguson, Bender, & Thompson, 2016). A YAB member bartends and “works the door” at local after-hours clubs that are not licensed and have been the site of violence and shootings. When discussing this they state that the money that they make outweighs the risk.

The YAB’s WERK IT! grant funding assists YYAs with purchasing items necessary for jobs, for pursuing educational opportunities/apprenticeships, developing entrepreneurial business plans and obtaining LLCs. In addition, the YAB shares job openings with its members and with CoC partner agencies, while also encouraging CoC partners to hire youth with lived experience when and wherever possible. Jobs for Ohio Graduates (JOG) partners with the CoC; currently one of the paid interns within the CoC offices was placed by JOG. Wherever there are openings or job fairs YAB shares these openings. Our community also has the BOSS program through the Department of Job and Family Services – Building Opportunities for Sustained Success. It is designed to help youth and young adults 14 to 24 to build the skills needed to obtain and retain employment. BOSS offers support services and case management to help overcome barriers and offers paid work experience and incentives.

## Social and Emotional Well-being

Homelessness in childhood affects the health, education, and overall well-being of thousands of YYA across the United States. The intergenerational transmission of health and homelessness risks between childhood and adulthood further suggests that a greater understanding of these risks may have the potential to prevent cycles of future housing instability and poor health. Unfortunately, evidence of the health and housing connection in children is lesser known than it is among adults experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Substandard housing conditions and communal living associated with shelter entry provide additional negative influences on the health of homeless children and youth which affects their social and emotional well-being. Studies have found that the proportion of youth who had been homeless school-age children with mental health problems was 2–4 times higher than poor youth who were stably housed.

Children who experienced homelessness whose mothers suffered mental illness were themselves at higher risk of mental health problems, often persisting through young adulthood and beyond. Complicating the mental health challenges faced by YYA experiencing homelessness was the general absence of available mental health.

Many of these YYA also suffered adverse childhood events (e.g., trauma, victimization, neglect) and toxic stress that contribute to chronic health conditions and chronic homelessness as adults.

Studies of homeless youth tend to focus on a narrow spectrum of health behaviors and outcomes such as sexual risk behaviors, mental health, and substance use (Bannon et al., 2012; Cauce et al., 2000; Medlow, Klineberg, & Steinbeck, 2014).

Adolescents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ) are at particularly high risk of homelessness, increased victimization, and increased HIV risk behaviors (Gaetz, 2004; Powell, Ellasante, Korchmaros, Haverly, and Stevens, 2016). Many studies also tend to cluster adolescents and young adults up to the

age of 24 into a single population, blurring the distinct developmental differences between adolescents and emerging adults (Auerswald et al., 2016; Mackelprang, Qiu, & Rivara, 2015; Powell et al., 2016).

Saperstein et al. (2014) found that 83.6% of a young adult homeless sample met criteria for a DSM-IV Axis I disorder, the most prevalent of which were anxiety, substance use, and mood disorders. Thus it is not surprising that high rates of neurocognitive impairments and decremented educational and vocational achievements are common among homeless young adults, relative to their age-matched peers (Medalia, et al., 2017). Contributing to these factors are significant adverse childhood events including parental rejection and abuse, particularly among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (Choi et al., 2015; Maccio & Ferguson, 2016; Norman-Major, 2017; Pearson et al., 2017; Shelton, 2015, 2018).

Our YAB has estimated that approximately 80% of members and other youth experiencing homelessness have anxiety, depression, or some form of PTSD from the traumas they have experienced. Anecdotally, we have observed that once many formerly houseless youth enter a stable living situation, they have difficulty adjusting. Rather than immediately embracing their new residence, the transition from being in survival mode to being settled and safe is unfamiliar; this is another way that YAB peers can help make the transition smoother. Peer support, just having another youth who has gone through the same adjustments and can share their experiences they dealt with is therapeutic.

Spicer Terrace, operated by the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority has 12 units for young adults aged 18-24 with developmental disabilities. The waiting list has over 200 YAs who need housing.

# LGBTQ+, including gender non-conforming and non-binary YYA

- LGBTQ+ data may not be an accurate reflection due to it being self-reported.
- Currently there aren't any emergency shelter for LGBTQ+ identifying YYA to go except for the Haven of Rest, which is faith-based, privately funded, and not LGBTQ+ affirming.
- A targeted process aimed at addressing equity issues and vulnerable for YYA who identify as LGBTQ+ needs to be implemented.
- Efforts to support and protect LGBTQ+ YYA need to include offering SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression) training to community partners and service providers.
- Expansion of peer support from other people with similar experiences, gender identities, and sexual orientations needs to be addressed in existing and new programs.
- More support groups for LGBTQ+ YYA and community spaces that are designed by and for them.
- There is a need to ensure that other youth in shared spaces and their service providers are educated about social identities and are respectful/affirming of people's full identities.
- Valuing LGBTQ+ young people's identities are just as important is serving their housing needs. Where they are placed, including in rental market units, matters. They need to feel safe with their neighbors and landlords.
- There need to be more ongoing education and training for case managers, service providers, and supervisors/leadership on being supportive to the LGBTQ+ community.
- There is currently a shortage of affordable, accessible LGBTQ+ affirming and responsive healthcare and mental / behavioral healthcare providers.



LGBTQ+ youth who are affected by homelessness or are in out-of-home care need protection from harassment, access to culturally appropriate support, and equal treatment and supportive services. It is important for shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing to promote positive youth development, provide trauma-informed services and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth, offer family reconciliation services (when appropriate) and connect youth to community resources and services. Responses to youth homelessness are typically crisis oriented. A comprehensive approach can better prevent youth homelessness, such as using prevention services (e.g., providing equitable and culturally appropriate health and mental health services) and diversion strategies (e.g., quickly helping homeless or youth at-risk to "choice driven" crisis housing and tailored services that will lead to permanent housing).



## Gender Non-Conforming Youth

Transgender homeless youth have unique experiences and trajectories into homelessness that require solutions that are equally accessible and inclusive. One of the ways this can be achieved is through improving cultural competency to meet their needs. Creating a welcoming environment where non-discrimination and non-harassment policies are implemented and communicated to all youth, families, and community partners is a strategy we will use to engage and address by:

- Few projects can serve minors without the consent of their guardian, so many minors may avoid asking for help for fear of being required to go to (or to go back to) foster care or families where they do not feel safe and supported.
- They may not know where to go to access help, or who to ask for help.
- They may not trust many people, especially adults and “helping professionals”.
- Some parents press “incurable” charges on youth who run away; consequently, they are then detained at the local juvenile community members do not know how to interact with minors in a trauma-informed way and are not familiar with their experiences.

Placing youth in safe, appropriate shelter and housing programs based upon an individualized assessment, preference, and gender identity will mean that we defer to how transgender youth self-identify with their gender, and they will not assign them to the boys or girls units strictly based upon their anatomical sex. Transgender youth will not be isolated from other youth to keep them safe. Our partner agencies, such as CANAPI and AAC along with the specialized Gender-Affirming Clinic at Akron Children’s Hospital are resources to make certain that we adopt policies on bathrooms, showers, and changing areas to assure safety and comfort of gender non-conforming youth.

The opinions of the youth and their mental health providers when making housing decisions are central to the process. The YAB has a diverse membership and partners with the local chapter of an organization called Trans Joy. Trans Joy hosts social events such as bowling and game nights, beach days, ice cream socials, and concerts to help transgendered youth with socialization.

## Minors

During brainstorming sessions, YYA and the staff and community members who support them shared that the following challenges tend to arise for minors experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Researchers find that the lack of a high school diploma or GED correlates more strongly than any other risk factor with experiences of youth homelessness, with young people without a diploma or GED being 3.5 times (346%) more likely to experience homelessness than their peers who completed high school. Therefore, providing educational supports is a key component of prevention for minor youth experiencing homelessness. Efforts to address homelessness among children and young adults are often distinct from interventions serving adults. Youth are more successful when placed in programs with their peers, and in programs that employ staff who understand the unique challenges and social issues confronting teenagers and young adults.

Unaccompanied youth need help to get on a quick path to safe, stable, and permanent housing, communities need to implement a robust, coordinated response focused on the shared USICH 4 Core Outcomes of stable housing; permanent connections; education/employment; and social and emotional well-being. By working closely with the YAB (youth with lived experience), our local PCWA (SCCS), and McKinney-Vento designee (Project Rise) we can identify and engage unaccompanied minors and to better develop strategies to support them. Our YAB members have gotten certified as security officers, obtained their G.E.D., and entered apprenticeships.

## YYA with justice and child welfare/foster care system involvement

- The state of Ohio launched the Bridges program in 2018 to provide Extended Care to youth aging out of foster care at 18. While stakeholders will leverage this resource, Bridges will only assist a narrow group of youth.
- To prevent homelessness among those with a history of child welfare system involvement, partners want to improve discharge planning and strengthen permanent connections while youth are still involved in the child welfare system.
- Youth and young adults who have been involved with child welfare and/or justice/legal systems face distinct barriers and have unique needs.
- Youth need ongoing support, especially those who have no positive, healthy connections in the community when coming out of care.
- Figuring out transportation can be particularly challenging for this group.
- Many staff aren't trained and supported in meeting the person where they're at
- Transitions aren't seamless. Youth exit into homelessness and often then don't know how to get help.
- There's a lack of housing and employment options for this group, especially for those who have specific prior criminal records. More education and support with expungement would help increase employment rates.
- Many YYA need support getting connected or reconnected to education opportunities.
- 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 into stable housing are youth with families residing in AMHA public housing. The families are not allowed to let additional people stay with them; by doing so puts them in jeopardy of losing their housing voucher. If a youth has justice-involvement whether on or off public housing properties, AMHA has canceled vouchers and evicted families, even when the offending youth remain incarcerated.

Thus, it is necessary to increase relationships between homeless housing and service providers and the justice system to take full advantage of existing resources, as well as to leverage additional support to keep YYA exiting the justice system. YYAs experiencing homelessness with a history of physical abuse are nearly twice as likely as non-abused youth to be arrested and detained, suggesting an acute need for screening and trauma-informed supports and services for youth impacted by homelessness who may be at risk of delinquency. Prevention policies such as housing assistance, trauma-informed services, and substance use counseling could play a significant role in mitigating young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness's likelihood of contact with the juvenile justice system and could have considerable positive impacts on their lives and future outcomes. According to the Executive Director of our local ADM (Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Board) the public perception is that youth enter homelessness because of a substance abuse issue but recent studies indicate that substance abuse more often occurs because of homelessness.

When young people leave residential juvenile justice placements, they face many challenges as they reenter the community, home, and school/workforce. Youth may return to unstable home settings, face a lack of family support, struggle to remain in school, lack the skills needed for employment, and experience a gap in behavioral health services. These barriers may create situations such that youth return to the street upon release. In these cases, a strong chance exists that they will become involved in the same behaviors that initially led to arrest. Planning for reentry can increase success, and support youth experiencing homelessness and runaway youth to keep them from returning to the streets and continuing the cycle of homelessness and delinquency.

Juvenile probation officers, social workers, and others supporting youth who have encountered the juvenile justice system should refer families and youth to local school district homeless liaisons if they suspect they may be experiencing homelessness or housing instability. We request that justice facility staff should refer youth and families if they suspect that a youth may be released into a homeless situation or that the youth is returning to a family —

experiencing housing instability. Summit County Juvenile Court staff belong to the Youth Summit Up workgroup and YAB members have accepted invitations to speak with youth and parents about being unhoused and justice involved. The CoC is exploring a relationship with Juvenile Court and the ADM Board to open a drop-in center.

## FOSTER CARE INVOLVEMENT

To support YYAs who were/are foster care involved, an approach that validates assets, addresses their developmental needs and resource should introduce a framework that builds on those assets, addresses their developmental needs and advances community-based solutions that encourage connection and socialization with peers and mentors. Youth who experience loss and separation and who lack caring, trusted adult guidance struggle to make healthy, successful transitions to adulthood. Grief work can help them process the losses that they experienced and impacted their development. The foster care system limits their ability to connect to others within their family and community and develop a sense of belonging, while simultaneously forcing independence on them without providing the healing and long-lasting relationships they need.



Our YAB has found that many of YYAs that connect have been in the foster care system, or they currently have children who are in custody of the local PCWA. This fact inspires us to create support networks for youth aging out of foster care who lack a circle of support: they often don't maintain a relationship with former foster parents or have necessary supports/contact with their families of origin.

The dynamics of these relationships are often fluid, conditional, or transactional: when peers are assisting YYAs with getting housing, many find that someone from their family of origin has used their social security numbers to open credit card accounts, open cable accounts, or have utilities turned on in the YYA's name. Peers who have experienced these situations are invaluable in helping navigate the process of untangling these complications and can commiserate with the emotions that accompany them.

This framework will emphasize that it is the responsibility of child welfare to prioritize healing for the youth they serve and provide aftercare for youth who have survived the trauma of foster care placement. Our partners in this work include Summit County Children Services, AMHA (FUP Vouchers), and our behavioral health providers including CYOP, Coleman, and Portage Path Behavioral Health Services.



## Pregnant and Parenting YYA

YYA who are already or are expecting to become parents face unique barriers.

- Insufficient access to prenatal, postnatal, and child health care
- Preventing rapid repeat pregnancy/ access to contraception/encouragement for cessation
- Addressing depression, past trauma, and treatment for substance abuse
- Ensuring a safe and nurturing environment, reducing child maltreatment
- Many YYA need assistance with birth planning.
- Concerns over their ability to care for and nurture their children appropriately without a safe and stable place to call home.
- Concerns about potential child welfare involvement if experiencing homelessness with their child(ren).
- The added expense of paying for childcare to go to work or school
- Access to critical supplies, including diapers and clothes as their child(ren) grow, and a safe place to keep those supplies, especially if they are not yet in permanent housing
- Lack of shelter spaces that provide support for newborns and their parent(s)
- Transportation to medical appointments.
- Lack of awareness of community resources for pregnant and parenting YYA
- Lack of clothing for their child(ren) as they grow, and a safe place to keep those supplies, especially if they are not yet in permanent housing
- Lack of shelter spaces that provide support for newborns and their parent(s)
- Transportation to medical appointments.
- Lack of awareness of community resources for pregnant and parenting YYA



Our partners to assist with pregnant and parenting YYAs are Shelter Care, Inc., which has the Highlands residential program for pregnant YYAs, Summit County Department of Health's Maternal and Child Health Division which sponsors programs such as Full Term/First Year and houses the local WIC program, and Refuge Host Homes which is a program designed for pregnant youth.

# Undocumented YYA

YYA who are undocumented and experiencing homelessness have compounding trauma and stress of navigating the system. Undocumented YYA often navigate additional risks and barriers to meet their housing needs such as:

- Language barriers
- Facing the results of stigma against non-native English speakers, non-U.S.-citizens, people from other places, and immigrants of color makes it challenging to build trust and connections.
- Inability to access mainstream benefits/cash assistance.
- There are not many legal employment options for this group to get a sustainable income and support their own housing long-term.
- There is no funding to provide rental assistance to undocumented YYA.
- Inability to access mainstream benefits/cash assistance
- Fear of deportation or legal action if they seek help from the wrong person or agency.

Two community partners, Asia in Action and the International Center, both have a wide variety of specialized services that include interpreters, legal assistance, job readiness, ESL courses, behavioral health counseling, and medical clinics all with trauma-informed approaches in recognition of the specific needs and issues that undocumented YYAs might experience. Our CoC is in talks with Asia in Action about collaborating on a shelter for youth survivors of trafficking.

## Goals and Objectives

Our shared vision as result of executing this CCP is one in which all YYAs in our community will have access to safe, supportive, and affirming housing options as well as access to restorative wraparound services; to manifest this vision for our community we intend to increase the annual total percentages of YYAs with access to these options and accompanying services.

To that end our vision is also one in which the community works collaboratively to gather more accurate data particularly regarding youth ages 24 and under so that project design and implementation are evidence-based and effective. We will offer resources to support and provide adaptable care to all youth experiencing homelessness while prioritizing those who are the most vulnerable in our community including but not limited to youth who identify as LGBTQIA+, differently abled youth, youth ages 24 and under, and other population that are represented in our data.

**Goal 1: All youth have access to safe, supportive, and affirming housing options as well as restorative wraparound services. We intend to increase the percentage of youth who have access to this care each year.**

**Objectives:**

- Secure more beds and safe temporary housing while waiting for permanent housing
- Ensure that host home providers have the

**Action Steps:**

- The CoC will create or partner with another agency or firm to facilitate quality Housing First training to all service providers at the

**Responsible Party:**

SCCoC Grantees/YAB

<p>necessary context/training to support youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure housing providers have direct access to partner agencies and can easily connect YYA to supportive services beyond housing</li> <li>• Establish a clear pathway of communication between YYA using housing services and peer navigators</li> <li>• Provide a transparent and restorative plan for conflict resolution if YYA or the provider causes harm</li> </ul>	<p>beginning of implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CoC will facilitate case coordination meetings between YHDP-funded projects for case managers to share resources and knowledge with one another at the beginning of implementation (regularly or as needed)</li> <li>• The CoC and YAB will collaborate, with the support of TA if needed, to create or review and edit conflict resolution plans for service providers to use at the beginning of implementation</li> </ul>	
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**Goal 2: All youth and young adults have access to free personalized care for socio-emotional wellbeing through a compassionate network of service providers as they transition into being self-sufficient.**

<p><b>Objective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that youth and young adults have access to responsive care and consistent check-ins with compassionate service providers</li> <li>• Establish a well-organized network of service providers that are informed by accurate contact information, data, feedback, and client needs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YAB members will list service providers and organizations that they've had positive experiences within a shared document</li> <li>• YAB members will create a survey for YYA to inform service providers of their needs, history, preferences, etc. to personalize support</li> <li>• CoC facilitates case coordination meetings between YHDP-funded projects for case managers to share resources and knowledge with one</li> </ul>	<p><b>Responsible Party:</b></p> <p>SCCoC Grantees/YAB</p>
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	<p>another at the beginning of implementation (regularly or as needed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CoC and case managers will collaborate to develop a referral system for YYA to establish care and/or access to another service provider if needed.</li> <li>• Case coordination between service providers and organizations under YHDP or warm hand off sessions to ensure youth are getting the best support possible.</li> </ul>	
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**Goal 3: All youth who experience homelessness can fulfill their educational and employment goals to be self-sufficient.**

<p><b>Objective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that YYAs have access to transportation to attend educational and employment-related events (ex: classes, workshops, meetings with counselors, work shifts)</li> <li>• Provide YYA with access to job readiness and resume support services</li> <li>• Ensure that YYA get personalized support for accessing educational programs like tutors, mentors, affinity groups, or school clubs centered around personal interests.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CoC and YHDP project staff will collaborate with education and employment providers who offer accessible and alternative programming to ensure youth have access to personalized support.</li> <li>• YAB will recommend any employment or education programs that have been supportive to them.</li> <li>• The CoC will research and identify discounted/free bus passes and other transportation resources/discounts for YYA to use.</li> <li>• The YAB will connect with Akron Urban League as a resource to support YYA</li> </ul>	<p><b>Responsible Party:</b></p> <p>SCCoC Grantee/YAB</p>
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	<p>who may need clothes and book bags with materials for employment or school preparedness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The YAB will connect with Peer staff as a resource for the WERK IT! Program through Summit County CoC to support YYAs with employment access and job readiness.</li> <li>• The YAB will collaborate with Walsh Jesuit to plan a tutoring/hot meals opportunity for youth who are navigating homelessness.</li> </ul>	
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**Goal 4: As a community we will offer resources to support and provide adaptable care to all youth experiencing homelessness, while prioritizing those who are the most vulnerable in our community including LGBTQIA+ youth, youth with disabilities, youth ages 14-24, among other populations that are highlighted in our data.**

<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure youth experiencing homelessness connect with a peer navigator that will help them secure individualized resources and housing services.</li> <li>• Provide training and resources for older adult partners and service providers to be more equitable towards youth and the community such as Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE), trauma-informed care and healing-centered engagement, conflict resolution, Disability Justice, Supporting Youth Who Are Neurospicy, etc.</li> <li>• Ensure that all housing units have ADA accessible options.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CoC and hiring staff from YHDP project agencies will ensure that peer navigators know how to offer individualized support and are well-versed in housing services.</li> <li>• The CoC and YAB members will leverage their network of organizations such as the Akron AIDS Collaborative (AAC) determine who can offer necessary trainings for Equity and Authentic Engagement mentioned in the objectives.</li> <li>• The CoC and YAB will create a mandatory training schedule that includes when training will be offered</li> </ul>	<p><b>Responsible Party:</b></p> <p>SCCoC Grantee/YAB</p>
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	<p>throughout the year for service providers and community partners to attend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CoC will connect with someone who is well-versed in ADA policy and development to determine if housing units are ADA accessible and how to make them ADA accessible if they are not already so.</li> </ul>	
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**Goal 5 : Collaborate with the community to gather more accurate data, particularly about youth aged 14-24 that are experiencing homelessness, to inform project design and implementation**

<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure YAB members, CoC staff, and service providers have a more accurate and in-depth understanding of the overall population of homeless youth and subpopulations with the highest need.</li> <li>• Ensure YAB members have the support and tools to access, interpret, and analyze data to inform project ideas and design.</li> <li>• Provide YYA who are accessing services with more personalized support through data collections and analysis .</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YAB members who are interested in learning more about data and how to use data to create or improve projects can connect with Data Collab for YABs through TCU.</li> <li>• YAB members can join the national YAB Discord to learn about how other YABs are accessing and using data to support their communities.</li> <li>• YAB members, CoC staff, and service providers will establish consistent meetings (quarterly, semi-annually, or annually) to have honest and comprehensive conversations about data to create responsive solutions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Responsible Party:</b></p> <p>SCCoC Grantee/YAB</p>
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## New Projects

Project 1: Planning Grant	
<b>YHDP Planning Grant</b>	Support for the Youth Advisory Board, YHDP project implementation, monitoring/evaluation, and system coordination.
<b>Project Description</b>	<p>The YHDP Planning Grant will support the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), Youth and Young Adults (YYA) and CoC staff dedicated to the development and implementation of YHDP projects.</p> <p>The YHDP Planning Grant to continue the coherent planning process for all activities related to youth homelessness. The YAB, YYA, and designated CoC staff will continue to develop and expand youth homelessness services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Reviewing, updating, and implementing the YAB Governance Charter and Bylaws.</li> <li>·Reviewing and updating the Review and Ranking Process</li> <li>·Creating Performance Measures for all recipients which include Ranking and Review tools and Systemwide Performance Measures.</li> <li>·Continuing to review committee structures including roles, responsibilities, and meeting guidelines</li> <li>·Monitoring all YHDP-funded projects to ensure compliance with HUD regulations (24 CFR 578).</li> <li>·Creating and implementing a reallocation process</li> <li>·Continuing the development of a comprehensive system-wide Centralized Intake system to focus on the youth homeless response system</li> <li>·Coordinating youth specific point-in-time counts</li> <li>·Providing a system-wide analysis of the CoC by reviewing project data submitted through Annual Performance Reports</li> <li>·Continuing to expand the collaboration with stakeholders and other interested individuals</li> <li>·Implementing a financial analysis of each project to analyze the cost of meeting outcomes and cost effectiveness of programs</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identifying low performing projects and collaborating with them to create corrective action plans, and to improve performance</li> <li>-Reviewing, updating, and revising all policies &amp; procedures to ensure that they align with 24 CFR 578</li> <li>-Updating CoC monitoring guide to reflect new HUD standards.</li> </ul>
<b>Target Population</b>	Youth experiencing homelessness, ages 24 and under, including unaccompanied youth and pregnant or parenting youth who are experiencing homelessness.
<b>YHDP Budget</b>	Approximately \$101,935 (3% of Total Award) Cost does not include MATCH

**Project 2: Enhanced Coordinated Entry and Youth Peer Navigator**

<b>Program Description</b>	<p>Support for new positions in the youth/young adult system – CE System Management and System Navigation. These positions will strengthen the operation of the entire youth coordinated entry system from identification and engagement to housing by providing direct navigation assistance to young people, ensuring all providers are using best practices, marketing the youth CE system, and engaging the youth advisory board in the work to build a new, improved system. Development and implementation of a youth-specific CE system, including initial triage before young people enter shelter and assistance for young people as they navigate the CE system. Improving coordination with system partners to improve coordination within, access to, and referrals to and from the CE system. YYA contacting CE or YAB hotline are immediately referred to a youth peer navigator.</p> <p>The youth peer navigator is a field-based services position that is charged with helping address all aspects of street outreach, diversion/prevention, shelter entry, and assessment for all homeless or at-risk YYA in the county. Youth peer navigator does diversion screen with YYA and either diverts or assists to enter emergency housing program</p> <p>Once YYA is in emergency housing, the youth peer navigator completes CE assessment within 48 hours to help identify housing needs and best intervention.</p>
<b>Target Population</b>	Youth experiencing homelessness, ages 24 and under, including unaccompanied youth and pregnant or parenting youth who are experiencing homelessness.
<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	Increased and rapid access to emergency TH for YYA without safe places to sleep; decrease in length of time homeless; increase in exits to permanent housing; reduction in recidivism; increased connection to wrap-around services (i.e. mental health, employment, treatment, benefits, etc.).
<b>YHDP Budget</b>	Approximately \$115,500 cost does not include MATCH.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Immediate one-time response

**Project 3: Emergency Transitional Housing (TH)-Rapid Rehousing (RRH)**

<p><b>Program Description</b></p> <p><b>Note: Applicants will be given the option to apply for TH-RRH or RRH projects under this project type.</b></p>	<p>TH-RRH will provide permanent and transitional housing and supportive services to young adults 18-24 experiencing homelessness, particularly but not limited to young adults and young adult families who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community or fleeing violence, including trafficking and exploitation.</p> <p>TH-RRH will co-enroll young adults into transitional housing and rapid rehousing with the choice given to YYA to opt in or out of the transitional or rapid rehousing option at any time.</p> <p>The transitional housing option will provide short to medium-term assistance for up to 2 years in a site-based setting using a housing first model that centers the needs and preferences of YYA and works with them to quickly move to permanent housing.</p> <p>The rapid rehousing option will provide rental assistance plus supportive services using a housing-first model that is similarly YYA-led and meets program participants where they are. While the length of time on the subsidy must be participant-driven and individually determined, we expect an average of 1 year per participant and up to 3 years (maximum allowed). We also expect an average of 6 months of aftercare and up to a maximum of 1.5 years once a participant’s rental assistance ends. Housing will be scattered site and allow program participants the option to have a roommate. Supportive services may be provided directly by the YHDP grantee or through program partnerships but must have the capacity to meet participant needs to sustain housing and thrive.</p>
<p><b>Target Population</b></p>	<p>All YYA experiencing homelessness, ages 24 and under, including unaccompanied youth and pregnant or parenting youth who are experiencing homelessness.</p>
<p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p>	<p>Successful exits to Permanent Housing, decrease in length of time homeless, reduction in recidivism, and increased connection to wrap around services (i.e. mental health, employment, treatment, benefits, etc.).</p>
<p><b>YHDP Budget</b></p>	<p>Approximately \$633,017 (TH-RRH) and \$447,632 (RRH) Cost does not include MATCH</p>
<p><b>Timeframe</b></p>	<p>Transitional Housing will be short to medium-term assistance for up to 2 years in a site-based setting.</p> <p>Rapid Rehousing will be an average of 1 year per participant and up to 3 years (maximum allowed). We also expect an average of 6 months of aftercare and up to a maximum of 1.5 years once a participant’s rental assistance ends.</p>
<p><b>Project 4: Host Homes and Kinship</b></p>	
<p><b>Project Description</b></p>	<p>Long-term and short-term host homes are interventions for youth who are currently experiencing homelessness for any variety of reasons, including but not limited to family conflict, poverty, gender identity and sexual orientation. The goal of long-term host homes is to provide a safe, welcoming space for up to 24 months where the young person has time to repair their relationships with self-identified families or</p>

	<p>make decisions about other housing options with the support of a caring housing case manager.</p> <p>For parenting youth long-term host home can be a family, couple, or individual who is willing to open their home and life to a mother and child(ren). The Host Home must have a commitment to showing generous hospitality, building intentional relationships, and meeting the physical and emotional needs of the mother and child(ren) throughout the pregnancy and postpartum period. This period will average about 9 months, depending on at which point in pregnancy the mother entered the Host Home and the need for ongoing support before moving into Independent Supportive Housing.</p> <p>Successful implementations of long-term host homes have generally been volunteer-based programs. Providing long-term host homes is a cost-effective and successful model for preventing youth homelessness in a wide range of cases.</p>
<b>Target Population</b>	All YYA experiencing homelessness, ages 24 and under, including unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness.
<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	Reduced youth involvement with Summit County Children Services, reduction in first time homeless, and increased connection to wrap around services (i.e. mental health, employment, treatment, benefits, etc.). Emergency response services available 24/7 YYA can access shelter within 12 hours of presenting to a system access point, YYA have a safe place to stay (assessments to determine safety of current housing situation or need to move to Emergency TH)
<b>YHDP Budget</b>	Approximately \$114,450 cost does not include MATCH
<b>Timeframe</b>	Average length of stay between three to six months

## Community Support

Copies of letters indicating support for the Coordinated Community Plan and a commitment to implementing the Plan can be found on the following pages. The signatory organizations include the *Youth Advisory Board*, the *CoC Governing Board*, the *Public Child Welfare Agency*, *City of Akron*, *County of Summit*, and the *CoC's Runaway & Homeless Youth provider*.



# Summit County Continuum of Care (SCCoC)

a collaboration of agencies working together for the homeless

Each person is a branch of strength within the community.

Strong branches make

## Signatures of Support

The signature(s) below attest to the approval and support of the Summit County Continuum of Care (SCCoC) OH-506, Coordinated Community Plan to end Youth Homelessness. We agree to work collaboratively with our partners to implement a comprehensive system to prevent and end youth homelessness, including the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

Signature Rachel Wilson Date 4/9/24

Print Name and Title Rachel Wilson, YAB Member

Signature Jayus Payne Date 04/9/24

Print Name and Title Jayus Payne

Signature Melody Stardust Date 04/9/24

Print Name and Title Melody Stardust

Signature Breanna Nesdon Date 4/9/24

Print Name and Title Breanna Nesdon YAB Member

Signature Brielle Davis Date 4/10/24

Print Name and Title Brielle Davis YAB ~~Sec~~ Sec.



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Signature Jackie Hemsworth Date 4/5/2024  
Print Name and Title Jackie Hemsworth, Board Chair  
Agency Summit County Continuum of Care

## Continuum of Care



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Signature *Ilene Shapiro* Date April 5, 2024  
Print Name and Ilene Shapiro, County Executive  
Title Agency Summit County

## Local Government



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Signature  Date 4/1/2024  
Print Name and Title Traci Foley, Department Director Placement Services  
Agency Summit County Children Services Authorized Agent of  
Legal Custodian, Cassandra A. Holtzmann  
Summit County Children Services

**Public Child Welfare Agency**



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Signature  Date 4/9/24  
Print Name and Title Joseph Rizzo, Executive Director  
Agency Shelter Care, Inc.

**Runaway and Homeless Youth Providers**



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Signature  Date 4/3/2024

Print Name and Title Kyle Julien, Planning Director

Agency City of Akron

**Local Government**

# APPENDIX A

# 2023

HUD defines youth as persons who are between 12 and 24 years old. Homeless youth are most likely to be staying with family or friends, which is often referred to as couch surfing as they frequently move from place to place.

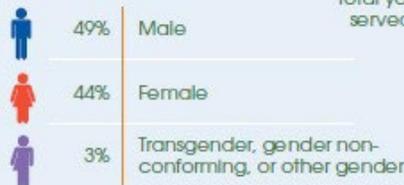
Individuals who are couch surfing do not meet the federal definition of Category 1 Homeless and are not eligible for many SCCoC funded programs.

The SCCoC is working to increase awareness of youth homelessness and create specialized programs to assist this vulnerable population.

## Youth Homelessness in Summit County

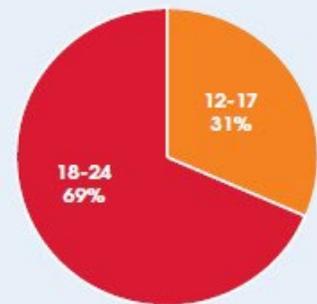
### YOUTH BY GENDER

**962**  
total youth served<sup>14</sup>



### AGE

Total: 962



### PARENTING YOUTH



### PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

Total: 705



**53%**  
of youth served were couch surfing at program entry compared to  
**19%**  
of overall homeless population

<sup>13</sup> Source for Total Summit County Population is the 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Survey (Table B03002).

<sup>14</sup> Youth served statistics are based on data in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) of Summit County on individuals who are 12 to 24 years old and were homeless at some point during 2023, were previously homeless and continued to be served by a SCCoC program in 2023, or were at risk of homelessness and accessed homelessness prevention services in 2023.